

**Perspectives on a mediating role for effective teaching and learning of  
Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band in  
schools under the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South  
Africa**

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schools under the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal Province, South  
Africa**

**by  
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**DECLARATION FORM**

I, Gladstone Khulani ZULU, of Durban, sincerely and solemnly declare that the copy of the thesis submitted by me during February 2016 is original. It is in no way the work of someone else. The product is the result of my efforts through the professional guidance of the recognised supervisors whose names and signatures appear below:

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to:

My beloved late mother and late brother, Mrs. Anna Mzamose Zulu (MaCindi) and Mr. David Goodman Zulu.

My wife, Jabulile Mary-Crescentia Zulu; my children, Snethemba, Vukile, Nontobeko, Kuhle Zulu and Mandisa Mabaso, who have been my source of inspiration and pillar of hope.

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## ABSTRACT

The inclusion of the subject, Life Orientation, in the school curriculum for a democratic education dispensation was the realisation of the recommendation of the National Education Crisis Committee or NECC (1992) in its research for a curriculum model for a post-apartheid society (CUMSA) and Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS). The NECC (1992: 79) emphasised that *lifestyle education* was essential for a post-apartheid curriculum in order to incorporate knowledge of and guidance on religion, economic education and physical education, to be directed at norms, values, personal convictions and attitude to life (including an emphasis on openness to and acceptance of the convictions and attitudes of others).

However, studies have highlighted that Life Orientation is generally considered an appendage, an additional subject that is perceived as being of lesser importance in the school curriculum (Chisholm, 2000; Jansen, 1997; Christie, 1999). Such claims are based on the following facts: Life Orientation has the least number of periods in the school timetable; there is no *formal assessment* of the Life Orientation knowledge, skills, values and attitudes; learners' performance in Life Orientation counts for less on their school-leaving certificates, than their performance in other subjects; and there is no accountability on the part of teachers with regard to learners' performance in the subject. Therefore, results obtained in the subject do not add value in the certification process of the learner in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band.

While reforms and changes have been introduced in the South African schooling curriculum for a democratic political and social dispensation, educational researchers (Chisholm, 2000; Jansen, 1997; Christie, 1999) have highlighted the challenges facing the successful implementation of the new curriculum. This study considers the *mediation* of the subject curriculum to be the main challenge in the successful implementation of the national curriculum statement, which provides teachers with guidelines on *why*, *what* and *how* classroom practice ought to be. Through the lens of the tuition of a specific subject,

this study considers the competence of teachers in mediating Life Orientation in the FET Phase.

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What paradigm informs the mediation strategies of teachers of Life Orientation?
- How do teachers' mediation strategies align content, intended outcomes and assessment for daily learning activities?
- Why do teachers perceive their mediation strategies as being congruent with the attainment of the Life Orientation curriculum statement and learning outcomes?

This study targeted teachers involved in the teaching of Life Orientation in the FET Phase: that is, Grades 10, 11 and 12 teachers in schools in the vicinity of the Pinetown District. A mixed method design was used to investigate teachers' perceptions and competencies in teaching Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training band. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used to collect data from the participants.

The researcher used open-ended questionnaires for data collection with regard to the perspectives on a mediating role for the effective teaching of Life Orientation in the FET band. The research was conducted with Grades 10, 11 and 12 Life Orientation (L.O.) teachers. There are 167 secondary schools under Pinetown District and the questionnaires were administered in 30 of the 167 secondary schools. A total of 60 teachers, that is, 2 teachers per school, teaching Grades 10, 11 and 12 were used as respondents to the questionnaires in order to answer the research question. The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to collect information regarding L.O.'s academic value, L.O. teachers' preparedness and L.O. mediation strategies.

Interviews were also used to collect qualitative data from the participants who were teachers who teach Life Orientation in the FET phase. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in-depth interviews use open-response questions to obtain data on participants' meanings regarding how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives.

According to the collected data, the participants felt very strong about the importance and the academic value of the subject LO in the FET curriculum. They emphasised that the subject was invaluable in the effective teaching of the learners at this stage in order to prepare them for future careers and as future citizens. They felt a need for the subject to be recognised and to be treated with some degree of the value it deserves within the curriculum.

It was mentioned by the participants that the teachers who teach the subject have to be well-prepared and trained, and also that they need to have a specialised knowledge and understanding for the effective teaching and learning of the subject to happen. Over and above they have to be passionate about the subject, and be willing to sacrifice their time and talents to develop themselves and to teach better.

A variety of mediation strategies that are learner-centred were identified as the best strategies to teach the subject, in order to improve and develop learner knowledge and understanding around the subject. Strategies that keep learners fully involved in their learning and development were seen as the best strategies. Participants felt that learners learn better when they find information on their own and when they interact with others to develop knowledge and understanding.

This study recommends that Life Orientation must be treated in the same manner as other subjects in the curriculum and that this needs to be shown in the allocation of time to teach the subject. It is very disturbing to learn that this subject is sacrificed a lot to benefit other priority subjects in the FET curriculum. It should always be remembered that this subject was introduced for the purpose of a holistic development of the learners. With the identified academic value of the subject, L.O., it is without doubt that the subject is indispensable within the FET curriculum.



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## **APPENDICES**

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Changes in the national school curriculum in South Africa have been driven by the quest to inculcate a value system for an emerging non-sexist, non-racial, united and democratic society, on the assumption that the role of the school curriculum is to contribute to the achievement of societal goals (Apple, 2004). Therefore, curriculum transformation in South Africa, since the inception of outcomes-based education, has been underpinned by the following principles: social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity (DoE, 1998). Every school subject in this regard should promote learners' responsibility to care about others for the common good of society, and should ensure that equal opportunities to improve living conditions are upheld. Furthermore, a commitment to the promotion of a healthy environment has social, political, economic and biophysical dimensions. Including a human rights' emphasis in the school curriculum, according to the Department of Education, (DoE, 1998) promotes peace, mutual acceptance and respect. Finally, the incorporation of the principle of inclusivity in the school curriculum strives towards the acknowledgment and recognition of the diversity of communities in terms of culture, race, language, economic background, ability and conviction. In congruence with constitutional values of non-sexism and non-discrimination, the principle of inclusivity acknowledges that all learners come to school with their own experiences, interests, strengths and barriers to learning which need to be accommodated.

The inclusion of the subject Life Orientation in the school curriculum in a democratic education dispensation was the realisation of the recommendation of the National Education Crisis Committee or NECC (1992) in its research for a curriculum model for a post-apartheid society (CUMSA) and Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS). The NECC (1992: 79) emphasised that *lifestyle education* was essential for a post-apartheid curriculum, in order to incorporate knowledge of, and guidance regarding religion, economic education and physical education, to be directed at norms, values,

personal convictions and attitude to life (including an emphasis on openness to and acceptance of the convictions and attitudes of others). This recommendation paved the way for the formulation of the learning outcomes and competences (articulated in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) to be attained by students through the teaching and learning of Life Orientation in schools.

Studies have, however, highlighted that Life Orientation is generally considered an appendage, an additional subject that is perceived as being of lesser importance in the school curriculum (Chisholm, 2000; Jansen, 1997; Christie, 1999). Such claims are based on the following facts: Life Orientation has the least number of periods in the school timetable; there is no *formal assessment* of the Life Orientation knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and, furthermore, learners' performance in Life Orientation counts for less on their school-leaving certificates than their performance in other subjects; there is also no accountability on the part of teachers with regard to learners' performance in the subject. Therefore, results obtained in the subject do not add value to the certification process of the learner in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band. This research study argues that the subject, Life Orientation, should be revitalised in order to fulfil its purpose in the school curriculum.

The fundamental and multifaceted purpose of Life Orientation in the national school curriculum was originally conceived of as follows: enhancing the practice of positive values, attitudes, behaviour and skills in individuals and communities; encouraging a healthy lifestyle; empowering learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation; working for the transformation of society in the interests of promoting a human rights culture; and promoting the achievement of individual learners' potential by: strengthening and integrating learners' self-concept, capacity to develop healthy relationships, ability to make informed decisions, independent, critical and creative thinking and survival and coping skills, commitment to lifelong learning, and pleasure in the expression and co-ordination of their intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional and moral powers (DoE, 1998: 183).

Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, values and attitudes regarding the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation

and physical activity, and careers, career choices and the learners' relationship with the world of work (DoE, 2003). The skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are emphasised in Life Orientation include opportunities to engage in the development and practice of a variety of life skills to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices, and to take appropriate actions to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing society.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Olivier (1997: 28) asserts that the success of outcomes-based curriculum delivery depends on the alignment of the tuition offered to learners and the concerns of learners. This suggests that fulfilling the intentions of the curriculum designers depends, to a large extent, on teachers' ability to mediate the subject content in the classroom. Kelly (2009) concurs, adding that mediation entails the ability to: select and organise content, align the intended learning outcome with teaching and learning strategies, and formulate assessment criteria to measure learners' levels of performance towards attainment of the intended outcome.

Schubert (1986) compares and contrasts the Tylerian paradigm and the critical praxis model as approaches that could inform mediation of a subject curriculum in classrooms. According to Null, (2011) the proponents of the *Tylerian paradigm* – named after curriculum theorist Ralph Tyler (1902–1994) – hold the view that implementation of the subject curriculum in the classroom involves the following: subject matter, the teaching/learning aims and objectives, the teacher and the learners. The view of knowledge construction held by Tylerian theorists upholds the notion of knowledge as empirically, analytically and objectively constructed by the educational experts. The main focus of teaching and learning in this paradigm, according to McNeil (1990), should be determined by the following: the behavioural objectives stated, opportunities to practise what the objectives of the instruction call for and learners' levels of cognitive development.

Critics of the Tylerian paradigm oppose its promotion of teacher-centred teaching and learning approaches, and reject its upholding of the teacher as the source of all knowledge, the only one with the authority to initiate and direct the process of teaching

and learning in the classroom. Such critics also challenge the notion of the formulation of learning objectives or performance objectives, on the grounds that they promote passiveness in the learning situation (Giroux, 2003; Null, 2011; Cornbleth, 1990; Kelly, 2009). Furthermore, McNeil (1990) draws on international research on the teaching and learning of the subject, Life Orientation, to argue that the kind of objective-driven approaches underpinned by the Tylerian paradigm focus on human capital (knowledge, skills and attitude) development – a very small aspect of the human factor, ignoring the fundamental dimensions of a well-developed human factor such as emotions, morals and spirit.

Pioneers and proponents of the *critical praxis model* which gained traction in the 1970s, (Pinar, 2004; Apple, 2004; Null, 2011) identify teachers, learners, subject matter and learning environment or *milieu* as the four main places for mediation of a subject curriculum. This paradigm emphasises *interaction* as the main mode of knowledge construction. The beliefs and values evident in the South African curriculum guidelines on Life Orientation, in terms of the envisaged mediation approaches and the principles underpinning pedagogy, (DoE, 1996a, 1996b, 2002, 2005) reflect the ideas pioneered by the proponents of the critical praxis paradigm. Furthermore, Olivier (1997: 30) emphasises the link between the espoused outcomes-based curriculum model and the critical praxis paradigm, highlighting that outcomes-based curriculum mediation requires teachers to assist, facilitate and guide the following: social interaction, the progress towards achieving the intended learning outcomes, (mastery of knowledge, skills acquisition and development of adequate values and attitudes) problem-solving, processing of information, interpretation of information, contextualisation of knowledge and outcomes, use of relevant methodologies for collecting information, opportunities and resources and revisiting strategies. Killen (2010), promoting the critical praxis approach, comments that curriculum mediation of new subject matter and learners' existing knowledge, enables learners to link and associate subject content knowledge with the events and incidents in their real life-world. Similarly, Pinar (2004) argues that meaningful learning occurs when teachers organise learning activities to enhance learners' understanding of the life context and environment.

The literature review undertaken for this study revealed contesting paradigms in terms of our understanding of the mediation process in classrooms. Scholars, including Jansen (1997), Christie (1999), Badat (1995) and Chisholm (2000) have voiced concern at the poor performance of learners in mastering content knowledge and at learners' weak competence levels when it comes to demonstrating skills, attitudes and values. Echoing these concerns, Graven (2001) charges that the outcomes-driven curriculum has reduced teaching and learning of subject discipline content knowledge to 'random activities'. While these theorists do not criticise the intentions of the designers of outcomes-based education for curriculum transformation in South Africa, they highlight, as the main area of contention, the *mediation process* that is necessary if curriculum changes are to be achieved in classrooms. Carr, (1995) Grundy (1991) and Fullan (2007) also emphasise that curriculum changes and innovations require new responses from and new approaches by teachers, with regard to subject-specific pedagogy.

The literature review confirmed that the outcomes-based principles behind teaching and learning in the South African schooling system are commensurate with the ideals of the critical praxis paradigm, hence the education authorities in South Africa recommend learner-centred approaches such as problem-solving, inquiry-based and cooperative learning and group work (DoE, 2005). For this reason, the mediation of Life Orientation as a multi-disciplinary subject should adopt a learner-centred teaching and learning style in order to inculcate in learners the desired values and attitudes with regard to democracy and citizenship. Furthermore, in this regard, the mediation of Life Orientation should model the integration of content and pedagogy in order to ensure that learners are able to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills, attitudes and values relating to personal growth, social development, health and hygiene, decision-making and the ability to make responsible choices in various life contexts (DoE, 1998, 2002, 2005). The main issues that have been highlighted in various research studies in South Africa, since the inception of the post-1994 curriculum changes, revolve around the issues of mediation – the abilities and the level of competence teachers demonstrate in applying pedagogy underpinned by an emphasis on learning outcomes, and by principles of integration, learner-centredness, diversity and inclusivity.

### 1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of mediation has different meanings and connotations in different contexts. In conflict management research, (Goleman, 1996; Fullan, 1994; Goodland, 1994), mediation suggests an intervention in a conflict situation with the purpose of resolving it. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2000) mediation in learning entails teachers' competence to address the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning; to construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational and to communicate effectively showing recognition of, and respect for differences in others. Moreover, mediation requires teachers to demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context (DoE, 2000: 49).

According to McNeil (1990: 314), "Mediation refers to the interpretative process by which people make sense of or create meaning from experience. Mediation can also mean an intervening and linking process between messages on the one hand and meaning and actions on the other". With regard to teaching and learning, Cornbleth (1990) classifies mediation into *organisational mediation* and *structural mediation*. The first requires teachers to expose learners to the realities that exist in society as part of the human experience (thus requiring teachers to consider the demographics of learners from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, with different socio-cultural values). The second entails structuring the teaching and learning *milieu* in terms of, for example, learners' grouping, selection of textbooks and other teaching and learning material, and teaching strategies and learning styles.

Olivier (1997) argues in favour of supporting the importance of an interactive and social constructivist approach in organisational and structural mediation. The following learning principles are recommended by the proponents of curriculum transformation in South Africa: self-learning, self-development, cross-curricular thinking, social interrelationships and a focus on the development of higher-order thinking skills, communication and decision-making. These learning principles underpin learner-centred mediation in classrooms (Olivier, 1997).



The Department of Education (DoE, 1998, 2000) also emphasises that outcomes-based education in South African schools should focus on the following: interaction between learners and the subject content and environment or real-life experiences, preparation for the desired learning outcome, (mastery of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) performing accordingly to demonstrate the outcome, concluding the outcome while interacting and assessing knowledge, skills processes, progression and the final outcome. Killen (2009) in support of learner-centred learning principles and styles, contends that the introduction and implementation of outcomes-based education required a shift from the view of teaching and learning that underpinned content-led curriculum. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 1998), the difference between a content-driven and an outcomes-based curriculum is that, in the former, the teaching and learning objectives are derived from the prescribed content and these objectives describe what learners should know and be able to demonstrate within the subject; whereas outcomes-driven learning implies an emphasis on the end result of the process of learning, the learning process itself, and the assessment of the attained results or output. Killen (2009) emphasises that mediation in the outcomes-based curriculum exposes learners to real-life experiences, because learning contexts are generated from learners' real worlds of experience, and, as a result of this congruency, learners become lifelong learners. This implies that the techniques, knowledge and procedures acquired in the process of learning in school are transferable to the world outside the classroom. Similarly, Olivier (1997) argues that learning which links content knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the real life-world constitutes *authentic learning* and that this is what teaching and learning should promote.

#### **1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

While reforms and changes have been introduced in the South African schooling curriculum for a democratic political and social dispensation, educational researchers (Chisholm, 2000; Jansen, 1997; Christie, 1999) have highlighted the challenges facing the successful implementation of the new curriculum. This study considers the *mediation* of the subject curriculum to be the main challenge in the successful implementation of the national curriculum statement which provides teachers with

guidelines as to *why*, *what* and *how* classroom practice ought to be. Through the lens of the tuition of a specific subject, this study considers the competence of teachers in mediating Life Orientation in the FET Phase.

A plethora of challenges of daily life that impinge and potentially impact of the lives of FET Phase learners are widely reported in the media, including incidents of rape on school premises, lack of discipline, intolerance on the basis of race, gender and physical barriers, and indulgence in drugs and unsafe sexual practices which contribute to the high rate of teen pregnancy and the incidence of disease. The rationale for Life Orientation in the school curriculum is to expose learners to an informed awareness of these realities of life to build their knowledge and value systems. Learners in this phase of schooling are expected to demonstrate competence in life skills, such as making responsible choices and decisions, refraining from harmful and unhygienic sexual or other practices, and creative thinking in managing their own lives and interacting with others.

It is arguable, however, that the behaviour, conduct and morals of learners have not changed for the better – despite the fact that the subject, Life Orientation, has been taught in schools for over 15 years. Learners' heightened awareness of their rights is not matched by demonstration of responsibilities, and parents tend to blame such conduct and behaviour on social, political and economic factors.

The subject, Life Orientation, was introduced into the FET Phase as the result of the implementation of the new curriculum called Curriculum 2005, or C2005 (DoE, 1998). Most of the teachers who teach this subject were not trained in it. These teachers are still in the field since, most importantly, teachers with a lower workload were given this subject as an add-on in order to balance the workload among teachers. This indicates once again that this subject was a taken-for-granted subject, and this has posed serious problems because the subject has not yielded the intended results.

Chisholm, (2000) Killen (2009) and Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) argue that the threats and challenges highlighted by research with regard to the implementation of the new curriculum are related to the following issues, among others: inadequate education and training of teachers in relation to both the implications of curriculum

transformation for their practice, and the expectations of and demands on their continuing professional development (CDP); the model used, that is, the train-the-trainer model, which presented a challenge in the cascading of principles underpinning the theory and practice of curriculum innovations; and time constraints, which hampered the successful implementation of the intentions of subject curriculum statement in classrooms.

Dalton (1988) argues that behaviour, conduct and morals among learners in the FET Phase are degenerating and cites as evidence for this the following: the high rate of teen (and younger) pregnancy; reported incidents of violence inside school premises; lack of discipline among learners; poor performance of learners in their post-matric studies; and the inability of learners to make adequate and informed career choices. In light of the range of challenges that have beset the implementation of C2005, in general (including the Life Orientation curriculum), and of the finding by the Ministerial Review Committee (Chisholm, 2000) concerning the lack of content knowledge, the researcher developed an interest in investigating the teaching of Life Orientation in the context of curriculum change in the FET Phase. This study aims particularly at discovering answers to the following questions:

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What paradigm informs the mediation strategies of teachers of Life Orientation?
- How do teachers' mediation strategies align content, intended outcomes and assessment for daily learning activities?
- Why do teachers perceive their mediation strategies as being congruent with the attainment of the Life Orientation curriculum statement and learning outcomes?

## **1.6 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions and competences in teaching Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training Phase of the South African schooling system.

## **1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the convictions and beliefs underlying teachers' choice of mediation strategies for teaching and learning of Life Orientation.
- To compare and contrast the mediation strategies employed by teachers with the envisaged learning outcomes and Life Orientation curriculum statement.
- To identify teachers' views and perceptions of the Life Orientation curriculum in practice.

## **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The results from this study will have both research and practical implications for the teaching of Life Orientation in South Africa. To date, research has been limited to the areas of Life Orientation teacher education, and, more specifically, to content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and curriculum knowledge and change. This research would contribute substantially to the literature on Life Orientation education by addressing teachers' perceptions of their mediating strategies in the teaching of Life Orientation. In addition, the study hopes to inform the Department of Education and higher education institutions of the impact of significant curriculum changes in the teaching of Life Orientation in the FET Phase. This research also hopes to put forward unambiguous suggestions for addressing curriculum issues in future to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. Fullan (1994) argues that education is not a destination, but a journey, and that education should be viewed as a process rather than a product. Given the process perspective, the data generated from this study could inform the evolving education policy processes in South Africa by investigating teachers' understanding and experiences of the new curriculum and

education system, their personal narratives about education, knowledge, teaching and learning, and how these translate into practice.

This study intended to highlight the interplay between teachers' epistemological beliefs, curriculum reforms and pedagogy. It will shed light on teachers' beliefs in their ability to implement the policy, based on their personal understanding. It is anticipated that the findings from this study may engage with the discourse of critiquing the ever-evolving curriculum, which currently tends to view teachers as victims of the changing educational landscape, with no power to modify the context, or to observe and assimilate the changes and develop responses to the new teaching and learning challenges.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

Methodology concerns the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used.

### **1.9.1 Research design**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) refer to the research design as the plan for generating empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research questions. The intention is to use a design that will result in drawing valid, credible conclusions from the answers to the research questions. Similarly, Kumar (2014: 122) explicitly states that a research design is the road map that a researcher intends to follow during the research journey, to find answers to his/her research questions as validly, objectively, accurately and economically as possible. The researcher considered all of these aspects in the selection of an appropriate design for this study.

Within this study, the researcher selected a mixed methods design. According to De Vos et al., (2011: 442) this is a one-phase design in which the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative methods during the same time-frame and with equal weight to best understand the phenomenon. To elaborate further, basically, this design entails concurrent, but separate, collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data so as to draw comparisons with the findings obtained (De Vos et al., 2011: 442). The researcher specifically selected this design as it enabled him to produce more

complete and well-validated conclusions from the study. The researcher used questionnaires to collect quantitative data from FET Phase teachers. The administration of questionnaires was followed by arranged interviews and interview schedules with the sample of teachers.

A mixed method approach involving a combination of qualitative and quantitative data from different sources was used to corroborate the findings of the study. Qualitative research methods help to provide answers to questions by examining various social settings and individuals who inhabit the settings, allowing the researcher to share in the understandings and perceptions of others, and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Qualitative research methods help elucidate the frames of meaning of the actors and investigate the context of action (De Vos et al., 2002; Creswell, 2009).

### **1.9.2 TARGET POPULATION**

The study targeted teachers involved in the teaching of Life Orientation in the FET Phase: that is, Grades 10, 11 and 12 teachers in schools in the vicinity of the Pinetown District.

#### **1.9. 2.1 Sampling procedures for the study**

Sampling is a process of selecting participants for a research study to be undertaken. There are more than 5 000 schools in the Pinetown District that teach the FET Phase, and therefore, the sample for this study was constituted using the following procedures: purposive sampling in selecting participants from 30 high schools. The representation of the participants in the semi-urban and urban schools alike were considered in the sample. The issue of gender and race was be addressed during the identification of participants.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), there are several important reasons for using purposive sampling. Firstly, it can be used to achieve representativity or typicality of the settings, individuals or activities selected. A small sample that has been selected systematically for typicality and relative homogeneity provides far more confidence, in terms of the research findings, that the conclusions adequately

represent the average members of the population, than does a sample of the same size that incorporates substantial random or accidental variation. Secondly, purposive sampling can be used to capture adequately the heterogeneity in the population. The goal here is to ensure that the conclusions accurately represent the entire range of variation, rather than only the typical members or some subset of this range. Thirdly, a sample can be selected purposively to allow for the examination of cases that are critical to the theories that the study began with, or which have subsequently been developed. Finally, purposive sampling can be used to establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals, a common strategy in multi-case qualitative studies (Creswell, 2009).

### **1.9.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the mediation strategies and the challenges facing FET Phase teachers in implementing integrated, multidisciplinary approaches in the teaching of Life Orientation. A sample of 60 teachers from 30 schools in the Pinetown District were targeted to participate in the study. The South African education system is made up of three different types of schools: independent or private; public or government; and Model C, or quasi-government schools. The researcher selected participants from each of the above three high school categories in the Pinetown District. In the independent or private category, 2 schools were selected, while 6 schools were selected from the Model C or quasi-government category, and 22 (11 rural and 11 township) schools were selected from the public or government category. Two teachers were selected from each school from Grades 10 to 12, (the FET Band) and one of these teachers had to be a Life Orientation specialist.

### **1.9.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

Qualitative research studies usually aim for depth rather than 'quantity' of understanding (Kumar, 2011). Kumar states further that studies are conducted in settings that are bound by the theme of the enquiry and that these cannot usually be extensive unless there is a large team of investigators. Since the study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, it used questionnaires and interviews to explore

the perspectives on the role/s of mediation in effective teaching and learning of Life Orientation in the FET Band in schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

## **Interviews**

An interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which an interviewer has a general plan of enquiry but does not require a specific set of questions to be asked in a particular order (De Vos, 2002). In essence, interviews are communicative events aimed at finding out what participants think, know and feel (Kendall, 2008). The researcher used interviews to find out what participants think, know and feel about the role/s of mediation in effective teaching and learning in the FET Phase of education in schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Interviews allowed the researcher to probe for more information and clarity where necessary. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule for collecting data. Semi-structured interviews are most useful when the intention is to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon within a particular cultural context. In addition, they are most appropriate when working within an interpretive research paradigm in which the underlying assumption is that reality is socially constructed by the participants in the setting of interest.

## **Questionnaires**

The term 'questionnaire' suggests the collection of answers to questions, but an examination of a typical questionnaire will probably reveal as many statements as questions. This is not without reason. Often, the researcher is interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Questionnaires make it possible for the researcher to gather data from participants who are situated in far-flung locations, as well as from many participants at once, since questionnaires are self-administered. Questionnaires were the main data-gathering instrument used, although the questionnaires were supplemented by interviews; the researcher used both to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were used. An open-ended questionnaire is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject's own knowledge and/or feelings. It is the opposite of a closed-ended questionnaire, which encourages a short or single-word answer. Open-ended



questionnaires also tend to be more objective and less leading than closed-ended questionnaires (Kumar, 2011).

### **1.10 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods for exploring the same focus or phenomenon, is a plan of action that will help to raise researchers above the personal biases that can stem from the employment of single methodologies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). By combining two or more methods, researchers can partially overcome the deficiencies that might flow from a single method. When seeking to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research, the researcher was concerned with triangulation.

As part of triangulation, for this study, the researcher used both interviews and questionnaires for the identified respondents and endeavoured to reach all respondents. Triangulation can be done according to paradigms, methodologies, methods and researchers, and is generally considered to be one of the best ways to enhance reliability and validity in qualitative research studies (Kendall, 2008).

Another approach to ensuring reliability and validity of the research findings is found in the notion of *objectivity* as found in the highly influential work of Creswell (2009). Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) emphasise, as a criterion of good qualitative research, the notion of *trustworthiness*: that is, neutrality of the research findings or decisions. According to De Vos, (2002) the basic issue of trustworthiness is simple: how can an enquirer persuade his or her audience that the findings of an enquiry are worth paying attention to or worth taking account of?

### **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Approval for the study was sought from the University of Zululand Research Ethics Committee as well as from the Department of Basic Education. The researcher contacted principals of schools telephonically to make arrangements to administer questionnaires. Participants were made aware that they will be under no obligation to continue with the study, and that they may withdraw at any point should they wish to

do so. The identity of participants was withheld in the reporting of the data and the final thesis. Participants were advised of the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and analysis to be used, and the manner of publishing the outcomes.

## **1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE CHAPTERS**

The study is organised as follows:

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

This chapter provides the introduction to and context of the study. It gives the background to the problem under investigation while the statement of the problem is also set out. The three research questions and the research objectives are highlighted and the significance of the study is explained.

### **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study and provides an overview of the literature. Previous research conducted on this topic is also discussed.

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION**

The research methodology used in conducting the study is outlined in Chapter Three. The institutions in which the research is conducted are mentioned, and details of the nature of participants, instruments and procedures for data collection and analysis are discussed.

### **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA**

This chapter begins answering the three research questions by presenting and analysing the research data.

### **CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA**

In this chapter the research findings are synthesised and interpreted.

### **CHAPTER SIX**

This chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a synthesis of the views and experiences of other researchers as recorded in the relevant literature. By tracing the role of mediation in the growth and progress of teaching and learning in South Africa to date through the literature documenting this, it is possible to establish a theoretical framework against which to position this study. In order to discuss the relevance of the literature and the way it substantiates this study, the chapter will be divided into sections dealing with the conceptual and the theoretical framework as well as the actual theory underpinning mediation and the role it plays generally, more specifically in education and finally, with regard to the subject of Life Orientation.

In order to understand how the literature positions mediation as applied to teaching and learning, and the teaching and learning of Life Orientation, in particular, it is necessary to consider how teaching and learning is carried out. This explanation leads to increased comprehension of how mediation can and is applied in the field of education.

It is further relevant to interest in understand what teachers believe about the nature of knowledge and learning (known as epistemological beliefs) and how these beliefs, or epistemologies, affect curriculum implementation and instructional approaches concerning the subject, Life Orientation. Lately, psychologists and educators have become interested in personal epistemological development and epistemological beliefs, including how individuals come to acquire knowledge, the theories and beliefs they hold about knowing, and the influence of epistemological beliefs on the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning (Chan & Elliot, 2004).

### **2.1.1 PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Perceptions of teaching and learning refer to the beliefs held by teachers about their preferred ways of teaching and learning. These include the meaning of teaching and learning and the roles of teachers and pupils. Often, perceptions of teaching and learning are associated with two learning models: the traditional/transmissive and the progressive/constructivist modes of learning. The constructivist learning model is often contrasted with the transmissive/traditional learning model. The constructivist learning model or conception emphasises the creation of active learning environments that permit critical thinking, discovery and collaboration, while the traditional/transmissive learning model views the teacher as the source of knowledge and students as passive recipients of knowledge. Such model or concept emphasises learning by receiving information, especially from the teacher and from textbooks, to help students encounter and learn well-defined concepts (Howard et al., 2000; Prawat, 1992). The constructivist mode of learning may be associated with teachers having sophisticated epistemologies, and an orientation to the traditional/transmissive conception may be reflective of teachers holding naive epistemologies associated with omniscient authority and certain knowledge (Chan & Elliot, 2004).

According to Babadogan and Unal (2011), studies for practices in all fields are carried out on the basis of certain theoretical concepts and principles, discussed later in Sections 2.5,6,10,11,12 and 13. Similarly, in the field of education, development and implementation of curricula, materials, teaching-learning processes are realised, based on the theoretical grounds. These theoretical grounds are the psychological principles, ideals, values and needs of the community and principles envisaged by the educational philosophy. Sound reasoning based on the educational programmes of a country provides for the development and promotion of good teaching and learning practices by the education departments, schools, teachers, parents, learners and the communities. If all these stakeholders are playing their expected roles in the teaching and learning processes, effective teaching and learning will prevail for the benefit of learners in South Africa.

### **2.1.2 THE FIELD OF LIFE ORIENTATION**

Life Orientation is a multi-disciplinary subject and an argument exists around how teachers construct, organise and structure the subject content to cover the scope of

academic work assigned for Life Orientation in the FET band of the schooling system. Rooth (2005) stresses that Life Orientation offers possibilities for equipping learners in South Africa with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to face the challenges they encounter as informed, confident and responsible young people. She further argues that the needs and challenges that the youth face offer both problems and possibilities for successful living and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to her, many of these needs and challenges can be addressed through the subject, Life Orientation.

In consideration of the above, it is evident that educators play a vital role in constructing, organising and structuring the subject content in Life Orientation. The learner's understanding of the content is highly dependent on the ability of the educators to firstly understand the content themselves, reiterate this information to the learners, as well as to ensure that the learners have sufficient understanding of relevant content by means of assessments and performance tests. These teachers' and learners' interactions if done in a good and productive manner will definitely result in quality teaching and learning that will also support the acquiring and understanding of information by learners.

Teachers are continuously learning, especially when it comes to the subject of Life Orientation, which is composed of a variety of life's aspects such as emotions, morals and spirit which are always different and dependent on the individual and his/her background. Teachers are therefore not the only authority to initiate and direct the process of teaching and learning, which also brings us to the main point that teachers form part of the existing mediation factors (i.e. teachers, learners, subject matter and learning environment). Teachers and learners form part of the mediation components that are required for the mediated teaching and learning processes to occur in a manner that is beneficial to learners. Other components that are also necessary and also form part of the mediation processes are the subject content, the information and knowledge that is delivered to the learners to develop their understanding and the environment where teaching and learning takes place. It is very important that the environment where teaching and learning take place allows this to happen in a free and undisturbed manner. Teachers are, therefore, not the source of knowledge. They

are, however, required to assist, facilitate and guide learners with social interaction, problem-solving, interpreting information and so forth.

### **2.1.3 HOW TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE IS MEDIATED**

The main focus of teaching and learning theories, i.e. the Tylerian and the Praxis model, basically placed an emphasis on the fact that the teacher has to be a great learner in order to be a great teacher. It is a fact and nature of the teaching profession that the teacher him/herself needs to learn a lot to enable him/her to be able to provide the learners with the information and knowledge they need. Critics oppose the notion of teachers as the source of all knowledge, simply because teachers need to be taught and supported in order to understand the knowledge that they need to pass on to learners.

It seems pertinent to consider the fact that knowledge alone is not all that is required of teachers. In this regard, Mwamwenda (2004) clearly asserts that teachers should aim to pursue factors such as clarity; warmth and enthusiasm; independent practice; reinforcement; self-concept and reading in their teaching practice. Alternatively, it is also the opinion of Hamachek (1990) and Mwamwenda, (1989) that the personality of the teacher contributes greatly to the learning experience of those s/he teaches. In a classroom situation teacher enthusiasm plays a vital role in promoting healthy and good interactions that will make teaching and learning effective and productive. An enthusiastic teacher will inspire and motivate learners to acquire more information that will be later produced as knowledge. Mediation of learning is thus centred in the teacher as a resource or a conduit by means of which knowledge, experience and skills are channelled through to the learners. The receptivity of the learners, and hence the amount or quality of the knowledge they acquire depends greatly upon the manner in which that knowledge is mediated across to them.

Mwamwenda (2004) asserts that, while it may not be easy for a teacher to encompass all these qualities, teachers should exhibit the following characteristics: co-operation, a democratic attitude, kindness, consideration, patience, fairness, impartiality, a broad interest, a sense of humour, an interest in learners' problems, flexibility, a pleasant disposition and consistent behaviour.

#### **2.1.4 ATTITUDE TOWARD TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Mwamwenda (2004) adds that, in addition, to the teachers' personalities, their attitudes towards teaching and learning also have a role to play in determining how effective the learning which occurs in their classrooms will be. He indicates that the teachers' belief in the ability of their learners is very important, as well as how passionate the teachers are about their learners' success. The teachers' attitudes towards themselves are also vital, as teachers who are self-controlled, confident and enthusiastic contribute to a positive learning atmosphere which is an asset to learners. Besides all this, the attitudes of teachers will play a crucial role in their preparation of lessons, which, in turn, will ensure that they are confident in their presentation of lessons thus promoting effective learning. Hamachek (1990) affirms that effective teaching is not simply an innate skill, but is rather the result of hard work and thorough preparation. This statement applies, not only to teaching generally, but particularly to the teaching of Life Orientation as a subject.

In pursuit of teaching the subject, Life Orientation, South African education authorities recommend learner-centred approaches towards its mediation. They have indicated that the reason for this is because Life Orientation is a multi-disciplinary subject and also, because there is a need to interact with learners and gather their views and contributions with regards to issues concerning the country. It is one of the objectives of this study to explore the convictions and beliefs underlying teachers' choices of mediation strategies for teaching and learning of Life Orientation. The above discussions highlighted some important information as to the choice and identification of mediation strategies by the teachers who teach Life Orientation.

### **2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.2.1 CONCEPT OF MEDIATION**

The concept of mediation has different meanings and connotations in different contexts. In conflict management research (Goleman, 1996; Fullan, 1994; Goodland, 1994), mediation may suggest an intervention in a conflict situation with the purpose of resolving it, however, according to the Department of Education (DoE, 2000), mediation in learning entails teachers' competence to: address the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning; construct learning environments that

are appropriately contextualised and inspirational, communicate effectively, showing recognition of, and respect for differences in others. Basically, in this sense of 'mediation' the teacher serves as an interface between the material to be learned (curriculum) and the learners, transferring the information in such a way that it can be absorbed and used by the learners. Mediation does, however, require that teachers demonstrate a sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context in order to capacitate them to serve as this interface (DoE, 2000: 49). This understanding of the concept of mediation indicates a distinct need for teachers to clearly comprehend their role as teachers with regard to the learners, subject content and the learning environment, since together, the four elements form the process of mediated learning during classroom interactions. This study intends to explore the views on a mediating role for the effective teaching and learning of Life Orientation and the theories discussed above provide a solid basis for the exploration and understanding of the available views.

According to McNeil (1990: 314), "Mediation refers to the interpretative process by which people make sense of or create meaning from experience. Mediation can also mean an intervening and linking process between messages on the one hand and meaning and actions on the other". McNeil's theory relates very well to a classroom situation, where mediated teaching and learning happen, since teaching and learning is basically about sending and receiving information in the form of messages. It is crucial that the information that is sent to the learners in the form of the subject content is received and interpreted correctly in order for them to acquire information and develop understanding through proper mediation processes.

Cornbleth (1990) classifies mediation into organisational mediation and structural mediation when discussing teaching and learning. Organisational mediation calls upon teachers to expose learners to the realities that exist in society as part of the human experience (thus requiring teachers to consider the demographics of learners from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, with different socio-cultural values). Structural mediation, on the other hand encompasses the structuring of the teaching and learning *milieu* with regard to, for example, learners' grouping, selection of textbooks and other teaching and learning material, and teaching strategies and



learning styles. Learners' demographics form part of the learning environment which is an integral part of the mediation processes that have the bearing on the classroom interactions between teachers and learners for an effective teaching and learning to ensue.

Olivier (1997) asserts that an interactive and social constructivist approach in organisational and structural mediation is essential. In this regard, the following learning principles are recommended by the proponents of curriculum transformation in South Africa: self-learning, self-development, cross-curricular thinking, social interrelationships and a focus on the development of higher-order thinking skills, communication and decision-making, since these learning principles underpin learner-centred mediation in classrooms.

### **2.2.2 BACKGROUND TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

It is necessary to understand the history of the education system in South Africa in order to appreciate the path travelled by education and the progress made. This enables comprehension of how an even greater need for mediation is engendered in this country in education than elsewhere.

Since South Africa was driven to change the education system which had existed under Apartheid and the political dispensation prior to democracy in 1994, in 1996, the new democratic government began a national process to transform the country's curriculum, aims and methodology. There was a surge to make public and implement, even partially a new curriculum before the 1999 elections to show evidence of practical attempts to fulfil political promises (Sieborger, 1998).

The new curriculum kicked off in 1998 with its Curriculum 2005 launch. For this educational programme, the Department of Education (DoE, 1998, 2000) affirmed that outcomes-based education, operating in South African schools must have, as its focal points: interaction between learners and the subject content and environment or real-life experiences, preparation for the desired learning outcome, (mastery of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) performance in order to demonstrate the outcome, concluding the outcome while interacting and assessing knowledge, skills processes, progression and the final outcome. In supporting learner-centred learning principles

and styles, Killen (2009) believed that the introduction and implementation of outcomes-based education requires a shift from the view of teaching and learning that underpinned content-led curriculum. It is through wisdom derived from theory that effective teaching and learning can be practiced and be made possible.

Outcomes-based education formed the basis of educational transformation in South Africa. The Curriculum 2005 system failed in many ways due to a number of reasons which included lack of adequate teacher training, a huge mind-shift from one style of teaching and learning to another, a failure of teachers to buy-in fully to the system and many more. Nevertheless, from this system of education, a number of developments came into existence with the aim of improving the education system of South Africa. Following the failure of Curriculum 2005, a Revised National Curriculum Statement for the GET phase was completed in 2002 and implemented in 2004. The RNCS for the FET phase was implemented in 2006. In 2009, there was a call to improve on the implementation of the NCS and the Dada Report of 2009 was released bringing with it, considerable criticism of the RNCS plus recommendations for a further five-year plan calling for a national policy in plain language with minimal design features and administrative paperwork which was to be ready for implementation in 2011 (Burroughs, 2014; Dean, n.d.). At one stage there was a system that was called the New Revised Curriculum Statement which was later changed to the Revised Curriculum Statement. In 2012, this system was revised again with the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which formed part of the National Curriculum Statement. This is the education system currently in use in South Africa. These changes in the education system of South Africa were an attempt to address the inequalities and challenges that faced the previous systems. South Africa, as a very diverse country, needed an education system that could address the challenges of learners' academic development and knowledge acquisition.

The Department of Education, (DoE, 1998) originally held the view that the difference between content-driven and outcomes-based curriculum was that, in the former, the teaching and learning objectives emanated from the prescribed content and that these objectives outlined what learners should know and be able to demonstrate within the subject, whereas outcomes-driven learning focused inherently on the end result of the process of learning, the learning process itself, and the assessment of the attained

results or output. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12, released as the new policy by the South African Department of Basic Education in January 2012 (of which Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement - CAPS is part) gives expression to knowledge, skills and values worth learning in South African schools. This curriculum aims at ensuring that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in a local context, while remaining sensitive to global imperatives. The South African curriculum serves the purpose of equipping learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical or intellectual ability, with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society, as citizens of a free country; serves the purpose of providing access to higher education; serves the purpose of facilitating the transition of learners from educational institutions to the workplace and also serves to provide employers with an adequate profile of learners' competences. The South African Curriculum is based on the principles of social transformation; ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sectors of the population. It is also based on the principles of active and critical learning; encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths. Lastly the South African Curriculum aims to produce learners who can identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; produce learners who are able to organise and manage themselves, and their activities, responsibly and effectively, and who can collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information (DoE, 2011).

Killen (2009) agrees that mediation in an outcomes-based curriculum exposes learners to real-life experiences because learning contexts are generated from learners' real worlds of experiences, and, due to this link between learning and life, learners become lifelong learners. This suggests that the methods, knowledge and procedures acquired in the process of learning in school are transferable to the world outside the classroom thus promoting the need for mediation, rather than merely education. Olivier (1997) added that learning which is able to blend content knowledge, skills, attitudes and values with real life issues and factors constitutes authentic learning, and that teaching and learning should strive towards this end.

These theories support the type of quality teaching and learning that should be involved in the mediated teaching of the subject Life Orientation in FET schools. As indicated earlier, the mediating learning processes have four vital and crucial components i.e. the teacher as learner and as a facilitator and provider of knowledge; a learner who is an active participant in his/her learning of new information; subject content that is intended to develop and improve the understanding of the learner and the learning environment that should always be conducive and allow effective teaching and learning to happen in a smooth and free flowing manner. Mediated learning that is based on the four components of the mediated teaching and learning processes will enhance and promote quality teaching and learning which will also assist to enhance the recognition and value of the subject

## **2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Even though the learner is the main focus of the teaching and learning process, the teacher plays a significant role in the transfer of information and knowledge to the learner and is responsible for how the learner receives this information. It is, perhaps, thus essential to consider the impact of the teacher on the learning process, and to analyse what constitutes effective teaching before delving further into how learning can best be achieved. In terms of the educational theories discussed above, the teacher is considered to be the centre of the mediating learning processes since s/he is expected to facilitate. This makes the processes of teaching and learning possible and beneficial, most importantly, to the learners who are expected to grow with information and knowledge.

### **2.3.1 WHY MEDIATION IS NEEDED FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING TO OCCUR**

#### **2.3.1.1 The impact of teaching on African and South African children**

According to Mwamwenda (2004), the question of how to be an effective teacher is an extremely important one in view of the significant role that education plays in the future and destiny of African and South African children. Without quality education, the chances of African and South African children succeeding in their schooling are slim. As a result, their employment prospects are poor, which, in turn, affects their lifestyle and overall standard of living. Furthermore, Mwamwenda (2004) argues that the number of African and South African children who complete their education at any

given level is small compared to the overwhelming number of children who are not successful. It can, therefore, be concluded that education has tended to be elitist in the sense that it has benefitted only a small percentage of Africans and South Africans. This should not be allowed to continue; therefore, as far as possible, quality education needs to be made available to all African and South African children. One way to ensure this is to see to it that teachers are effective in their work. If teachers are passionate, enthusiastic and change-driven in their efforts of developing and supporting the learners in the processes of teaching and learning, the numbers of learners who benefit from the education system will increase. This implies that teachers cannot simply impart information, because the role they play is so important, they need to employ effective teaching methods.

### **2.3.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVE TEACHING?**

Rothstein (1990:13) defines effective teaching as the extent to which teaching leads to an increase in learning on the part of a learner. Such teaching and learning is also known as quality teaching. In order for a teacher to effectively mediate knowledge s/he must be able to design lessons, employ appropriate teaching strategies and implement management techniques to maximise the learning opportunities of their learners. The aim of the country's education system is that learners should be able to learn more from their teachers to develop their knowledge and understanding to be competent and be able to overcome life challenges and to be successful in their lives in future. The researcher is made to believe that effective teaching and learning happen when a change in the culture of teaching and learning is achieved. This will make the lives of the learners move in the right direction.

### **2.3.3 HOW MEDIATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING**

#### **2.3.3.1 The element of time**

If the transfer of knowledge and skills is to be mediated, then more thought has to be employed to how this transfer will take place. It is this very engagement of the mind actively towards a focused and planned transfer which constitutes the act of mediation in education. For instance, Eggen and Kauchak (1992), cited in Mwamwenda (2004), point out that time is a crucial issue in effective teaching and can be divided into four types: allocated, instructional, engaged and academic time. Allocated time is the time set aside for each topic that must be covered. The more time spent on a topic, the

more likely it is that learning will be realised. While the amount of time is important in influencing learning, the pace at which learning is acquired may be just as important. Time is always a crucial factor in the processes of mediated teaching and learning.

Eggen and Kauchak (1992) also assert that it is relevant to point out that the time allocated to a given topic should be based on the level of difficulty of the topic. While some topics are relatively simple, others are more complex for learners to comprehend. Practical teaching experience aids teachers in knowing which subjects are more difficult and thus require more time to be spent on teaching them. Eggen and Kauchak (1992) add that this may have a bearing on covering the syllabus, which influences teaching in most African and South African schools, as a result of external examinations. While the importance of such examinations should not be underrated, there is a need for African teachers to reassess the way topics are taught for various subjects, particularly, whether each topic is allocated sufficient time to allow learning to take place, or whether the aim is simply to cover the syllabus before scheduled examination. If the latter is the case, then Eggen and Kauchak (1992) believe such teaching may be regarded as unproductive, since it is likely to lead to a lack of understanding and rote learning on the part of the learners. However, if the former is the case, then teachers should have no doubt that they are being effective in their teaching and that their learners will benefit from their instruction. Here mediation is necessary to temper the effects of a scheduled examination. Consequently, learners should be able to apply knowledge learned to real-life situations, as well as succeeding in their tests and examinations, irrespective of whether these are internal or external.

Instructional time is defined by Eggen and Kauchak (1992) as the actual time that the teacher spends on the teaching planned for that period. This is the time remaining after the teacher has carried out all the classroom managerial and administrative duties. This is often referred to as 'contact' time. In view of this, these authors (1992) believe that it is important for African teachers to spend as little time as possible on managerial and administrative tasks, so that maximum time can be spent on teaching, which will facilitate more learning taking place.

Eggen and Kauchak (1992) describe engaged time as the amount of time for which learners actually pay attention while teaching is taking place, or are engaged in

participating in other ways in what is being taught. Learners who spend more engaged time in instruction, learn more than those who participate to a lesser degree. Furthermore, Eggen and Kauchak (1992) argue that it is important for teachers to ensure that learners pay adequate attention and involve themselves in one way or another in what is being taught, for example, by answering questions or conducting experiments. There are thus multiple responsibilities which rest with teachers concerning the way in which they carry out their actual teaching. Teaching thus required several forms of mediation before it can be said to be successful.

The final time-category relates to academic learning time which is classified as the extent to which learners experience success in their work. Failure is both disappointing and frustrating and can lead to despair on the part of many learners. To combat this, the work allocated to learners should be challenging and should ensure that they will experience the satisfaction and joy of success if they work hard and diligently. Success will serve as a motivation to learners to work hard during the course of the year, and, indeed, throughout their academic careers (Woolfolk, 1993).

#### **2.3.3.2 Essential teaching skills**

In order to mediate the transmission of knowledge and skills from the teacher to the learner, certain skill sets are required of the teacher (Mwamwenda, 2004). Properly allocating and managing time is not the only aspect which requires attention.

Among the many other issues which Mwamwenda (2004) discusses which either contribute to, or obstruct effective teaching, teachers' expression and use of terminology and language is also important to ensure that what is conveyed to learners, especially to second language learners, is clear and comprehensible. Communication is advanced as an essential factor which can promote effective teaching. It is thus clear that this is a further skill by which knowledge is mediated so that it reaches learners in a comprehensible manner.

Mwamwenda (2004:111) adds that teachers need to communicate with their learners every step of the way which includes announcing transitions to new themes or sub-themes, summarising, re-explaining, asking and inviting questions, and interacting with the learners to determine how much of what has been taught has been absorbed.

As an aid to attracting and maintaining learners' interest, Mwamwenda (2004:157) expounds the notion of three categories of focus which should be covered by teachers, namely introductory, sensory and academic focus which direct the way in which learners' attention is seized and retained.

There are, however, different approaches and strategies which are utilised in the education system to bring about the desired form of mediation between the teacher, the learner and the information being filtered.

#### **2.3.4 OPPOSING VIEWS OF THE ROLE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN MEDIATION**

The main function of the mediation process has been proven to be the uplifting of the learner. Therefore, it is imperative that the strategies and approaches which target mediation in the classroom, focus mainly on the benefit of the learner, i.e. they are learner-centred, as it is mainly the learners who are disadvantaged or aided by the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the functional strategies of the education system.

The literature review conducted for this study revealed oppositional viewpoints in terms of reaching a unitary understanding of the mediation process in classrooms. Scholars, including Jansen, (1997) Christie, (1999) Badat (1995) and Chisholm, (2000) have expressed concern regarding the weak performance of learners in mastering content knowledge and their flagging competence levels in terms of the demonstration of skills, attitudes and values. Graven (2001) similarly asserts that the outcomes-driven curriculum resulted in the teaching and learning of subject discipline content knowledge degenerating to 'random activities'. No criticism is intended to be levelled at the goals of the designers of outcomes-based education for curriculum transformation in South Africa, however, an obstacle in the path of the desired result continues to be caused by the fact that the *mediation process* is necessary, if curriculum changes are to be achieved in classrooms. Carr (1995), Grundy (1991) and Fullan (2007) urge that curriculum changes are vital, as these, together with innovations prompt fresh responses from and innovative approaches by teachers with regard to subject-specific pedagogy. This is even more critical in the case of Life Orientation as a subject.



### **2.3.5 FOCUS ON LIFE ORIENTATION**

The abovementioned scholars voice the concern that the teaching and learning process of the subject of Life Orientation is not guided by a standard curriculum because of the constantly changing aspects of life and, therefore that learners end up experiencing a series of random activities in the classroom. 'Random activities' constitute the different life experiences which are shared during the classroom integrated mediation process.

According to Rooth (2005), the methods for Life Orientation are not merely information-giving, but are practical, active and participatory methods which are experiential. Skills practice is core to the development of the competencies associated with Life Orientation's outcomes and assessment standards.

The literature review confirmed that the outcomes-based principles which were employed in teaching and learning in the South African schooling system are commensurate with the ideals of the Critical Praxis paradigm. Education authorities in South Africa support and encourage learner-centred approaches such as problem-solving, inquiry-based and cooperative learning and group work (DoE, 2005). This thus suggests that the mediation of a multi-disciplinary subject such as Life Orientation needs to engage a learner-centred teaching and learning style in order to foster in learners the desired values and attitudes with regard to democracy and citizenship.

Life Orientation's mediation should utilise an approach which leads to modelling the integration of content and pedagogy in order to empower learners to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills, attitudes and values relating to personal growth, social development, health and hygiene, decision-making and the ability to make responsible choices in various life contexts (DoE, 1998, 2002, 2005).

### **2.3.6 HOW SOCIETY AFFECTS TEACHING AND LEARNING**

As Säljö (2009), has put it, a major interest from a sociocultural perspective is how human skills are appropriated by individuals. This implies that children's intellectual achievements and failures are not just dependent upon their own efforts or discoveries, but on the product of culturally-situated forms of social interaction. Knowledge is not just an individual possession, but is also the creation and shared

property of members of communities who use 'cultural tools', (including spoken and written language) relationships and institutions (such as schools) for that purpose.

Student-activating teaching methods are intended to challenge students to acts of knowledge construction, rather than knowledge acquisition, and, consequently, deepen student learning beyond the levels of reproduction and rote-learning (Struyven et al., 2006).

## **2.4 METHODS OF LEARNING**

According to meaningful learning theory, learning occurs through retention of meaningful learning materials. Rote learning does not make learning meaningful according to this theory. Rote learning is the kind of learning where the subject learned is learned without making a connection through it to other subjects and so it is forgotten rapidly. Meaningful learning, on the other hand, is the kind of learning where the subject is learned meaningfully, in an integrated way, through incorporating the new subject or concept into the relevant subjects and concepts and through establishing connections between the new subject or concepts and the existing information of the learners. Therefore, rote learning is forgotten rapidly, whereas meaningful learning is not (Babadogan & Unal, 2011). This is a further indication that learning is not just an emission of knowledge but that mediation is required to make it successful.

Pollard and Triggs (1997) define learning as a highly complex aspect of human capacity which, even then, was not fully understood. The most important cornerstone of the teaching process is the learning situation. Therefore, learning situations should be analysed in the most detailed way. Learning situations are structured on the basis of three fundamental elements: "sense organs of students", "situations stimulating senses of students" and "behaviours stimulating senses of students" (Alkan, 1977: 103).

There are eight instructional steps which guide teachers to organise teaching situations by considering the basic components of the information processing theory: attention/alertness, inform students of the objectives (expectancy), retrieval to working memory, selective perception, encoding into long-term memory, responding, feedback and recall (cueing retrieval) (Babadogan, 1996: 74; Erden and Akman, 1995: 180).

In considering the theories and views of the abovementioned scholars, it becomes clear that the strategy by means of which learners are taught (mediation) plays a significant role in how successfully they receive and keep the knowledge and information which is transferred to them.

#### **2.4.1 TYPES OF LEARNING SITUATIONS**

The setting in which learning occurs is just as vital to consider when planning how learning can be mediated. According to Feuerstein (1991: 21), the child is exposed to two types of learning situations. The situation of direct learning includes an unmediated interaction between learning material and the child's mind. If the child's mind is ready to accept this material it will benefit from it. If, however, the child does not know how to accept the material, cannot identify its meaning, or does not know how to respond, the second type of learning, the mediated one, becomes crucially important. Feuerstein (1991: 21) further clarifies that the mediated learning experience can be defined as a quality of interaction between child and environment, which depends on the activity of an initiated and intentioned adult who interposes him/herself between the child and the world. In the process of such mediation the adult selects and frames stimuli for the child, creates artificial schedules and sequences of stimuli, removes certain stimuli and makes other stimuli more conspicuous. Furthermore, Feuerstein (1991) explains that mediated learning experiences are a rather important condition for the development of the very unique human conditions of modifiability, or the capacity to benefit from exposure to stimuli in a more generalised way than is usually the case.

According to Christiaans (2006), irrespective of what the situation is, it seems that L.O. is taught by a broad spectrum of teachers who are not specialists in this field. Oon Seng (2003), argues that, since Feuerstein was more concerned with the learning potential and untapped capacity, he turned the need to assess into a learning opportunity for the students, so that every assessment became a learning experience, interwoven with a diagnostic approach and an intervention or remediation. In this way, he made the assessment process dynamic and truly developmental.

Feuerstein (1990), argues that a person's capacity to learn is not solely determined by his or her genetic endowment. Cognition can be improved or modified irrespective of

a person's age and stage of development. In Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) theory, a child (or even adolescent) who has cognitive deficiencies has every chance of positive change and development through mediation.

The concept of modifiability is of prime importance in Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM). This refers not merely to remediation of specific behaviours, but to changes of a structural nature (that is, internal changes in cognition rather than external behaviour). It is about changes that are durable, substantial and meaningful to the individual. The changes impact on the individual holistically, on dispositional traits, thinking ability and the general level of competence (Feuerstein, 1990).

Oon Seng (2003) links Feuerstein's research to mediation as a tool in learning by stating that, embedded in Feuerstein's theory of structural cognitive modifiability, is the theory of mediated learning experience (MLE). Simply put, this posits that the quality of interaction between the individual and the environment, via an intentional human being, (the teacher) plays a pivotal role in the cognitive development of the individual.

According to Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991), the lack of MLE is often responsible for an individual's deficiencies in learning tools, a positive disposition and a propensity to learn. Without mediation, a learner has a limited opportunity to benefit from either formal or informal learning.

Oon Seng (2003) stresses that Feuerstein's theory points to the importance of human mediation as the key to the psychological development of children in social interactions as well as pedagogy. Mediation is underpinned by a belief in the modifiability of the child and a holistic approach. Through the use of the Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) model, teachers may be helped to re-examine their roles. MLE helps empower roles, such as being (i) facilitators of the learning of heuristics, (ii) mediators of knowledge sources, (helping learners learn to access information sources (iii) mediators of lifelong learning (helping learners develop dispositions and mind-sets for learning to learn) and (iv) designers of the learning environment.

According to McLaughlin and Talbert (1993), success for all students depends ultimately on what teachers do in the classroom, on teachers' abilities and willingness

to provide the kinds of educational environments necessary to meet the country's education goals.

Furthermore, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993), explain that the core of the challenge and the opportunity for meeting the nation's education goals lies at the core of the education system; the classroom interactions among teacher, students and content; the stuff of teaching and learning. The extent to which systemic reform succeeds in bringing coherence to the education system and fostering success for all students, depends on the extent to which its ideas, strategies and perspectives become part of this stuff of the classroom educational environment.

The changes in practice, content, and pedagogy assumed by the national education goals are extremely complex and difficult to carry out, or even to understand. At its core, the problem of systemic reform is fundamentally a problem of teachers learning how to translate enhanced curricula and higher standards into teaching and learning for all of their students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

McLaughlin and Talbert (1993), confirm that teachers agree that students are the context that matters most to what they do in the classroom, and that today's students differ in many ways from students of the past and the not so-distant past. Contemporary students bring different cultures and languages to school; different attitudes and support to the classroom and learning. They, themselves, are required to navigate difficult and competing pressures of family, peers and community at the same time as they are expected to function as students.

McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) assert that teachers who are successful in engaging contemporary students and fostering their success with challenging academic content, have generally moved from traditional, teacher-controlled pedagogy to work interactively with students, encouraging an active student role. Their students wrestle with problems and puzzles of subject matter and achieve deeper understandings than is possible with traditional modes of instruction. These teachers, knowingly or not, embrace the vision of practice often called "teaching for understanding", which promises not only to engage non-traditional students, but to improve learning outcomes for all students.

However, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) also point out that, some teachers who attempted such changes in practice, were found to be unable to sustain them and became frustrated and discouraged. This is because learning how to teach for student understanding goes against the grain of traditional classroom practice and so entails radical change and risks obstruction. Those teachers who made effective adaptations to today's students had one thing in common; each belonged to an active professional community which encouraged and enabled them to transform their teaching. In this vein, Smith (2011) states that learning is a permanent change in behaviour or thinking, arising as a consequence of an experience or insight. Smith (2011) adds that learning sometimes comes from within and sometimes, has to come from outside.

McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) highlight that teachers define standards for their classroom practice through interactions with other teachers and administrators. According to Rowe, (2003) the quality of teaching and learning provision is by far the most salient influence on students' cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes of schooling, regardless of their gender or backgrounds.

Rowe (2003) asserts that the provision of schooling is one of the most massive and ubiquitous undertakings of the modern state. Schools account for a substantial proportion of public and private expenditure and are universally regarded as vital instruments of social and economic policy aimed at promoting individual fulfilment, social progress and national prosperity. Moreover, since schooling generates a substantial quantity of paid employment for teachers and administrators, it is not surprising that there has long been an interest in knowing how effective the provision of school education is and how it can be improved.

Van Deventer (2009) explains that it should also be remembered that lifestyle changes prevalent in modern society require paradigm shifts in attitudes, through processes and approaches to bring about an awareness of the quality of life and total wellness. This does not occur overnight. Changes in lifestyle patterns do not involve fairies and magic wands, but hard, persistent work from dedicated teachers in experiential learning environments that are qualified to do the job. Higher Education Institutions have a major role to play in this regard by producing quality teachers, motivated to provide such a service to South African schools.

Oliver and Omari (1999) argue that today, the forms of activity that are frequently suggested as necessary and sufficient conditions for effective learning, are those with high degrees of interactivity and engagement, which provide a motivational environment based on a well-structured knowledge base.

Furthermore, Oliver and Omari (1999) explain that these activities and conditions incorporate tasks such as the solution of real world problems, students working in collaborative and cooperative teams, problem negotiation and solving, and free and open communication among learners and with their teacher. Such activities are seen as supporting the development of higher order thinking and learning and, at the same time, developing students' learning strategies.

In the process of adopting technologies, educators have often not looked to fully exploit their potential, and most learning technologies in the past have been directed towards the presentation of content, rather than the answering of questions or the opportunity for discussion and reflection (Oliver & Omari, 1999).

Laurillard (1993) describes teaching as mediating learning, and suggests the importance of a conversational framework in media-supported learning which provides for discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflective forms of communication in academic dialogues. Fry and Coe (1980) assert that, when students are able to participate in active learning activities, they find the learning more pleasurable and satisfying than non-participative events.

According to Elen and Clarebout, (1998) one strategy that holds considerable potential for supporting more open forms of teaching and learning and involves collaborative learning activities is problem-based learning. Problem-based learning involves learning through goal-directed activity situated in circumstances which are authentic in terms of the intended application of the learnt knowledge.

#### **2.4.2 THE LIFE ORIENTATION LEARNING AREA**

Pillay (2012), asserts that Life Orientation can be described as a learning area within the educational context that promotes the holistic development of a child. One may argue that Life Orientation teachers require specific knowledge, skills, values and

attitudes if they are to make positive contributions to their schools. As such, my point of departure is that L.O. teachers should be keystone teachers in schools (Pillay, 2012). According to Pillay (2012), many social issues in the country warrant the need for highly trained and specialised Life Orientation teachers, especially when they are expected to contribute to the holistic development of learners. Furthermore, Pillay (2012) argues that it is not just the Life Orientation learning area that is needed to make a difference within schools, but that the skills and characteristics of L.O. teachers are also crucial.

Berns (2007: 256) notes that the best teachers are interesting, competent, caring, encouraging and flexible, yet have demanding standards. According to Pillay, (2012) subject knowledge and experience are important factors to consider with regard to L.O. teachers, but these could become problem areas if they are not trained to teach L.O. Pillay (2012) argues that Life Orientation teachers need to have a critical understanding of educational, social and cultural contexts if they are to be keystone teachers in their schools.

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PROGRESS IN THE EVOLUTION OF THEORIES OF LEARNING**

The modern psychological study of learning can be dated from the work of Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909), whose well-known study of memory was published in 1885. Other early studies of learning were by Edward L. Thorndike (1874–1949), whose dissertation on problem-solving was published in 1898 and Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936), whose research on classical conditioning was begun in 1899 but was first published in English in 1927. These theories focused on explaining the behaviour of individuals and became known as behavioural theories. These theories used a stimulus-response framework to explain learning and dominated psychology and education for over half a century. Behavioural theories focus on environmental factors such as reinforcement, feedback and practice, and they conceptualise learning as something that occurs from the outside in.

Behavioural theories provide very good explanations only for certain kinds of learning. Operant conditioning, for example, is better than other theories at explaining the rote



acquisition of information, the learning of physical and mental skills and the development of behaviours conducive to a productive classroom (i.e., classroom management). In these situations, the focus is on performing behavioural tasks rather than developing a learner's cognitive structure or understanding. Although classical conditioning is frequently dismissed as irrelevant to human learning, (Pavlov's initial research paradigm involved dogs salivating) this type of learning provides, by far, the best explanation of how and why people, including students, respond emotionally to a wide variety of stimuli and situations. The many types of emotional reactions acquired through classical conditioning include: anger toward or hatred of a particular person or group, phobias in regard to a particular subject area or to school itself and infatuation with another person. However classical conditioning fails to explain how individuals come to understand complex ideas and phenomena.

In 1963, Bandura and Walters published the first formal statement of social-learning theory in their book, *Social Learning and Personality Development*. Social-learning theory has clear roots in behavioural theory but differs from these theories in significant ways according to Zimmerman and Schunk (2001). During the 1980s, this theory became known as social-cognitive theory. Although essentially the same theory, the new name more accurately reflects the cognitive features of the theory and aids in differentiating it from behavioural theories of learning.

It is further discussed among the theories of learning that there are various factors which influence learning, negatively or positively. The behaviours of teachers and learners, as well as the environment comprise some of these factors. All these factors need to be incorporated in the mediation process in order for teaching and learning to prove effective.

From the 1970s and 1980s onwards, behavioural theories gave way to cognitive theories that focused on mental activities and the understanding of complex material. An information-processing metaphor replaced the stimulus-response framework of behavioural theories. These theories emphasised that learning occurred from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. During the mid-1980s the study of self-regulated learning began to emerge (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001).

These cognitive theories began to be challenged, especially during the later 1980s and the 1990s, by theories which emphasised the importance of social interactions and the sociocultural context of learning. The work of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, (1896–1934) (see Section 2.7) first became available in North America, and, along with the work of anthropologists such as Jean Lave, began to have a major influence on theories of learning. Individuals were seen as initially participating in peripheral activities of a group (known as legitimate peripheral participation) before becoming fully integrated into group activities. Apprenticeship became a metaphor for the way people learn in natural settings. The notion that people learn by observing others, first articulated in social-cognitive theory, was expanded on in a new context.

Traditionally, learning has been viewed as something that occurs within an individual. Individuals may participate and learn in groups, but it is the individual person who learns. With few exceptions, the educational systems in Europe and North America have adopted this perspective, if not entirely with regard to instructional practices, certainly in the evaluation of student performance and the assignment of grades. Many psychologists and educators currently consider learning to be a phenomenon that is distributed among several individuals and/or environmental affordances (such as calculators, computers, and textbooks) or situated (existing or occurring) within a “community of practice” (or community of learners). Both a social and a material dimension are involved in this distribution (Pea, 1993). For example, a student may use a calculator to help learn how to solve a three-digit multiplication problem (the material dimension) and/or work with another student to understand the proper procedures to follow (the social dimension). In either case, the student is not learning totally on his or her own, but is taking advantage of resources (affordances) available in the environment. If the student is not able to solve a subsequent problem without the aid of the calculator or another student, then it is possible to see the distributed nature of learning. In such situations, participation or activity, rather than acquisition, becomes the defining metaphor (Greeno, 2006).

As time changed, the main focus with regard to the learning process also changed and evolved. Behavioural factors became less important to the process of learning, and it was the way in which the information was processed by both teachers and

learners that became a priority. Social circumstances also played a role in the evolution of the learning process.

The evolution from the behavioural to the social then distributed and finally to situated theories of learning was accompanied by new concepts of knowledge. Traditional theories conceive of knowledge as a commodity capable of being transmitted, more or less intact, from one individual to another. According to these theories, knowledge is something an individual acquires; when a student successfully learns it, he or she can reproduce the knowledge in its original form. In contrast, more recent theories conceive knowledge as something each learner constructs or creates afresh, rather than something that is assimilated in its pre-existing form. According to current theories, truly “objective” knowledge does not exist, although something similar exists in the form of collective knowledge within a particular culture or discipline. Knowledge resides in the community of learners (individuals) that creates it, and is distributed among members of the community and the various environmental affordances available to the group. Because each person constructs his or her own understandings, the knowledge each acquires is unique. Communities and cultures are composed of individuals with common understandings, and these groups provide opportunities for new members (e.g., children) to construct a similar knowledge of the world through schools and/or a variety of informal activities.

The 1990s were dubbed “The Decade of the Brain”, and huge advances were made in neuroscience, explaining how the brain relates to human behaviour and learning. The study of how the brain relates to learning is still in its infancy. An understanding of how the neurophysiology of the brain affects learning and cognition will add greatly to our understanding of human learning and will have a great influence on future theories of learning. Nevertheless, a psychological component to these theories will remain critical for learning in educational settings. Education as it is presently understood is based on psychological processes and interactions capable of being influenced by instruction, and it seems likely that psychological interventions will continue to be important in the foreseeable future (Shuell, 2013). The changes in the education system channelled a greater focus on the functioning of the brain and how it connects human behaviour to learning. Psychology became the main study with

regard to associating the human brain with behaviour and learning. Learning revisited how the brain receives information.

## **2.6 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF VYGOTSKY**

Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, died at the age of 37 in 1934, but is as influential as any living educational psychologist. In '*Thought and Language*' and '*Mind in Society*', along with several other texts, he presents a psychology rooted in Marxist social theory and dialectical materialism. Development is the result of two phenomena and their interaction, the 'natural' and the 'social', a sort of early nature and nurture theory. Vygotsky offers several methods or approaches to teaching and learning which all prescribe a form of mediation.

### **2.6.1 THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)**

Vygotsky prescribes a method of instruction that keeps the learner in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), an idea that was neither original to him, nor even fully developed in his work. The ZPD is the difference between what the learner knows and what the learner is capable of knowing or doing with mediated assistance. To progress, one must interact with peers who are ahead of the game through social interaction, a dialectical process between learner and peer (UTAS, 2014). Bruner thought the concept was contradictory, in that you don't know what you don't yet know. And if it simply means not pushing learners too far through complexity or cognitive overload, then the observation, or concept, seems rather obvious. One could even conclude that Vygotsky's conclusion about mediation through teaching is false. Teaching, or peer mediation, is not a necessary condition for learning. A great deal is made of social performance being ahead of individual performance in the ZPD, but there is no real evidence that this is the case. Bruner, as stated, was to point out the weakness of this idea and replace it with the much more practical and useful concept of 'scaffolding'.

### **2.6.2 SCAFFOLDING AND MEDIATION**

Under a discussion of scaffolding and mediation, one becomes aware that the learning process not only takes place within the classroom and between the teacher and the learner. It is thus not something that only the teacher can impose on the learner; the

learners' social environment also plays its part in what and how the learners are educated, especially in the subject of Life Orientation. The members of the learners' families and society may have certain influences on learning through their behaviour, the roles that they play in the learners' lives, their beliefs, morals, etc.

The provision for assisted performance is known as scaffolding. Common elements of scaffolding include (UTAS, 2014):

- task definition;
- direct or indirect instruction;
- specification and sequencing of activities;
- provision of materials, equipment and facilities; and
- other environmental contributions.

Scaffolding is basically a support mechanism which may include assistance with planning, organising, doing and/or reflecting on the specific task. Such assistance is best made available in a timely manner matched to the learning needs and interests of the learner.

Mediation draws on the scaffolding of action and experience to further enhance learning by enhancing purpose, meaning, experience and engagement and by supporting insightful questioning of existing knowledge, action and experience.

#### **2.6.2.1 The value of scaffolding**

Effective scaffolding offers two major contributions:

- makes it easier for the learner to undertake a task successfully and thus;
- expands the possible learning activities and experiences;
- increases the rate at which learning may be achieved; and
- extends what it is possible for a learner to perform and thus expands the ZPD since the provision of powerful tools and well-formed instructions enable higher order problems to be solved more rapidly.

Scaffolding comprises the breaking down of information by educators to help the learners to understand and process the relevant information. The reduction of

information can include diagrams, worksheets, etc. Traditionally, scaffolding was provided by a teacher directly to a learner in real time. Scaffolding can also be provided indirectly as in the tutorial materials such as worksheets (UTAS, 2014).

### **2.6.3 MEDIATION, SCAFFOLDING AND THEORY**

Mediation of the learning experience is a form of intervention (in the form of auxiliary stimulus) by focusing on experience during the processes of thinking and learning (metacognition) and has, as its aims, the facilitation of effective learning behaviour through:

- expansion of the learner's zone of proximal development and
- providing the learner with insights into him/herself as a learner
- providing the learner with insights into the effectiveness of the learner's present capabilities, processes and strategies
- enhancing the transference of learning into new situations which the learner will encounter
- increasing the capacity of the learner to scaffold and mediate their own learning in future, and thus, is largely about (UTAS, 2014).

Mediation overlaps and complements scaffolding in that Vygotsky's theory of **scaffolding** describes the assistance that a teacher gives a student to help him/her safely take risks and reach heights than would not be possible by the student's efforts alone. Bloom's taxonomy helps identify the target skills and Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding (as explained in Section 2.6.2) helps teachers assist their students in achieving those skills.

#### **Learning how to learn**

Mediation thus reduces the need for scaffolding by increasing the capacity of learners to provide their own scaffolding. The locus of control is moved to the learner who is

able to accept responsibility for more independent learning and problem-solving (UTAS, 2014).

#### **2.6.4 MEDIATION AND PARENTING**

The two examples detailed below explain how parenting can mediate a learning experience:

Two mothers take their sons to the science museum. One of the mothers encourages her son to go on his own. He goes to various work stations, punches buttons, gets lights and noises and then runs to another station where he punches more buttons. He has a good time, exploring on his own.

The other Mother goes with her son to a work station and before they push any keys asks him, *"What do you think will happen if we push this key?"* Then they push it and discuss the result. She encourages him to form hypotheses as to why one result or another is obtained. They try to improve their predictive ability, together. Together they monitor the child's improving capacity to predict.

#### **2.6.5 MEDIATION AS INTERVENTION**

A number of frameworks exist, for example, Greenberg working with Feuerstein has identified eight (8) Tools of Independent Learning and ten (10) Building Blocks of Thinking which provide a framework for focusing and enhancing learning both now and in the future.

##### **2.6.5.1 Eight Tools of Independent Learning**

These tools are needed if a person is going to be an active generator of information and not just a passive recipient. The teacher intervenes in ways that assist the learner to develop and become aware of his/her use and valuing of (UTAS, 2014):

**Inner Meaning:** An awareness of significance to oneself that provides intrinsic motivation for learning and remembering;

**Self-Regulation:** Controlling our approach to learning by using metacognition (thinking about what you are thinking and how you are feeling) to determine factors like readiness and speed;

**Feeling of Competence:** Knowing we have the ability to do a particular thing. Lack of this tool often results in laziness and other avoidance behaviours; presence of it results in feeling confident and motivated to learn;

**Goal Directed Behaviour:** Taking initiative in setting, planning for, and reaching objectives on a consistent basis;

**Self-Development:** Being aware of our uniqueness as an individual and working toward becoming all we can be;

**Sharing Meaning:** Communicating thoughts to ourselves and others in a manner that makes the implicit explicit;

**Acceptance of Challenge:** Being aware of the effects emotions have on novel, complex, and consequently difficult tasks; knowing how to deal with challenge; and

**Awareness of Self-Change:** Knowing that we change throughout life and learning to expect, nurture, and benefit from it (UTAS, 2014).

#### **2.6.5.2 Ten Building-Blocks of Thinking**

These are prerequisite skills upon which thought processes are based. The teacher evaluates the learner's level of competency and use of these building-blocks and seeks to help develop those that are underused (UTAS, 2014).

**Approach to Task:** Beginning, engaging with, and completing an event, including gathering information, thinking about the task and situation, and expressing thoughts, feelings and/or actions related to the task and situation.

**Precision and Accuracy:** Awareness of the need to automatically be exact and correct in understanding and using words and ideas.

**Space and Time Concepts:** Understanding basic ideas about how things relate in size, shape, and distance to one another; (space) and the ability to understand measurement of the period between two or more events and/or changes that occur due to these periods (time).

**Thought Integration:** Pulling together and, using at the same time, multiple sources of information which are a part of a given event.



**Selective Attention:** Choosing relevant pieces of information when considering thoughts or events.

**Making Comparisons:** Awareness of the need to automatically examine the relationship between events and ideas, especially in determining what is the same and what is different.

**Connecting Events:** Awareness of the need to automatically associate one activity with another and use this association in a meaningful manner.

**Working Memory:** Enlarging the thinking space in order to enter bits of information from the mental act, retrieve information stored in the brain and make connections among the information gathered.

**Getting the Main Idea:** Awareness of the need to automatically find a fundamental element that related pieces of information have in common.

**Problem Identification:** Awareness of the need to automatically experience and define within a given situation what is causing a feeling of imbalance (Shuell, 2013).

## **2.7 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

Ultimately the strength of Vygotsky's learning theory stands or falls on his social constructivism, the idea that learning is fundamentally a socially mediated and constructed activity. This is a detailed recasting of the Marxist theory of social consciousness applied to education. Psychology becomes sociology as all psychological phenomena are seen as social constructs. In a sense, he posits a theory of development that is more flexible in terms of how and when child development takes place, and less dependent on internal natural development and more on mediation.

### **2.7.1 MEDIATION AS IDEA AND CONSTRUCT**

Mediation is the cardinal idea in his psychology of education, that knowledge is constructed through mediation, yet it is not entirely clear what mediation entails and what he means by the 'tools' that we use in mediation. In many contexts, it simply

seems like a synonym for discussion between teacher and learner. However, he does focus on being aware of the learners' needs, so that they can 'construct' their own learning experience and changes the focus of teaching towards guidance and facilitation, as learners are not so much 'educated' by teachers, as helped to construct their own learning.

### **2.7.2 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING**

In particular, his focus on the role of language and the way it shapes our learning and thought defined his social psychology and learning theory which posited that behaviour is shaped by the context of a culture and schools reflect that culture. He continued deconstructing social influence right down to the level of interpersonal interactions, claiming that these interpersonal interactions mediate the development of children's higher mental functions, such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, memory, and language.

## **2.8 BACKGROUND OF FEUERSTEIN'S WORK AND THEORY**

The theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) was developed over the period 1950-1963 during which Feuerstein worked with large numbers of orphaned and traumatised youths returning to Israel after the Holocaust (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffnman and Miller, 1980). These young people came from diverse cultures and disadvantaged conditions and had to be received, settled and schooled for citizenship in a new country with a unique and thoroughly modern technological culture (Hobbs, 1980). The methods of psychometric testing used then provided little help for such a mammoth task. As Feuerstein noted, existing practice looked at children's failure to learn and not at what they could learn. Like the summative assessments of today, testing intended to determine the end products of development and learning (i.e. achievement of learning outcomes) and to decide placement (i.e. predicting performance) (Oon Seng, 2003).

Feuerstein turned the need to assess into a learning opportunity for the students, so that every assessment became a learning experience, interwoven with a diagnostic approach and an intervention or remediation. In this way he made the assessment process "dynamic" and truly developmental. Feuerstein thought beyond the traditions

of his time. When others were modifying materials for those with learning disabilities, Feuerstein chose to invest his energies in modifying these learners directly. According to Oon Seng, (2003) when behaviourism was looking at stimuli and output behaviours, Feuerstein chose to focus, not only on the organism, but on the inner structure of cognition. While intervention programmes were often concerned with content, Feuerstein was more concerned with the prerequisites of thinking and ways to help people learn how to learn. Psychoanalysis was concerned with emotions and antecedent factors, but Feuerstein preferred to search other mediating factors that impact on future cognitive development.

At the heart of Feuerstein's Theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM) is the belief in the plasticity and modifiability of cognition. Feuerstein (1990) argued that a person's capacity to learn is not solely determined by one's genetic endowment. Cognition can be improved or "modified irrespective of a person's age and stage of development. In SCM theory, a child (or even adolescent) who has cognitive deficiencies has every chance of positive change and development through mediation. This leans toward an intention that mediation is a tool for pursuing this type of action.

The concept of modifiability is of prime importance in SCM. It refers not merely to remediation of specific behaviours, but to changes of a "structural nature" (that is, internal changes in cognition rather than external behaviour). It is about changes that are durable, substantial and meaningful to the individual. The changes impact on the individual holistically, on dispositional traits, thinking ability and the general level of competence.

## **2.9 MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND LIFE ORIENTATION**

The literature reviewed covers many theories on mediation and learning strategies regarding effective teaching and learning in general, as well as in terms of Life Orientation, which invites researchers to question how to bring about a structural modification of cognition in practice? The question relates to the basis for effective intervention or interaction (mediation). Embedded in the theory of structural cognitive modifiability is the theory of mediated learning experience (MLE). Simply put, this states that the quality of interaction between the individual and the environment via an

intentional human being (the teacher) plays a pivotal role in the cognitive development of the individual.

According to Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991), the lack of MLE is often responsible for an individual's deficiencies in learning tools, positive disposition and propensity to learn. Without mediation, a learner has limited opportunity to benefit from either formal or informal learning. Feuerstein and Feuerstein (1991) identified a list of parameters which characterise MLE. Three of these parameters are seen as indispensable to any mediated interaction: (i) intentionality and reciprocity, (ii) mediation of meaning, and (iii) transcendence. These parameters can be viewed as a repertoire for classroom teachers.

### **2.9.1 INTENTIONALITY AND RECIPROCITY (IR)**

In the MLE interactionist model, the teacher not only has a clear intention of what to teach, but also shares his/her intentions with the learner. Reciprocity refers to the teacher's alertness and awareness of how the learner responds to the intention. The presence of this IR parameter implies that an explicit and purposeful outcome results from the interaction. The IR parameter helps to highlight the fact that the quality of interaction is not accidental or coincidental in nature. Furthermore, it is the "IR" parameter and not just the specific content to be taught, that will determine the effectiveness of a teaching-learning situation.

### **2.9.2 MEDIATION OF MEANING (ME)**

In MLE, the awareness of meaning constitutes a major component of the motivation system. Meaning involves the individual's cultural background, value system, aspirations and needs. According to Feuerstein and Feuerstein, (1991) the effective mediator (teacher) *makes known* to the learner the significance of the interaction, for example, by asking: "Why are we learning this?" and "What is it for"?

### **2.9.3 MEDIATION OF TRANSCENDENCE (T)**

According to Rand (1991), transcendence (**T**) is about going beyond the "here and now" of the learning situation. It refers to the transfer of learning *across contexts and situations*. The effective mediator enables the learner to take a life-wide approach to learning so that the learner actually learns how to learn.

## **2.9.4 THE PARAMETERS OF MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE (MLE)**

The three parameters of mediated learning advocated (IR, ME and T) are necessary and sufficient conditions for a mediated learning experience. Other parameters are often present whenever applicable in effective learning situations. The parameter of mediation: feeling of competence (FC) relates to the need to provide "successful experiences" for students and to remove the unwarranted fear of failure. FC is important, as the fear of making mistakes often results in the student's lack of investment in time and effort to try again. The mediation of reflective practice, (RP) which relates to self-regulatory and metacognitive behaviours, is important for classroom learning situations. RP is important for students given the demands of school life and the challenges confronting their personal and social development.

The mediation of interdependence and sharing (IS) parameter refers to a "sense of belonging" and sharing behaviour. For example, in the case of a small nation like Singapore, the sense of belonging is an important notion, especially in relation to national education and survival (Ministry of Education, 1998). There is a need to encourage students to appreciate that they are an integral part of the community and institution. Furthermore, teamwork, interdependence and knowledge sharing are attributes emphasised in today's world.

The theories of Vygotsky, Social Constructivism and Feuerstein discussed previously talk to the mediated teaching and learning practices that are necessary for effective teaching and learning at schools. These theories point to the required processes of teaching and learning that should be followed by teachers in schools in order to improve and enhance teaching and learning standards. Vygotsky emphasised the level of actual development that the learner has already reached, which is the level at which the learner is capable of solving problems independently. The Social Constructivist theory indicates that the educator should consider the knowledge and experiences students bring to class and that learners construct their knowledge through a process of active enquiry. The Feuerstein theory focuses on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of

knowledge. All these theories can successfully be applied to the teaching of LO in South African schools and all advocate a form of mediation.

## **2.10 THE BASIC CONCEPTS IN SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

One of the fundamental concepts of sociocultural theory, according to Lantolf, (2000) is its claim that the human mind itself is mediated. Lantolf (2000) claims that Vygotsky finds a significant role for what he calls “tools” in humans’ understanding of the world and of themselves. According to Lantolf, Vygotsky advocates that humans do not act directly on the physical world without the intermediary of tools. Whether symbolic or signs, tools, according to Vygotsky, are artefacts created by humans under specific cultural (culture specific) and historical conditions, and as such, they carry with them the characteristics of the culture in question. Such artefacts are used as aids in solving problems that cannot be solved in the same way in their absence. In turn, they also exert an influence on the individuals who use them in that they give rise to previously unknown activities and ways of conceptualising phenomena in the world. Therefore, they are subject to modification as they are passed from one generation to the next, and each generation reworks them in order to meet the needs and aspirations of its individuals and communities.

This transition from social to personal property is, according to Vygotsky, not a mere copy of what has been learnt through interaction, but rather, a transformation into personal values. Vygotsky claims that this transformation is also what happens in schools. Students do not merely copy teachers’ capabilities; rather, they transform what teachers offer them during the processes of appropriation, in which cases mediation of information has taken place. This refusal, according to him, has restricted the role of psychology to a mere explanation of the most elementary connections between a living being and the world. Consciousness, in his view, distinguishes human behaviour from other living beings and links the individual’s knowledge to his/her behaviour. It arises, functions and develops in the process of people’s interaction with reality on the basis of their socio-historical practices. He insists that socially meaningful activity has to be considered as the explanatory principle for understanding consciousness, and he rejects any attempt to decouple consciousness from behaviour.

Williams and Burden (1997:64) claim that sociocultural theory advocates that education should be concerned:

not just with theories of instruction, but with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person.

They claim that the theory asserts that education can never be value-free; it must be underpinned by a set of beliefs about the kind of society that is being constructed and the kinds of explicit and implicit messages that will best convey those beliefs. These beliefs should also be manifest in the ways in which teachers interact with students. While this affirms sociocultural theory, it also illustrates clearly how all learning is much more than a simple relay of information and success depends greatly on the nature and extent of mediation.

Williams and Burden (1997) claim that the theory opposes the idea of the discrete teaching of skills, and argue that meaning should constitute the central aspect of any unit of study. A unit of study should be presented in all its complexity, rather than skills and knowledge being presented in isolation. The theory emphasises the importance of what the learner brings to any learning situation as an active meaning-maker and problem-solver. It acknowledges the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others. According to Ellis (2000), sociocultural theory assumes that learning arises, not through interaction, but in interaction. Learners first succeed in performing a new task with the help of another person and then internalise this task so that they can perform it on their own. In this way, social interaction is advocated to mediate learning. In addition, Ellis (2000), states that this theory goes further to say that interactions that successfully mediate learning are those in which the learners scaffold the new tasks.

## **2.11 LEARNING THEORY - CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH**

Constructivism is an epistemology, or theory, used to explain how people know what they know. The basic idea is that problem-solving is at the heart of learning, thinking,

and development. As people solve problems and discover the consequences of their actions – through reflecting on past and immediate experiences – they construct their own understanding. Learning is thus an active process that requires a change in the learner. This is achieved through the activities the learner engages in, including the consequences of those activities, and through reflection. People only deeply understand what they have constructed.

A constructivist approach to learning and instruction has been proposed as an alternative to the objectivist model, which is implicit in all behaviourist and some cognitive approaches to education. Objectivism sees knowledge as a passive reflection of the external, objective reality. This implies a process of "instruction," ensuring that the learner gets correct information (Ellis, 2000).

### **2.11.1 HISTORY OF CONSTRUCTIVISM**

The psychological roots of constructivism began with the developmental work of Jean Piaget (1896–1980), who developed a theory (the theory of genetic epistemology) that analogised the development of the mind to evolutionary biological development and highlighted the adaptive function of cognition. Piaget proposed four stages in human development: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage. For Piaget, the development of human intellect proceeds through adaptation and organisation. Adaptation is a process of assimilation and accommodation, where external events are assimilated into existing understanding, but unfamiliar events, which don't fit with existing knowledge, are accommodated into the mind, thereby changing its organisation (Ellis, 2000).

A study by Oon Seng (2003) has tried to discredit Piaget's developmental stages. For example, it has become clear that most adults use formal operations in only a few domains where they have expertise. Nonetheless, Piaget's hypothesis that learning is a transformative, rather than a cumulative process, is still central. Children do not learn a little at a time about an issue until it finally comes together as understanding. Instead, they make sense of whatever they know from the very beginning. This understanding is progressively reformed as new knowledge is acquired, especially new knowledge



that is incompatible with their previous understanding. This transformative view of learning has been greatly extended by neo-Piagetian research.

### **2.11.2 COMPARISON BETWEEN PIAGET AND VYGOTSKY'S CONSTRUCTIVISM**

The Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky's (1896–1934), relevance to constructivism derives from his theories about language, thought, and their mediation by society. Vygotsky held the position that the child gradually internalises external and social activities, including communication, with other more competent options. Although social speech is internalised in adulthood, (it becomes thinking) Vygotsky contended that it still preserves its intrinsic collaborative character.

In his experiments, Vygotsky studied the difference between the child's reasoning when working independently, versus reasoning when working with a more competent person. He devised the notion of the *zone of proximal development* to reflect on the potential of this difference. Vygotsky's findings suggested that learning environments should involve guided interactions that permit children to reflect on inconsistency and to change their conceptions through communication. Vygotsky's work has since been extended in the *situated approach* to learning.

Vygotsky and Piaget's theories are often contrasted to each other in terms of individual cognitive constructivism (Piaget) and social constructivism (Vygotsky). Some researchers, as indicated in State University.com (2014) have tried to develop a synthesis of these approaches, though a few, such as Cole and Wertsch, argue that the individual versus social orientation debate is over-emphasised. To them, the real difference resorts in the contrast between the roles of cultural artefacts. For Vygotsky, such artefacts play a central role, but these do not appear in Piaget's theories.

For the American philosopher and educator, John Dewey (1859–1952), education depended on action – knowledge and ideas emerge only from a situation in which learners have to draw out experiences that have meaning and importance to them. Dewey (2008) argued that human thought comprises practical problem-solving, which proceeds by testing rival hypotheses. These problem-solving experiences occur in a social context, such as a classroom, where students join together in manipulating materials and observing outcomes. Dewey invented the method of progressive

education in North America. The Fostering Communities of Learners (FCL) program, devised by Ann Lesley Brown and Joseph Campione, is a current attempt to put Dewey's progressive education theory to work in the classroom.

In summary, Piaget contributed the idea of transformation in learning and development; Vygotsky contributed the idea that learning and development were integrally tied to communicative interactions with others; and Dewey contributed the idea that schools had to bring real world problems into the school curriculum (Dewey, 2008).

### **2.11.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST PROCESSES AND EDUCATION**

There are a number of competing constructivist views in education. Constructivists tend to celebrate complexity and multiple perspectives, though they do share at least a few educational prescriptions.

#### **2.11.3.1 Prior knowledge**

Constructivists believe that prior knowledge impacts the learning process. In trying to solve novel problems, perceptual or conceptual similarities between existing knowledge and a new problem can remind people of what they already know. This is often one's first approach towards solving novel problems. Information not connected with a learner's prior experiences will be quickly forgotten. In short, the learner must actively construct new information into his or her existing mental framework for meaningful learning to occur.

In this example, Rosalind Driver discovered that children's understanding of a phenomenon (interpretations that fit their experiences and expectations) differs from scientific explanations (State University.com, 2014). This means that students distinguish school science from their "real world" explanations. Studies of adult scientific thinking reveal that many adults hold non-normative scientific explanations, even though they have studied science. This is what the philosopher Alfred Whitehead (1861–1947) referred to as *inert knowledge*. Asking students what they already know about a topic and what puzzles them affords an opportunity to assess children's prior knowledge and the processes by which they will make sense of phenomena and is a practical way of deciding on an approach to learning.

#### **2.11.4 COGNITIVE CONFLICT AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

According to Dewey (2008: 326), reflection arises because of the appearance of incompatible factors within an empirical situation. This results in opposed responses being provoked which can never be responded to simultaneously. To say this in another way, cognitive conflict or puzzlement is the stimulus for learning, and it determines the organisation and nature of what is being learned. Negotiation can also occur between individuals in a classroom. This process involves discussion and attentive listening, making sense of the points of view of others, and comparing personal meanings to the theories of peers. Justifying one position over another and selecting theories that are more viable leads to a better theory. In this context, Katerine Bielaczyc and Allan Collins have summarised educational research on learning communities in classrooms where the class goal is to learn together, to appreciate and capitalise on distributed expertise, and to articulate the kinds of cognitive processes needed for learning (Dewey, 2008: 326).

#### **2.11.5 CONSTRUCTIVIST ASSESSMENT**

According to the State University.com (2014) assessment of student learning is of two types: formative and summative. Formative assessment occurs during learning and provides feedback to the student. It includes evaluations of ongoing portfolios, and demonstrations of work in progress. Student collaboration also provides a form of formative assessment. In Fostering Communities of Learners, (FCL) for example, students report to each other periodically on their research. In knowledge-building classrooms, students can read and comment on each other's work with the Knowledge Forum software. Formative assessment often occurs in classrooms. Summative assessment occurs through tests and essays at the end of a unit of study. Summative assessments provide little specific feedback. From a constructivist perspective, formative assessments are more valuable to the learner, but, with the recent emphasis in North America on standards, and due to the poor alignment of constructivist approaches and standards, it is very difficult to harmonise formative and summative assessments (State University.com, 2014).

#### **2.11.6 TECHNOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTIVISM**

According to the State University.com (2014) cognitive research has uncovered successful patterns in tutorial, mentoring and group discussion interactions. However,

typical Internet chat and bulletin-board systems do not support a constructivist approach to learning and instruction. During the 1990s, researchers created tools such as the Knowledge Forum, the Knowledge Integration Environment and Constructivist Learning Environment (CLE) to more fully address constructivist principles. Each of these tools invites collaboration by structuring the kinds of contributions learners can make, supporting meaningful relationships among those contributions and guiding students' inquiries. Teachers who use information and communication technologies in their classrooms are more likely to have a constructivist perspective towards learning and instruction. Additionally, sophisticated information and technology communications tools can capture the cognitive processes learners engage in when solving problems. This affords teachers opportunities for reflection and coaching to aid deeper learning. It also affords teachers the chance to learn from each other (State University.com, 2014).

#### **2.11.7 THE TEACHER'S ROLE**

The teacher's role in a constructivist classroom is not so much to lecture students, but rather to act as an expert learner who can guide students into adopting cognitive strategies such as self-testing, articulating understanding, asking probing questions, and reflection. The role of the teacher in constructivist classrooms is to organise information around big ideas that engage the students' interest, to assist students in developing new insights and to connect them with their previous learning. The activities are student-centred and students are encouraged to ask their own questions, carry out their own experiments, make their own analogies and reach their own conclusions. Becoming a constructivist teacher may prove a difficult transformation, however, since most instructors have been prepared for teaching in the traditional, objectivist manner. It "requires a paradigm shift," as well as "the willing abandonment of familiar perspectives and practices and the adoption of new ones" (Brooks and Brooks, 1993: 25).

#### **2.12 THE BASIC CONCEPTS IN SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY**

Sociocultural theory has a holistic view about the act of learning. Williams and Burden (1997), claim that the theory opposes the idea of the discrete teaching of skills and argues that meaning should constitute the central aspects of any unit of study. Any

unit of study should be presented in all its complexity, rather than skills and knowledge being presented in isolation. According to Ellis (2000), the sociocultural theory emphasises the importance of what the learner brings to any learning situation as an active meaning-maker and problem-solver. It acknowledges the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others. Sociocultural theory assumes that learning arises, not through interaction, but in interaction. Learners first succeed in performing a new task with the help of another person and then internalise this task so that they can perform it on their own. In this way, social interaction is advocated to mediate learning. According to Ellis (2000), the theory goes further to say interactions that successfully mediate learning are those in which the learners scaffold the new tasks.

Society plays a great role in learners' lives in general. It is, therefore, imperative to include sociocultural factors in the learning of Life Orientation. This basically means that teachers need to be aware of the current issues in society and, in turn, make learners aware of the relevant issues.

### **2.13 SKILLS AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS**

Pillay (2012) suggests that Life Orientation (L.O.) teachers, in particular, must be skilled counsellors, career guides and diverse role-players. They should also be open, approachable, have integrity, be trustworthy, resolve conflict and make good use of internal and external support within the context of schools. Life Orientation teachers need specific skills and characteristics that are essential for them to be effective and influential in their teaching of L.O. They also need to have a critical understanding of educational, social and cultural contexts if they are to be successful and effective teachers in their schools.

Berns (2007: 256) notes that the best teachers are interesting, competent, caring, encouraging and flexible, yet have demanding standards. Also, they motivate students to learn and reinforce their efforts (Van Deventer, 2009). As expected, subject knowledge is a necessary component to enable teachers to be successful in their teaching (Palmer, Stough, Burdenski & Gonzales, 2005: 14). Subject knowledge and

experience are important factors to consider with regard to L.O. teachers, but could cause problems if they are not trained to teach LO (Khulisa Management Services, 2000). This was confirmed by Rooth (2005), who found that 30 percent of all teachers in her national study within the country were not specifically trained to teach L.O. The important point to note is that L.O. teachers should be sensitive to diverse cultural contexts, which could be seen as “the values, understandings, norms, beliefs, and traditions of a group of people in a society” (Donald et al., 2002: 24).

Teachers not only need to be trained, but should also be willing to learn and share their observations, problem-solving strategies and experiences, since this is a subject that focuses mainly on teaching learners the right direction in life and the approach to take towards life.

### **2.13.1 TRAINING OF LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS**

Prinsloo (2007) reported in his findings that 20 teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they had had little rigorous, formal training in the presentation of the L.O. programmes. Their training had consisted of one to three-day short courses on the content and aims of the programmes. They criticised the knowledge and experience of the trainers/facilitators who had been appointed by the Department of Basic Education to empower them for their task. Their key criticism was that these trainers had little teaching knowledge, little knowledge of didactic methods in a learning area like L.O., and little knowledge of the current conditions in schools and classrooms. Facilitators did not seem to comprehend the problems in contemporary classrooms. Black and coloured teachers in rural areas offered the most serious complaints. Clearly they felt that the Department of Basic Education was not genuinely concerned with their problems and that the trainers lacked the necessary knowledge and skills. The general impression given by respondents teaching in government schools was that most teachers in government schools, and, in particular, those in rural schools, were ill-equipped to cope with the demands of the Life Orientation programmes.

It seems evident that a three-day period cannot offer sufficient training and provide adequate knowledge of the Life Orientation subject. This may be because Life Orientation is a subject about life in general and is composed of a number of different

factors that affect an individual's life. Therefore, due to people's different experiences and backgrounds, no one person can teach another about life in general, or even try to simplify Life Orientation into a curriculum form. This also then justifies the difficulty trainers experience when training teachers.

The response of the teachers in the former Model-C schools was different. They also mentioned that they had not received specific training to put the aims of the programmes into action and were also unimpressed by the departmental facilitators, however, they described how they had worked together to achieve results. They devised a strategy whereby the L.O. teachers and the school counsellor formed a team. The information and skills which they conveyed in the L.O. periods were strengthened in follow-up sessions with the school counsellor, and often, in individual afternoon sessions with learners in which the teachers acted as counsellors. Their general teacher training, the quality of their input to the teaching task and their access to the newest information in textbooks and the internet enabled them to equip themselves for the task (Prinsloo, 2007).

According to the study conducted by Prinsloo, (2007) presentation of L.O. programmes requires expert skills from teachers. They should receive intensive training over a period of time in a number of problem areas. Cultural diversity in the class and ways in which a teacher could create a relationship of trust with learners from diverse cultures must be addressed. L.O. teachers should understand the frame of reference of diverse South African cultures and should be proficient in at least three of the official languages. Teachers should be trained in ways to retrieve the information they need to present and to illustrate the different areas of the curriculum. It is imperative that they are trained to present the content in different grades in such a manner as to interest and engage the learners according to their development levels, once again referring to the way in which the subject is mediated. They should receive practical training in positive discipline strategies (Prinsloo, 2007).

## **2.14 THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE ORIENTATION AS AN ACADEMIC SUBJECT**

Rooth (2005) highlights that learners' psychosocial and health needs, as well as several socio-economic challenges, can be addressed through the subject, Life

Orientation. She emphasised that Life Orientation is a value-laden subject, particularly with reference to religious education, sexuality and HIV and AIDS education and gender. She also states that the focal point of the subject, Life Orientation, should be the holistic development of the learners.

The need for the subject, Life Orientation, is apparent in consideration of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and a range of other serious health and safety factors impinging on learners' well-being. Being young in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in a developing country with its opportunities and challenges, requires being equipped with the necessary life skills to live successfully and meaningfully (Rooth, 2005). Rooth further hinted at the fact that there are indications that Life Orientation is not optimally implemented in South African schools. Harber (2001) as quoted by Rooth (2005), argues, in this vein, that an attempt to reform the education system in a democratic direction in order to educate young people with the values and skills they will need as democratic citizens, has the potential to lead South Africa into a future marked by peace, educational excellence and prosperity.

Prinsloo (2007) states that the Department of Education realised the scope and intensity of the problem of children who lacked values of discipline and self-discipline, and that these children also lacked support towards achieving responsible adulthood. The Department of Education thus introduced the subject, Life Orientation, in an attempt to make a difference in the lives of a new generation of learners and to address the abovementioned challenges. Prinsloo also points out that the development of L.O. programmes brought teachers and educational planners to the realisation that the only hope of reaching children at risk lay in a holistic support system. Furthermore, Prinsloo argues that Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life and for its responsibilities and possibilities.

## **2.15 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the conceptual framework of the study, perspectives on teaching and learning, the evolving theories of learning, the theoretical origins which included scaffolding and mediation, the constructivism approach, social constructivism, Feuerstein's work and theory, the theory of meditated teaching and



learning sociocultural theory, and the skills and characteristics of the Life Orientation teachers as part of literature review with regards to the study. The following chapter will look at the research design and the data collection methods for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter gives a detailed descriptive analysis of the methodology used in the study during the data collection process. It outlines the choice of research design and sampling methods and provides a detailed description of the data-collection methods, instruments and processes. In this study, qualitative and quantitative research approaches are used to explore the perspectives on a mediating role for effective teaching and learning of Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band in schools under the Pinetown District of KwaZulu-Natal Province.

This study is based on the premise that the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences and meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for a complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2003).

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Burns and Grove (2001: 223) state that designing a study helps researchers to plan and implement the study in a way that will help them obtain the intended results, thus increasing the chances of obtaining information that could be associated with the real situation. Babbie (2007: 112) states that a research design involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied, among what population, with what research methods, for what purpose.

This study used a mixed method design to collect data. Creswell (2014) defines mixed method research as an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The researcher

specifically selected this design because it provided him with an opportunity for a variety of divergent views and perspectives, thereby making him aware of the possibility that issues are more multifaceted than they may initially have been (Creswell and Clark, 2007: 71). The triangulation mixed method design was used to investigate teachers' perceptions and competencies in teaching Life Orientation in the Further Education and Training band. Hasse-Biber (2010) points out challenges regarding using a mixed method approach, one of which is that, using mixed methods requires training in and knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative methods, however researchers normally have expertise in only one method. She further argues that, if the researcher is unable to use both methods successfully, the integrity of a mixed method project may be compromised.

### **3.3 QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

The study used quantitative, as well as qualitative, approaches to collect data. According to Henning, (2005) in a quantitative study, the focus was on control of all the components in the actions and the representations of the participants will be controlled while the study will be guided with an acute focus as to how variables are related. Creswell (1994) defines a quantitative study as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true. Quantitative researchers are likely to choose concepts, or even to create words in such a manner that no more than a single meaning can be attached to the word that they choose (Mouton & Marias, 1990). A survey design provides a quantitative or numerical description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). McMillan & Schumacher (2010) argue that quantitative research is based on some form of positivism, which assumes that there are stable, social facts with a single reality, separated from the feelings and beliefs of individuals. They further

explain that, quantitative research seeks to establish the relationships and explain causes of changes in measured outcomes.

### **3.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the quantitative approach**

In the quantitative study the focus was on control of all the components in the actions and representations of the participants. Respondents or research subjects are usually not free to express data that cannot be captured by the predetermined instruments (Henning, 2014). Quantitative methodology utilises deductive logic and are suitable for a study of phenomena which are conceptually and theoretically well developed; seeks to control phenomena. The research design is standardised according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated. The data is obtained systematically and in a standardised manner, the unit of analysis is variables which are atomistic (De Vos et al., 2011).

### **3.3.2 Instruments used to generate quantitative data**

Questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data from the Life Orientation teachers who were the respondents to this study, for the purpose of answering the research questions. According to Babbie and Mouton, (2001: 233) the term 'questionnaire' suggests a collection of questions; a typical questionnaire will probably contain as many statements as questions, especially if the researcher is interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective. All three research questions were covered in this data collection instrument.

#### **3.3.2.1 Questionnaires**

The researcher used open-ended questionnaires for data collection with regards to the perspectives regarding a mediating role for the effective teaching of Life Orientation in the FET band. The research was conducted with Grades 10, 11 and 12 Life Orientation (L.O.) teachers. There are 167 secondary schools under Pinetown District and the questionnaires were administered in 30 of the 167 secondary schools. A total of 60 teachers, that is, 2 teachers per school, teaching Grades 10, 11 and 12, were used as respondents to the questionnaires in order to answer the research question. The purpose of the survey questionnaire was to collect information regarding L.O.'s academic value, L.O. teachers' preparedness and L.O. mediation strategies.

McMillan and Schumacher (2011) pinpoint that, in survey research, the investigator selects a sample of respondents from a target population and administers a questionnaire or conducts interviews to collect information on variables of interest.

The researcher deemed it fitting for the quantitative study to be used based on the number of participants used by this study. The study used 60 teachers from the 30 secondary schools chosen as a sample of the population. Questionnaires were convenient to use to cover the number of teachers in a short period of time and with less expense. The questionnaires were distributed to schools where teachers who teach L.O. in Grades 10 to 12 were requested to participate as respondents, by completing the questionnaire. They were given a week to go through the questionnaire and to complete them, and, on the agreed upon date, the questionnaires were collected for data-capturing.

### **3.3.3 Analysis and Presentation of Quantitative data**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse and to present data that was collected. De Vos et al. (2011) state that, although quantitative data analysis is a diverse and complex process, it has become relatively easy, with clear step-by-step processes and the aid of computerised data analysis software. The quantitative data was analysed using a programme called Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS); which is an electronic computer programme.

#### **3.3.3.1 Questionnaires**

Data collected from the questionnaires was analysed by using a descriptive statistical method involving percentages and graphs. According to Creswell, (2014) descriptive statistics are means, standard deviations and ranges. The questionnaire questions or statements were compiled by considering the three variables; L.O.'s academic value, L.O. teacher preparedness and training and L.O. mediation strategies. There were two sections comprising the questionnaire. The first section focused on the personal (biographical) data. This biographical information was important to establish the gender, age group, experience, the level of professional qualification and the nature of employment of the participants. Experience and their professional qualifications were important to gauge their competence in teaching the subject. The second section consisted of the questionnaire statements.

### **3.3.4 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability refers to whether or not the results can be considered reliable (Babbie, 2001) and if the same research were to be conducted by a different team, whether the results would be similar or not. This research was planned based on guidelines from various research methodology authors (Cooper & Schindler, 2008 and Babbie, 2001).

Cronbach's alpha is a test to determine the validity level of the questionnaire. A level above .7 is considered adequate to declare a question/questionnaire valid (Pallant, 2007) though Pallant goes on to say that, with scales fewer than 10 items, it is common to find lower values, even as low as .5.

The researcher incorporated validity strategies by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches which should enhance the researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings, as well as being able to convince the reader of that accuracy (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative and qualitative validity means that the researcher checks the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while quantitative and qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different projects (Gibbs, 2007). The importance of the validity and reliability of the study is that it assures that the findings produced by the study are accurate, consistent, and in line with the objectives of the study.

In order to ensure that the findings were accurate and consistent, the researcher used a combination of two different instruments. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, as part of the mixed-method approach, were used to collect data and quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches were also used to analyse and to present data. This helped to assure that the findings were accurate and consistent. Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods for exploring the same focus or phenomenon, is a plan of action that helps to raise researchers above the personal biases that can stem from the employment of single methodologies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). By combining two or more methods, researchers can partially overcome the deficiencies that might flow from a single method. While seeking to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research, the researcher considered triangulation.

### **3.4 QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The qualitative approach is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view (De Vos et al., 2011).

Henning (2005) states that, in qualitative research, researchers wish to find out not only what happens, but also how it happens and why it happens the way it does. In qualitative research, researchers wish to give as clear and detailed an account of actions and representations of actions as possible, so that they can gain a better understanding of the world, hopefully in order to use it to bring about a measure of social change.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that qualitative research is based more on constructionism, which means that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation. They further explain that qualitative research is more concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives.

According to Creswell, (2014) the process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

#### **3.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative approach**

Henning (2004) states that, in the qualitative study, the "variables" are usually not controlled because it is exactly this freedom and natural development of action and representation that we wish to capture. Qualitative studies usually aim for depth rather than "quantity of understanding". In qualitative research, the use of theory is much more varied. The concept is "immature" due to a conspicuous lack of theory and previous research; a notion that the available theory may be inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect or biased; a need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory; or the nature of the phenomenon may not be suited to quantitative measures. Qualitative researchers collect data in the field at the site where participants

experience the issue or problem under the study. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants. In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research, or that writers express in the literature. The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study (Creswell, 2014). According to De Vos et al., (2011) the purpose in the qualitative research is to construct detailed descriptions of social reality. Methods utilise inductive logic. Participants' natural language is used in order to come to a genuine understanding of their world. The research design is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process. Data sources are determined by information richness of settings; types of observation are modified to enrich understanding. The unit of analysis is holistic, concentrating on the relationships between the elements, contexts, etc. The whole is always more than the sum.

### **3.4.2 Instruments used to generate qualitative data**

Interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the participants who were teachers who taught Life Orientation as a subject at FET phase. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in-depth interviews use open-response questions to obtain data on participants' meanings, on how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives.

#### **3.4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews**

According to De Vos et al., (2011) questions in a semi-structured interview are nearly always open-ended. With semi-structured interviews the researcher had a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule, but the interview was guided, rather than dictated, by the schedule. Participants share more closely in the direction the interview takes, and they can introduce an issue the researcher had not thought of. In this relationship, participants can be perceived as the experts on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story (Smith, Harre & Van Langenhoven, 1995).



The research study used semi-structured interviews to gain a better understanding of the participants' perceptions and perspectives on a mediating role for effective teaching and learning of Life Orientation. Semi-structured interviews gave the researcher and the participants more flexibility, and the researcher had an opportunity to probe or follow up on certain issues (De Vos et al., 2011).

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was that they could be used to elicit qualitative data that answered all three research questions in chapter one.

### **3.4.3 Analysis and Presentation of Qualitative data**

#### **3.4.3.1 Interview schedule**

Data collected using semi-structured interview schedules were categorised using themes. Throughout the entire qualitative research process the researcher kept a focus on learning the meaning that participants hold concerning the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher brought to the research or that writers express in the literature (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative data was analysed carefully in a narrative manner, and a summary of the interview discussions was made, highlighting the most important and frequently mentioned points concerning the interview questions that were compiled to address the research questions.

#### **3.4.3 Trustworthiness**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) emphasise, as a criterion of good qualitative research, the notion of *trustworthiness*: that is, neutrality of the research findings or decisions. According to De Vos (2002), the basic issue of trustworthiness is simple: how can an enquirer persuade his or her respondents/audience that the findings of an enquiry are worth paying attention to or worth taking account of?

In order to address the issue of trustworthiness for this study, the researcher ensured that confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents/audience was guaranteed. No names nor any other form of identity of the respondents were disclosed for the purposes of anonymity, confidentiality and security. The value and impact that the study would bring to society was identified and discussed with the respondents in detail before embarking on the study.

The researcher used different individuals from different school settings and from different school categories as participants during the interview process. Nine teachers from nine different secondary schools under Pinetown District were used as participants in the interview process. The three different school categories that were used were: private, ex-model C and public school sectors. The approach used helped the researcher to collect data that gave an in-depth description and understanding of the research phenomena. This approach also helped to minimise or to address the issue of bias error from the collected data.

### **3.5 DELIMINATION OF THE STUDY**

The focus of the study was mainly on Life Orientation teachers who teach within the Further Education and Training Band under Pinetown District. Teachers from other learning areas/subjects would have contributed to achieving the objectives of the study if they were included. There was also an issue of time and financial constraints to conduct the study. Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher was not able to reach all schools within the district.

### **3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

Polit and Hungler (1999) define population as the totality of all subjects that conform to a set of specifications, comprising the entire group of persons that is of interest to the researcher, and to whom the research results can be generalised. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998:250) describe a sample as a portion or a subset of the research population selected to participate in a study representing the research population. The study targeted teachers involved in the teaching of Life Orientation in the FET Phase: that is, Grades 10, 11 and 12 teachers in schools in the vicinity of the Pinetown District.

#### **3.6.1 Population**

The research population for this study comprised 60 teachers who were involved in the teaching of Life Orientation in the FET Phase: that is, Grades 10, 11 and 12 teachers in the schools under Pinetown Town District. Eligibility criteria specify the characteristics that people in the population must possess in order to be included in the study (Polit & Hungler, 1999). In this study, the participants were teachers who were involved in teaching the subject, Life Orientation, in Grades 10, 11 and 12 under

Pinetown District where data was collected, and those who were willing to participate in the study.

### **3.6.2 Sampling procedures for the study**

Sampling is a process of selecting participants for a research study to be undertaken. There are 167 schools in the Pinetown District that teach the FET Phase, and therefore, the sample for this study was constituted using the following procedures: purposive sampling in selecting participants from 30 high schools. Representativeness of the participants in the semi-urban and urban schools alike was considered in the sample. The issue of gender and race was addressed during the identification of participants.

## **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Approval for the study was sought from the University of Zululand Research Ethics Committee, as well as from the Department of Basic Education. The researcher contacted principals of schools telephonically to make arrangements for administering questionnaires. Participants were made aware that they were under no obligation to continue with the study, and that they could withdraw at any point should they wish to do so. The identity of participants was to be withheld in the reporting of the data and the final thesis. Participants were advised of the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and analysis that was used, and the manner of publishing the outcomes. Respondents were issued with consent forms to assure them they were not compelled to be part of the study and that their participation was voluntary and had no financial benefits.

## **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the mixed-method approach to data collection, that is qualitative and quantitative research methods. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as instruments used to collect data were also discussed when encompassing data collection instruments. The analysis and data presentation strategies were also mentioned. The issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness were also covered by this chapter. Delimitation of the study was identified. Lastly,

population, sampling and ethical considerations were also discussed. The next chapter will be a presentation of the findings and data analysis.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the results are presented, analysed and interpreted and the analysis is depicted in the form of tables, figures and statistical analysis. These findings aim at addressing the following research questions:

- What paradigm informs the mediation strategies of teachers of Life Orientation?
- How do teachers' mediation strategies align content, intended outcomes and assessment for daily learning activities?
- Why do teachers perceive their mediation strategies as being congruent with the attainment of the Life Orientation curriculum statement and learning outcomes?

#### **4.2 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED**

The data from completed survey questionnaires were coded and captured in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 22, for Windows and used for descriptive and inferential analysis. The results from the data analysis are also presented in this section. The findings of the research are discussed in the light of the literature. By interpreting the statistical analysis of the data collected, the extent to which the research objectives are met and the research questions are answered will be demonstrated.

A total of 46 questionnaires out of 60 questionnaires distributed were returned. The researcher checked for non-responses, (i.e. questionnaires that were not returned) however the reasons indicated had nothing to do with the nature of the questionnaire. Reasons given were that respondents had forgotten about the questionnaire, while some claimed to be too busy. All questionnaires received were sufficiently completed for statistical analysis. This represents 100 percent usability rate.

**Table 4.1 Gender distribution of respondents**

| What is your gender? |        |           |         |               |                       |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
|                      |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
| Valid                | Male   | 18        | 39.1    | 39.1          | 39.1                  |
|                      | Female | 28        | 60.9    | 60.9          | 100.0                 |
|                      | Total  | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Table 4.1 reveals the Gender distribution of respondents. The largest percentages of the respondents formed part of the female group with a high level percentage of 60.9 percent while the male group encompassed 39.1 percent.

**Table 4.2 Age distribution of respondents**

**What is your age?**

|                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid 20-29 years | 7         | 15.2    | 15.2          | 15.2                  |
| 30-39 years       | 14        | 30.4    | 30.4          | 45.7                  |
| Over 39 years     | 25        | 54.3    | 54.3          | 100.0                 |
| Total             | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Table 4.2 reveals the age distribution of respondents. The largest percentage of respondents occurred in the over 39 years group at 54.3 percent, followed by the 30-39 years category with 30.4 percent and lastly, the 20-29 years division at 15.2 percent. The age distribution of respondents shows that the majority of the respondents within the study were experienced and possessed a sound understanding and knowledge relating to the teaching of the subject.

**Table 4.3 Highest qualification distribution of respondents**

What is your highest qualification?

|         |                               | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid   | Teaching Certificate          | 2         | 4.3     | 4.4           | 4.4                |
|         | Teaching Diploma              | 11        | 23.9    | 24.4          | 28.9               |
|         | Teaching Degree               | 11        | 23.9    | 24.4          | 53.3               |
|         | Post-graduate teaching degree | 18        | 39.1    | 40.0          | 93.3               |
|         | Other                         | 3         | 6.5     | 6.7           | 100.0              |
|         | Total                         | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing | System                        | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total   |                               | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.3 reveals the highest qualification distribution of respondents. Most respondents fell into the post-graduate group at 39.1 percent, followed by respondents with teaching diplomas and teaching degrees at 23.9 percent, others at 6.5 percent and teaching certificates at 4.3 percent. The qualification distribution of the respondents shows that the respondents in this study were people who were academically prepared and equipped to teach the learners in the FET band.



**Table 4.4 Employment status of respondents**

| Employment status |                      | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid             | Permanently employed | 40        | 87.0    | 87.0          | 87.0               |
|                   | Temporary employed   | 3         | 6.5     | 6.5           | 93.5               |
|                   | SGB post             | 3         | 6.5     | 6.5           | 100.0              |
|                   | Total                | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.4 reveals the employment status distribution of respondents. The highest percentage of respondents occurred in the permanently employed group at 87 percent, followed by those who were temporarily employed and those in SGB posts both at 6.5 percent. The employment status distribution of respondents shows that the majority of the respondents in the study were permanently employed as teachers offering L.O. in their respective schools.

**Table 4.5 Teaching experience of respondents**

| Teaching experience |           |         |               |                    |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|                     | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid Below 5 years | 8         | 17.4    | 17.4          | 17.4               |
| 5-10 years          | 14        | 30.4    | 30.4          | 47.8               |
| Over 10 years       | 24        | 52.2    | 52.2          | 100.0              |
| Total               | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.5 reveals the teaching experience distribution of respondents. The majority of the respondents fell into the group with more than 10 years' experience at 52.2 percent, followed by those with 5-10 years' experience at 30.4 percent and those with below 5 years' experience in the minority at 17.4 percent. The teaching experience distribution of respondents shows that the majority of respondents within the study had more than ten years' teaching experience which means that they had the required knowledge and understanding concerning the issues of teaching and learning.

**Table 4.6 Subject teaching experience of respondents**

| Subject teaching experience |           |         |               |                    |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|                             | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid Below 5 years         | 16        | 34.8    | 34.8          | 34.8               |
| 5-10 years                  | 17        | 37.0    | 37.0          | 71.7               |
| Over 10 years               | 13        | 28.3    | 28.3          | 100.0              |
| Total                       | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.6 reveals the subject teaching experience distribution of respondents. The largest number of respondents comprised the 5-10 years group at 37 percent, followed by those in the below 5 years group at 34.8 percent and lastly, those with more than 10 years at 28.3 percent. The subject teaching experience distribution of respondents shows that the majority of the respondents in the study had between five years and ten years of subject teaching experience. This means that they had the required understanding and knowledge concerning the teaching and learning of L.O.

**Table 4.7 L.O. subject content is about life in general**

**The L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Disagree | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 2.2                |
| Neutral        | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 4.3                |
| Agree          | 17        | 37.0    | 37.0          | 41.3               |
| Strongly Agree | 27        | 58.7    | 58.7          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.7 reveals that most respondents agreed that the L.O. subject is about life in general. Most respondents strongly agreed, 58.7 percent followed by those who agreed with 37 percent, while both those who disagreed and those who remained neutral comprised 2.2 percent each.

**Table 4.8 L.O. is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure**

**The subject L.O. is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure  
according to my teaching experience**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 2         | 4.3     | 4.3           | 4.3                   |
| Disagree                | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 6.5                   |
| Neutral                 | 4         | 8.7     | 8.7           | 15.2                  |
| Agree                   | 14        | 30.4    | 30.4          | 45.7                  |
| Strongly Agree          | 25        | 54.3    | 54.3          | 100.0                 |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Table 4.8 reveals that L.O. is considered to be of great value by most respondents. The largest percentage of respondents fell with the 'strongly agree' group at 54.3 percent, followed by those who agreed at 30.4 percent, neutral respondents at 8.7 percent, respondents who strongly disagreed at 4.3 percent and those who disagreed at 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.9 Easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O.**

**It is easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O.**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 2         | 4.3     | 4.3           | 4.3                |
| Disagree                | 2         | 4.3     | 4.3           | 8.7                |
| Neutral                 | 3         | 6.5     | 6.5           | 15.2               |
| Agree                   | 21        | 45.7    | 45.7          | 60.9               |
| Strongly Agree          | 18        | 39.1    | 39.1          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.9 reveals that it is easy to combine the methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O. according to the respondents. The majority of the respondents agreed with this statement, 45.7 percent, followed by those who strongly agreed with 39.1 percent, those who felt neutral at 6.5 percent, respondents who strongly disagreed and those who disagreed at 4.3 percent each.

**Table 4.10 Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling**

**Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 22        | 47.8    | 47.8          | 47.8               |
| Disagree                | 13        | 28.3    | 28.3          | 76.1               |
| Neutral                 | 7         | 15.2    | 15.2          | 91.3               |
| Agree                   | 4         | 8.7     | 8.7           | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.10 reveals that without experience L.O. is not considered the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling by respondents. Most respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 47.8 percent, followed by those who disagreed at 28.3 percent, while those who remained neutral comprised 15.2 percent and those who agreed totalled 8.7 percent.

**Table 4.11 People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject**

**People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O.  
as a subject**

|       |                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 24        | 52.2    | 53.3          | 53.3               |
|       | Disagree          | 16        | 34.8    | 35.6          | 88.9               |
|       | Neutral           | 4         | 8.7     | 8.9           | 97.8               |
|       | Agree             | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 100.0              |
|       | Total             | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
|       | Missing           | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total |                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.11 reveals that people without educational or curriculum understanding are not good at teaching L.O. according to respondents in this study. The largest percentage of respondents strongly disagreed, 52.2 percent, followed by those who disagreed with 34.8 percent, neutral respondents with 8.7 percent, those who agreed with the statement and non-responses equally with 2.2 percent.



**Table 4.12 To reduce the burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff**

**To reduce the burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff**

|       |                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 31        | 67.4    | 68.9          | 68.9               |
|       | Disagree          | 12        | 26.1    | 26.7          | 95.6               |
|       | Neutral           | 2         | 4.3     | 4.4           | 100.0              |
|       | Total             | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
|       | Missing           | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total |                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.12 reveals that respondents definitely do not agree that in order to reduce workloads, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff. By far the majority of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 67.4 percent, while those who disagreed comprised 26.1 percent, with those who remained neutral and non-responses at 4.3 percent and 2.2 percent respectively.

**Table 4.13 According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges**

**According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 21        | 45.7    | 45.7          | 45.7               |
| Disagree                | 15        | 32.6    | 32.6          | 78.3               |
| Neutral                 | 2         | 4.3     | 4.3           | 82.6               |
| Agree                   | 3         | 6.5     | 6.5           | 89.1               |
| Strongly Agree          | 5         | 10.9    | 10.9          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.13 reveals that respondents do not agree that to teach L.O. one must only know basic life issues and challenges distribution of respondents. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, 45.7 percent, followed by those who disagreed with 32.6 percent, while those who strongly agreed and agreed comprised 10.9 percent and 6.5 percent respectively and some remained neutral, 4.3 percent.

**Table 4.14 I support the idea of the subject L.O. being offered as a compulsory subject in the FET band in South African schools**

**I support the idea of the subject L.O. being offered as a compulsory subject in the  
FET band in South African schools**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative<br>Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 2         | 4.3     | 4.3           | 4.3                   |
| Disagree                | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 6.5                   |
| Neutral                 | 3         | 6.5     | 6.5           | 13.0                  |
| Agree                   | 9         | 19.6    | 19.6          | 32.6                  |
| Strongly Agree          | 31        | 67.4    | 67.4          | 100.0                 |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                       |

Table 4.14 reveals that respondents support L.O. being offered as a compulsory subject. Most respondents strongly agreed with this suggestion, 67.4 percent, followed by 19.6 percent who agreed, 6.5 percent who remained neutral, and those who strongly disagreed and disagreed with 4.3 percent and 2.2 percent respectively.

**Table 4.15 Other subjects on the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.**

**Other subjects on the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 2.2                |
| Disagree                | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 4.3                |
| Neutral                 | 4         | 8.7     | 8.7           | 13.0               |
| Agree                   | 18        | 39.1    | 39.1          | 52.2               |
| Strongly Agree          | 22        | 47.8    | 47.8          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Table 4.15 reveals that respondents definitely consider that other subjects are influenced by the knowledge provided by L.O. Respondents strongly agreed with this statement, 47.8 percent and agreed, 39.1 percent, while those choosing to be neutral comprised 8.7 percent, and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed totalled 2.2 percent of the group of respondents each.

**Table 4.16 With or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the same in the FET band**

**With or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the same in the FET band**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 14        | 30.4    | 31.1          | 31.1               |
| Disagree                | 22        | 47.8    | 48.9          | 80.0               |
| Neutral                 | 4         | 8.7     | 8.9           | 88.9               |
| Agree                   | 4         | 8.7     | 8.9           | 97.8               |
| Strongly Agree          | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing                 | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.16 reveals that respondents disagreed with the statement that with or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results would be the same, since most respondents fell into the 'disagree' group at 47.8 percent, followed by those who strongly disagreed at 30.4 percent, while those who remained neutral and those who agreed were equal at 8.7 percent and respondent who strongly agreed comprised 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.17 In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful**

**In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Disagree | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 2.2                |
| Neutral        | 1         | 2.2     | 2.2           | 4.4                |
| Agree          | 8         | 17.4    | 17.8          | 22.2               |
| Strongly Agree | 35        | 76.1    | 77.8          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing        | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total          | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.17 reveals that respondents agreed with the statement that, in teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of the subject should be taken seriously since the majority of the respondents strongly agreed, 76.1 percent, followed by those who agreed, 17.4 percent. Neutral respondents and those who disagreed each constituted 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.18 There are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O., in the FET band**

**There are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject,  
L.O., in the FET band**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 3         | 6.5     | 6.8           | 6.8                |
| Disagree                | 2         | 4.3     | 4.5           | 11.4               |
| Neutral                 | 8         | 17.4    | 18.2          | 29.5               |
| Agree                   | 18        | 39.1    | 40.9          | 70.5               |
| Strongly Agree          | 13        | 28.3    | 29.5          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 44        | 95.7    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing                 | 2         | 4.3     |               |                    |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.18 reveals that respondents believe that there are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O. Most respondents agreed at 39.1 percent, followed by those who strongly agreed at 28.3 percent, those who remained neutral at 17.4 percent, those who strongly disagreed at 6.5 percent and those who disagreed at 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.19 The strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject**

**The strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 1         | 2.2     | 2.3           | 2.3                |
| Disagree                | 2         | 4.3     | 4.5           | 6.8                |
| Neutral                 | 6         | 13.0    | 13.6          | 20.5               |
| Agree                   | 27        | 58.7    | 61.4          | 81.8               |
| Strongly Agree          | 8         | 17.4    | 18.2          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 44        | 95.7    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing                 | 2         | 4.3     |               |                    |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.19 reveals that respondents feel that the strategies used in the transmission of L.O. to the teaching and learning of the subject, since most respondents 58.7 percent agreed, followed by 17.4 percent who strongly agreed, those who were neutral at 13 percent, those who disagreed at 4.3 percent and those who strongly disagreed at 2.2 percent.



**Table 4.20 If the subject L.O. was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways**

**If the subject L.O. was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Disagree | 5         | 10.9    | 11.4          | 11.4               |
| Neutral        | 4         | 8.7     | 9.1           | 20.5               |
| Agree          | 8         | 17.4    | 18.2          | 38.6               |
| Strongly Agree | 27        | 58.7    | 61.4          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 44        | 95.7    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing        | 2         | 4.3     |               |                    |
| Total          | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.20 indicates that respondents believe that if L.O. was important at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different. The majority of the respondents strongly agree with this statement, 58.7 percent, followed by respondents who agreed, 17.4 percent, while those who disagreed comprised 10.9 percent, those who felt neutral constituted 8.7 percent and non-responses accounted for 4.3 percent.

**Table 4.21 The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system**

**The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system**

|                         | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Strongly Disagree | 1         | 2.2     | 2.3           | 2.3                |
| Disagree                | 1         | 2.2     | 2.3           | 4.7                |
| Neutral                 | 1         | 2.2     | 2.3           | 7.0                |
| Agree                   | 18        | 39.1    | 41.9          | 48.8               |
| Strongly Agree          | 22        | 47.8    | 51.2          | 100.0              |
| Total                   | 43        | 93.5    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing                 | 3         | 6.5     |               |                    |
| Total                   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.21 displays that most respondents believe that the subject, L.O., is significant as a compulsory subject with 47.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreeing and 39.1 percent agreeing. Respondents who remained neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed weighed in at 2.2 percent each.

**Table 4.22 Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight**

**Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Neutral  | 3         | 6.5     | 6.7           | 6.7                |
| Agree          | 20        | 43.5    | 44.4          | 51.1               |
| Strongly Agree | 22        | 47.8    | 48.9          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing        | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total          | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.22 makes it clear that tasks given to learners help develop their content insight as far as the respondents are concerned. Most respondents fell into the 'strongly agree' group at 47.8 percent, followed by respondents who agreed at 43.5 percent, neutral respondents at 6.5 percent and those who failed to respond at 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.23 Teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content**

**Teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content**

|                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid Disagree | 3         | 6.5     | 6.7           | 6.7                |
| Neutral        | 4         | 8.7     | 8.9           | 15.6               |
| Agree          | 24        | 52.2    | 53.3          | 68.9               |
| Strongly Agree | 14        | 30.4    | 31.1          | 100.0              |
| Total          | 45        | 97.8    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing        | 1         | 2.2     |               |                    |
| Total          | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.23 depicts that respondents agree that teachers give constant support to their learners to assist them to achieve the required understanding of the content. The majority of the respondents agreed with this statement, 52.2 percent, followed by those who strongly agreed at 30.4 percent, while neutral respondents comprised 8.7 percent, those who disagreed formed 6.5 percent and non-responses accounted for 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.24 Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content**

| Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content |           |         |               |                    |
|---|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
|   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid Disagree  | 5         | 10.9    | 11.6          | 11.6               |
| Neutral   | 7         | 15.2    | 16.3          | 27.9               |
| Agree   | 15        | 32.6    | 34.9          | 62.8               |
| Strongly Agree  | 16        | 34.8    | 37.2          | 100.0              |
| Total   | 43        | 93.5    | 100.0         |                    |
| Missing   | 3         | 6.5     |               |                    |
| Total   | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.24 indicates that respondents concur that teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content, since most strongly agreed with this statement at 34.8 percent, with those who agreed at 32.6 percent, neutral respondents at 15.2 percent and non-responses at 6.5 percent.

**Table 4.25 Learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning**

**Learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning**

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree       | 1         | 2.2     | 2.3           | 2.3                |
|       | Neutral        | 4         | 8.7     | 9.1           | 11.4               |
|       | Agree          | 20        | 43.5    | 45.5          | 56.8               |
|       | Strongly Agree | 19        | 41.3    | 43.2          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 44        | 95.7    | 100.0         |                    |
|       | Missing        | 2         | 4.3     |               |                    |
| Total |                | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.25 reaffirms that respondents support the idea that learners can approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding teaching, since 43.5 percent of the respondents agreed with this and 41.3 percent strongly agreed, while those who chose to remain neutral comprised 8.7 percent and non-responses accounted for 4.3 percent with respondents who disagreed forming only 2.2 percent.

**Table 4.26 Teachers always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning**

**Teachers always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning**

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Neutral        | 3         | 6.5     | 6.8           | 6.8                |
|       | Agree          | 22        | 47.8    | 50.0          | 56.8               |
|       | Strongly Agree | 19        | 41.3    | 43.2          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 44        | 95.7    | 100.0         |                    |
|       | Missing        | 2         | 4.3     |               |                    |
| Total |                | 46        | 100.0   |               |                    |

Table 4.26 shows support for the statement that teachers always consider and encourage ideas and suggestions from learners. Most respondents agreed with this at 47.8 percent, with 41.3 percent strongly agreeing, neutral respondents at 6.5 percent and non-responses weighing in at 4.3 percent.

Cronbach's Alpha was conducted on the questionnaire and the results are as follows.

| Case Processing Summary |                       |    |       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|-------|
|                         |                       | N  | %     |
| Cases                   | Valid                 | 10 | 83.3  |
|                         | Excluded <sup>a</sup> | 2  | 16.7  |
|                         | Total                 | 12 | 100.0 |

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Figure 4.1**

| Reliability Statistics |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | N of Items |
| .785                   | 22         |

The statements in the questionnaire were drawn up based on the literature review and the theoretical framework. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the issue of reliability in order to understand whether the statements in the questionnaire all reliably measured the same underlying variable. Figure 4.1 above contains the results. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated at 0.785 which is above 0.7, so the scale can be considered reliable with the samples. In other words, the Cronbach's Alpha co-efficient of 0.785 shows that the questionnaire was sound.

A correlation was done between the two statements: L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life and the subject L.O. is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure according to my teaching experience. This correlation is clearly illustrated in Table 4.27.



**Table 4.27: Relationship between L.O. and life in general**

**Correlations**

|   |   | The L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life | The subject, L.O., is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure according to my teaching experience |
|---|---|---|--|
| The L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life | Pearson Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed)<br>N | 1<br><br>46   | .435**<br>.002<br>46   |
| The subject, L.O., is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure according to my teaching experience              | Pearson Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed)<br>N | .435**<br>.002<br>46  | 1<br><br>46  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation ( $r$ ) between L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life and the subject, L.O., is of great value to the South African FET curriculum structure according to my teaching experience is 0.435. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is at 0.002; less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.435$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O. and without experience

and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling. This correlation is clearly illustrated in Table 4.28 below.

**Table 4.28: Relationship between teaching methodologies and specialisation**

| Correlations   |                     |   |  |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
|  |                     | It is easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O. | Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling |
| It is easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O.          | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .039   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .797   |
|  | N                   | 46  | 46   |
| Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling | Pearson Correlation | .039  | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .797  |  |
|  | N                   | 46  | 46   |

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements 'easy to combine the teaching methodologies learned with one's experience in teaching L.O.' and 'without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling' is 0.039. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.797, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=-0.039$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject' and 'to reduce the

burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff'. This is illustrated in Table 4.29 below.

**Table 4.29: Relationship between educational or curriculum understanding and unqualified staff**

| Correlations  |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject | To reduce the burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff |
| People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject   | Pearson Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed)<br>N | 1<br><br>45   | .551**<br>.000<br>44  |
| To reduce the burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-specialised and unqualified teaching staff | Pearson Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed)<br>N | .551**<br>.000<br>44  | 1<br><br>45   |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation (r) between 'People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject' and 'to reduce the burden on the teaching staff's workload in the FET band, the subject, L.O., should be allocated to non-

specialised and unqualified teaching staff' is 0.551. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.551$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges' and 'I support the idea of the subject, L.O., being offered as a compulsory subject in the FET band in South African schools'. This is illustrated in Table 4.30 below.

**Table 4.30: Relationship between L.O. dealing with basic life issues and L.O. as a compulsory subject**

| Correlations  |                     |   |   |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
|   |                     | According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges | I support the idea of the subject, L.O., being offered as a compulsory subject in the FET band in South African schools |
| According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges     | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .018  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .903  |
|   | N                   | 46  | 46  |
| I support the idea of the subject, L.O., being offered as a compulsory subject in the FET band in South African schools | Pearson Correlation | .018  | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .903  |   |
|   | N                   | 46  | 46  |

The correlation (r) between the statements 'According to my understanding, to teach the subject, L.O., one must only know basic life issues and life challenges' and 'I support the idea of the subject, L.O., being offered as a compulsory subject in the FET

band in South African schools' is 0.018. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.093, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.018$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: Other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.' and 'with or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the same in the FET band'. This is illustrated in Table 4.31 below.

**Table 4.31: Relationship between other subjects in the FET curriculum and the end of the year results**

| Correlations  |                     |   |   |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
|   |                     | Other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O. | With or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the same in the FET band |
| Other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.                         | Pearson Correlation | 1   | -.110   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .471  |
|   | N                   | 46  | 45  |
| With or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the same in the FET band | Pearson Correlation | -.110   | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .471  |   |
|   | N                   | 45  | 45  |

The correlation (r) between the statements 'other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.' and 'with or without the subject, L.O., the end of the year results and learners' performance will still be the

same in the FET band' is -0.110. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.47, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=-0.110$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.' and 'in teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful'. This is clearly illustrated in Table 4.32 below.

**Table 4.32: Relationship between other subjects in the FET curriculum and the teaching of L.O.**

**Correlations**

|  |                     | Other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O. | In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| Other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.                      | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .713**   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .000   |
|  | N                   | 46  | 45   |
| In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful | Pearson Correlation | .713**  | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000  |  |
|  | N                   | 45  | 45   |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation (r) between the statements 'other subjects in the FET band curriculum are influenced by the knowledge provided by the subject, L.O.' and 'in teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful' is 0.713. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.713$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). A correlation was done between the two statements: there are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O., in the FET band and the strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject. This is clearly illustrated in Table 4.33 below.

**Table 4.33: Relationship between strategies and methods of teaching L.O. and strategies that are conducive to teaching L.O.**

**Correlations**

|  |                     | There are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O., in the FET band | The strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| There are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O., in the FET band                                     | Pearson Correlation | 1  | .423**   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | .005   |
|  | N                   | 44   | 43   |
| The strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject | Pearson Correlation | .423**   | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .005   |  |
|  | N                   | 43   | 44   |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements ‘there are simple and effective strategies and methods of teaching the subject, L.O., in the FET band’ and ‘the strategies used in the transmission of L.O. content and its understanding are conducive to the teaching and learning of this subject is 0.423. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.423$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: ‘In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful’ and ‘if the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level,



learners' lives would be better or different in many ways'. This is clearly illustrated in Table 4.34 below.

**Table 4.34: Relationship between the teaching and learning of L.O. and L.O. as a special subject**

| Correlations  |                     |  |   |
|---|---------------------|--|---|
|   |                     | In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful | If the subject L.O. was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways |
| In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful    | Pearson Correlation | 1  | .346*   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | .021  |
|   | N                   | 45   | 44  |
| If the subject L.O. was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways | Pearson Correlation | .346*  | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .021   |   |
|   | N                   | 44   | 44  |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements 'in teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful' and 'if the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways' is 0.346. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.021, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.346$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'if the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways' and 'the subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system'. This is clearly illustrated in Table 4.35 below.

**Table 4.35: Relationship between L.O. as a special subject and L.O. as a significant subject in the FET band**

| Correlations  |                     |   |   |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
|   |                     | If the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways | The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system |
| If the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways           | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .111  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .480  |
|   | N                   | 44  | 43  |
| The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system | Pearson Correlation | .111  | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .480  |   |
|   | N                   | 43  | 43  |

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements: 'if the subject, L.O., was a special and important subject at FET level, learners' lives would be better or different in many ways' and 'the subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system' is 0.111. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.480, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.111$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). A correlation was done between the two statements: 'the subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system' and 'tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight'. This is illustrated in Table 4.36 below.

**Table 4.36: Relationship between the significance of L.O. in the FET band and tasks to develop learners' insight**

| Correlations  |                     |   |  |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
|   |                     | The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system | Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight |
| The subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary points entry system | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .026   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .870   |
|   | N                   | 43  | 42   |
| Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight  | Pearson Correlation | .026  | 1  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .870  |  |
|   | N                   | 42  | 45   |

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements: 'the subject, L.O., is significant in the FET band as a compulsory subject, even without its recognition by the tertiary point's entry system' and 'tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight' is 0.026. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.870, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.026$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content' and 'teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content'. This is illustrated in Table 4.37 below.

**Table 4.37 Relationship between teachers giving support and opportunities to explore and gain understanding**

| Correlations  |                     |   |   |
|---|---------------------|---|---|
|   |                     | Teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content | Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content |
| Teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .759**  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .000  |
|   | N                   | 45  | 43  |
| Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content           | Pearson Correlation | .759**  | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000  |   |
|   | N                   | 43  | 43  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements: ‘teachers give constant support to their learners so that they acquire the required understanding of the content’ and ‘teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content’ is 0.759. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.759$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: ‘tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight’ and ‘learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning’. This is illustrated in Table 4.38 below.

**Table 4.38: Relationship between tasks help learners to develop insight and learners are able to approach teachers**

**Correlations**

|   |                     | Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight | Learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning |
|---|---------------------|--|---|
| Tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight                    | Pearson Correlation | 1  | .137  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | .377  |
|   | N                   | 45   | 44  |
| Learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning | Pearson Correlation | .137   | 1   |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .377   |   |
|   | N                   | 44   | 44  |

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements: 'tasks that are given to the learners help to develop their content insight' and 'learners are able to approach their teachers with concerns and input regarding their learning' is 0.137. This coefficient shows that there is a weak or no relationship between the two statements. The probability ( $p$ ) of this correlation coefficient is 0.377, which is more than 0.05, thus implying that there is no statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.137$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content' and 'teachers always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning'. This is illustrated in Table 4.39 below.

**Table 4.39: Relationship between opportunities to explore and gain understanding and learners' ideas and suggestions**

| Correlations   |                     |   |  |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
|  |                     | Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content | Teachers always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning |
| Teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content    | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .590**   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .000   |
|  | N                   | 43  | 43   |
| Teachers always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning | Pearson Correlation | .590**  | 1  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000  |  |
|  | N                   | 43  | 44   |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation ( $r$ ) between the statements 'teachers always give learners opportunities to explore and gain a better understanding of the content' and 'teachers

always consider and encourage learners' ideas and suggestions that contribute to their learning' is 0.590. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.590$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life' and 'in teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful'. This is illustrated in Table 4.40 below.

**Table 4.40: Relationship between L.O. is about life in general and teaching and learning of L.O. should be taken seriously**

| Correlations  |                     |   |  |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
|   |                     | The L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life | In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful |
| The L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life | Pearson Correlation | 1   | .365*  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |   | .014   |
|   | N                   | 46  | 45   |
| In teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful        | Pearson Correlation | .365*   | 1  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .014  |  |
|   | N                   | 45  | 45   |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation (r) between the statements 'L.O. subject content is about life in general and about life in relation to its future and being successful as a person in life', and 'in

teaching L.O., the teaching and learning of this subject should be taken seriously for it to be successful and meaningful' is 0.365. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.014, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.365$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

A correlation was done between the two statements: 'without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling' and 'people without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject'. This is illustrated in Table 4.41 below.

**Table 4.41: Relationship between experience and teaching specialisation and teaching without educational or curriculum understanding**

| Correlations   |                     |  |   |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
|  |                     | Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling | People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject |
| Without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling | Pearson Correlation | 1  | .507**  |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     |  | .000  |
|  | N                   | 46   | 45  |
| People without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a subject            | Pearson Correlation | .507**   | 1   |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |   |
|  | N                   | 45   | 45  |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation (r) between the two statements 'without experience and teaching specialisation, L.O. is the easiest subject in the FET band of schooling' and 'people without educational or curriculum understanding are good at teaching L.O. as a



subject' is 0.507. This coefficient shows that there is a strong and positive relationship between the two statements. The probability (p) of this correlation coefficient is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, thus implying that there is a statistically significant relationship between them ( $r=0.507$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

#### **4.3 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

The results showed that there was either a greater percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the questionnaire statements, or a larger percentage of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the questionnaire statements. The results also showed that there was a minority percentage of respondents who were either neutral or silent about the questionnaire statements. This discussion addresses the question of validity and reliability of the results, and this simply means whether the questionnaire was able to measure what it intended to measure, and whether the same results would be reached all the time if the same research was conducted. The statements in the questionnaire were drawn up based on the objectives and the research questions of the study. The three variables used to compile the questionnaire in order to answer the research questions were: (i) the academic value of the subject, L.O., in the FET curriculum; (ii) the L.O. teacher preparedness and training and (iii) the L.O. mediation strategies. When the statements from the questionnaires received were analysed, Cronbach's Alpha was applied to the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha is a test used to determine the validity level of the questionnaire.

Correlation means a connection between things. Correlations were done between pairs of questionnaire statements and the results showed either a strong and positive relationship between the statements, which also implied, by analysing the probability correlation coefficient, that there was a statistically significant relationship between the two statements. It also happened that, when correlations were done between other two questionnaire statements the results showed a weak or no relationship between the two statements. This implied that there was no statistically significant relationship between the two statements.

Indications of a strong and positive relationship and a statistically significant relationship between the questionnaire statements did not mean that the respondents always agreed or strongly agreed with those statement; on occasions, it meant that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with those statements. In some cases, results showed a weak or no relationship at all between two statements. This implied that no statistically significant relationship existed; once again, this did not mean that the statements were disagreed with or strongly disagreed with, but meant that one statement could have a high percentage of respondents who agreed with it, or strongly agreed with it, while the other had a high percentage of respondents who disagreed with it or strongly disagreed with it. There were cases where the results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the questionnaire statements. This interpretation showed that the respondents related their own experience as a positive response to the questionnaire statements. In the cases where the results showed a great percentage of the respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the questionnaire statements, this interpretation showed that the respondents related to the questionnaire statements with a negative response. The results also showed that there was a low percentage of respondents who were either neutral or silent concerning the questionnaire statements. This interpretation thus indicated that, sometimes, the respondents had nothing to say, or were doubtful as to what to say about some of the questionnaire statements, although this happened in very rare cases. This was shown by respondents opting to remain neutral, or, where there were missing items (meaning that there were no responses for those items).

Rooth (2005) stresses that Life Orientation offers possibilities for equipping learners in South Africa with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to face the challenges they encounter as informed, confident and responsible young people. According to Rooth, (2005) many of the needs and challenges that the learners face can be addressed through the subject of Life Orientation.

With regard to teaching and learning, Cornbleth (1990) classifies mediation into organisational mediation and structural mediation. The first type requires teachers to expose learners to the realities that exist in society as part of the human experience (thus requiring teachers to consider the demographics of learners from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, with different socio-cultural values). The

second entails structuring the teaching and learning *milieu* in terms of, for example, learners' grouping, selection of textbooks and other teaching and learning material, and teaching strategies and learning styles.

Olivier (1997) emphasises the link between the espoused outcomes-based curriculum model and the critical praxis paradigm, pinpointing that outcomes-based curriculum mediation requires teachers to assist, facilitate and guide the following: social interaction, the progress towards achieving the intended learning outcomes, (mastery of knowledge, skills acquisition, and development of adequate values and attitudes) problem-solving, processing of information, interpretation of information, contextualisation of knowledge and outcomes, use of relevant methodologies for collecting information, opportunities and resources and revisiting strategies. The above discussion lays the foundation of the CAPS which emphasises the teaching of LO.

Pinar (2004), Apple (2004) and Null (2011), identify teachers, learners, subject matter and learning environment or *milieu* as the four main places for mediation of a subject curriculum. The view of knowledge construction held by Tylerian theorists upholds the notion of knowledge as empirically, analytically and objectively constructed by the educational experts (Null, 2011). Prinsloo (2007) reported in his findings, that 20 teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they had had little rigorous formal training in the presentation of the L.O. programmes.

Olivier (1997: 28) asserts that the success of outcomes-based curriculum delivery depends on the alignment of the tuition offered to learners and the concerns of learners. Kelly (2009) states that mediation entails the ability to: select and organise content, align the intended learning outcome with teaching and learning strategies, and formulate assessment criteria to measure learners' level of performance towards attainment of the intended outcome. Prinsloo (2007) argues that presentation of L.O. programmes requires expert skills from teachers. They should receive intensive training over a period of time in a number of problem areas.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the analysis of the quantitative data that was collected using the questionnaires from 46 respondents teaching at 30 different secondary schools under Pinetown District in KwaZulu-Natal. A total of 46 questionnaires was received out of 60 which were distributed. The data from completed survey questionnaires were coded and captured in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 22, for Windows, and were used for descriptive and inferential analysis. Cronbach's alpha was conducted on the questionnaire. Correlations were done between questionnaire statements and the results of this showed either a strong and positive relationship between statements or a weak or non-existent relationship between statements. The next chapter will discuss the analysis of the qualitative data that was collected using semi-structured interviews.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents and discusses the analysis of the qualitative data collected using semi-structured interviews, these interviews were conducted with nine teachers (participants) from nine different secondary schools in Pinetown district in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The previous chapter presented and discussed the analysis of quantitative data that was collected using questionnaires.

Qualitative data analysis was done using what is called a thematic approach to data analysis. The main themes were identified, categorised and interpreted. The interviews were conducted using a sample of 9 teachers out of 60 teachers who were selected as respondents to questionnaires. This sample was chosen using a percentage; 10 percent of the whole sample of 60 teachers was used, and an additional 3 teachers were selected over and above this 10 percent amount. This was effected by adding one teacher per category out of the three school categories. The three school categories used were private, ex-model C and public schools.

All nine teachers, who were approached, were willing to participate in the interview process and made themselves available to this end. These nine teachers were teachers engaged in teaching L.O. in Grades 10 to 12 (FET band). A semi-structured interview schedule was used during the interview process. This type of interview allowed the interviewer the opportunity to have face to face conversations with the interviewees. The interviewer was able to check the facial expressions and body gestures of interviewees which could also be interpreted for additional information and, most importantly, the interviewer was able to probe for further clarity and for additional information in case this was needed.

Nine out of nine teachers participated in the interviews and provided the interviewer with invaluable information. The interviews were tape-recorded and were later transcribed. The data was categorised into themes, analysed and interpreted.

Interviews were used for the in-depth descriptions and understanding of the situations related to the teaching and learning of L.O. in the FET band.

## **5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Themes were identified, categorised, analysed and interpreted according to the following three themes: (i) L.O. academic value; (ii) L.O. teacher preparedness and training and (iii) L.O. mediation strategies. These themes were identified by refining the research questions. Over and above the three main themes that were identified, there were sub-themes that were also identified from the discussions with the participants. Under L.O. academic value, the following sub-themes emerged: holistic development, life style issues, responsibility to self and others, grooming, discipline and constitutional rights. Under L.O. teacher preparedness and training the following sub-themes were identified: well-qualified person, specialised knowledge, being passionate about the subject and lifelong learning. Under L.O. mediation strategies the following sub-themes were observed: self-discovery as a teaching strategy, debates, presentations, role-play and internet search. Italics have been used below to identify the sub-themes that emerged.

The following were the themes and sub-themes that were identified during the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data:

### **5.2.1 Life Orientation academic value**

*Holistic development:* This was among the themes that were identified and the participants related to this theme while discussing the importance of the subject L.O.; that it teaches the learners good morals and values, self-discipline, good behaviour, responsibility and care towards self and others, emotional, physical, cognitive and social aspects of the learners were also discussed in order to highlight the value of L.O.

Respondent: *“I think it’s about the holistic development of the learner, which involves emotional, physical, social and cognitive development of the learner.”*

Respondent: *“It teaches them about the changes that they have to go through physically, emotionally and socially.”*

*Lifestyle issues:* Participants touched upon the issues of a positive lifestyle, while discussing that L.O. covers aspects of good diet and nutrition, regular exercise and engagement in physical activities, which is important for learners so that they stay healthy and in good condition. They mentioned that L.O. makes the learners aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse.

Respondent: *"I think Life Orientation is mostly about the learners, their lifestyles and how they carry themselves."*

Respondent: *"It basically teaches children how to build and sustain their lives and relationships."*

*Responsibility to self and others:* L.O. is seen as a subject that teaches learners to be responsible, first to themselves, and then to others, and the participants discussed this in terms of a positive self-image, development of confidence and assertiveness and the understanding, acceptance and the willingness displayed by the learners to take the initiative to help themselves and others.

Respondent: *"I give them the opportunity to sit among their peers so they can assist each other and understand each other better."*

Respondent: *"They need to know what choices and decisions to make."*

*Grooming:* Discussions about the grooming of the learners using L.O. was touched upon when participants raised their concerns that L.O. is important to shape, prepare and train learners to focus more on their future.

Respondent: *"It's about teaching learners what to expect in life and how to prepare for life."*

Respondent: *"The subject is aimed at helping the child to grow up as a good citizen."*

*Discipline:* It appeared that discipline formed part of the discussions with participants, this was identified as a contribution L.O. will bring to the lives of the learners, as this subject teaches self-discipline, awareness of misbehaviour, treating the self and others (including adults) with respect. They mentioned the issues of respecting and managing time and being cautious and considerate towards others.

Respondent: *“We need to make them understand how to behave as normal human beings.”*

Respondent: *“It’s to teach them how to live and communicate with other people.”*

*Constitutional rights:* Participants also highlighted that L.O. is very important since it teaches learners the importance of the rights and responsibilities of the individual, communities and different social groups. They mentioned that it was also very important for learners to understand and accept diversity.

Respondent: *“Life Orientation needs to focus more on constitutional rights.”*

Respondent: *“We need to involve them [learners] in any activities that are going on in the community and in the outside world so that they can extend their sense of responsibility.”*

### **5.2.2 Life Orientation teacher preparedness and training**

*A well-qualified person:* In their discussions, participants identified that a person who is well-educated and has been taught the required teaching methods and strategies is one who is best suited to be placed in a position as an L.O. subject teacher. It was also noted that beside such person’s education, s/he should be someone who is experienced in life and understands basic life issues.

Respondent: *“I believe that to apply Life Orientation you need to have a qualification.”*

Respondent: *“It requires a person who has an understanding of different teaching methods, who will usually be a person who has a teaching qualification.”*

*Specialised knowledge:* A discussion arose concerning the issue of specialised knowledge as key to teacher preparedness and training in the subject, L.O. Participants felt that it was time that the subject L.O. was taught by teachers who had specialised knowledge regarding the concepts and components of the subject and its conceptualisation. It was important that a teacher who taught the subject should understand its dynamics.

Respondent: *“You have to be very special to teach Life Orientation and this calls for subject specialisation by teachers.”*



Respondent: *“As a Life Orientation educator, you become a parent to them [learners] because you have to explain changes; in other words, it puts you in a position of loco-parentis which requires special knowledge and a lot of information.”*

*To be passionate about the subject.* It was identified that a person in charge of the subject must have passion and positive feelings towards the subject in order to be able to develop and improve his/her practices in the teaching of the subject. It was said that a person who associates himself/herself well with the subject can go the extra mile in developing and improving the teaching of the subject, and that s/he can sacrifice his/her time and talents to improve the teaching of the subject.

Respondent: *“I think a person teaching Life Orientation must be willing to sacrifice his time and talents for the benefit of the learners.”*

Respondent: *“I also think that passion is important; to be willing to learn more about the subject and to find different and interesting methods to use in teaching.”*

*Lifelong learner.* Participants mentioned that we live in an ever-changing world that exerts some demands on a person who teaches L.O., since s/he has to comply with these demands through ongoing studies and self-development with regard to the teaching and learning of the subject. Participants expressed that the person who teaches L.O. must be able to understand the emerging issues and the impact of these on the lives of the learners and communities.

Respondent: *“As a Life Orientation educator, I am willing to learn new things and to keep on learning for better understanding and better content delivery.”*

### **5.2.3 Life Orientation mediation strategies**

In discussing the suitable methods and strategies that teachers can adopt and use to teach the subject effectively, participants came up with different views, ideas and opinions. I have to mention that it was most pleasing to hear so many of the participants talking passionately about the teaching of the subject in order to improve learners' lives and their understanding of life issues.

Among the mediation strategies mentioned were the following:

*Self-discovery as a teaching strategy:* Participants mentioned that it was the best form of learning when learners were able to discover things on their own, but with the mediation and guidance of the teacher for the effective teaching of L.O. It was mentioned that this taught them to be able to identify and to search for relevant information while also developing their thinking.

Respondent: *"I provide my learners with topics and they go and search for relevant information to use to discuss that topic. In doing so, I teach them to find information on their own."*

Respondent: *"Sometimes we ask them to go to the library and do research on a specific topic."*

*Debates as a teaching strategy:* Debating was taught and mentioned as a good strategy whereby learners were given an opportunity to discuss and argue facts in a controlled manner to gain a better understanding about life issues and controversial issues in life. Elements of controversy concerning life orientation are selected to bring about a clear understanding and the proper meaning of life issues through debate.

Respondent: *"We either hold a debate or a discussion to cater to each learner's learning style."*

Respondent: *"I also use a lot of debating forums and I give them a week to prepare which improves their argumentative skills."*

*Presentations as a teaching strategy:* Participants mentioned that they used presentations a lot as a teaching strategy to prepare and teach learners to be able to work on their own in searching, selecting and arranging information around a given topic for a presentation. This enables learners to display a clear understanding of the topic and the concepts related to that topic.

Respondent: *"I show them video-clips which I get from YouTube and they understand the information faster than they would if I tried explaining it to them."*

Respondent: *"I also use my laptop to show pictures relating to controversial issues and I let them discuss these and then explain afterwards."*

*Role-play as a teaching strategy:* This was discussed as a very good strategy to instil a sound understanding of life issues when learners were given opportunities to demonstrate or role-play some of the practical issues about life. It was mentioned that this was mostly done to teach or highlight good or bad behaviour among the learners. At the end of a role-play there should be a lesson to be learned.

Respondent: *"I always find that role-play works the best, as do group discussions and group work."*

Respondent: *"We do role-play in assemblies as well, where we give them a topic."*

*Internet searching as a teaching strategy:* Participants from well-to-do schools, mostly private and ex-model C schools, mentioned the use of internet searching as a teaching strategy. They said this strategy was helpful to teach and prepare the learners to be able to work on their own while searching, identifying, selecting and arranging the required and related information, and that this exercise helped a lot in developing and improving learners' knowledge and understanding of life issues.

Respondent: *"I give them interesting websites to search on the internet since they carry android phones and we discuss the topic in class."*

Respondent: *"Sometimes we ask them to go to the library and do research on a specific topic."*

*Time allocation as factor that had an impact on the effective teaching and learning of the subject, L.O. in the FET band:* Participants also voiced their concern about the issue of the amount of time allocated to teach the subject in the FET band. They felt that justice was not done in the allocation of time to teach the subject as only two hours were allocated to teach the subject per week. They said that if sufficient time (for example, four hours) was allocated to teach the subject this would also change the perceptions about the subject which they felt were currently negative. They added that if the issue of time was considered, this would help to boost the value of the subject in the curriculum. To justify this concern, they mentioned that the subject has more than one section as it covers the theory and practical components and that physical activities cover the practical component which justifies more time being allocated to the subject.

Respondent: *“I would really like for it to be given equal valid time.”*

### **5.3 INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

To interpret the data collected using interviews, the researcher used his understanding and own interpretation of data using the abovementioned themes, categories and variables. The researcher took the participants' ideas, opinions and suggestions into consideration. According to the collected data, the participants felt very strongly about the importance and the academic value of the subject L.O. in the FET curriculum. They emphasised that the subject was invaluable in the effective teaching of the learners at this stage in order to prepare them for their future careers and as future citizens. They felt a need for the subject to be recognised and to be treated with some degree of the value it deserves within the curriculum.

It was mentioned by the participants that the teachers who teach the subject have to be well-prepared and trained, and also that they need to have a specialised knowledge and understanding, in order for the effective teaching and learning of the subject to happen. Over and above this, they have to be passionate about the subject, and be willing to sacrifice their time and talents to develop themselves and to teach better.

A variety of mediation strategies that are learner-centred were identified as the best strategies to teach the subject in order to improve and develop learner knowledge and understanding around the subject. Strategies that keep learners fully involved in their learning and development were seen as the best strategies. Participants felt that learners learn better when they source information on their own and when they interact with others to develop knowledge and understanding.

The findings discussed above relate very well to the conceptual framework that was identified for the study, and are in total agreement with the literature that was reviewed for this study.

As new knowledge that the researcher discovered through this data, participants had a strong feeling about the level of L.O. teachers' preparedness and training. They indicated that qualified teachers with specialised knowledge must teach the subject. They also indicated that there should be special and specific mediation strategies designed to make the teaching and learning of L.O. easy and successful as a very dynamic subject. Participants viewed L.O. as an invaluable subject that needs to be

treated in the same manner as other subjects in the FET curriculum in order to maintain its value as a compulsory subject. Participants voiced their deep concern about the issue of time allocation that they regarded as undermining the subject and believed to be critical to the proper upbringing and good development of the learners in the FET band. Participants regarded L.O. as a subject that teaches the learners to be independent, but yet responsible towards the self and others, and to be responsible for the choices and decisions they make towards building their future.

McNeil (1990) draws on international research concerning the teaching and learning of the subject, Life Orientation, to argue that the kind of objective-driven approaches underpinned by the Tylerian paradigm, focus on human capital (knowledge, skills and attitude) development – a very small aspect of the human factor, ignoring the fundamental dimensions of a well-developed human factor such as emotions, morals, and spirit. Olivier (1997) argues that learning which links content knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to the real life-world is authentic learning and that this is what teaching and learning should promote. Prinsloo (2007) asserts that Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life and for its responsibilities and possibilities.

Williams and Burden (1997:57) claim that sociocultural theory advocates that education should be concerned:

not just with theories of instruction, but with learning to learn, developing skills and strategies to continue to learn, with making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person.

Prinsloo (2007) insists that teachers should receive practical training in positive discipline strategies in order to teach positive behaviour and self-discipline to learners. Olivier (1997) asserts that the success of outcomes-based curriculum delivery depends on the alignment of the tuition offered to learners and the concerns of learners. This suggests that fulfilling the intentions of the curriculum designers depends, to a large extent, on teachers' ability to mediate the subject content in the classroom.

Subject knowledge and experience are important factors to consider with regard to L.O. teachers, but could become a problem if they are not trained to teach L.O.

(Khulisa Management Services, 2000). Grundy (1991) and Fullan (2007) also emphasise that curriculum changes and innovations require new responses from and new approaches by teachers with regard to subject-specific pedagogy. Rooth (2005) found that 30 percent of all teachers in her national study were not specifically trained in teaching L.O. Donald et al. (2002) explain that teachers not only need to be trained, but must also be willing to learn and share their observations, problem-solving strategies and experiences, seeing that this is a subject that focuses mainly on teaching learners the right direction in life and the approach to take towards life.

Prinsloo (2007) highlights that, with general and ongoing teacher training, the quality of teachers' input to the teaching task, and their access to the newest information in textbooks and the internet had enabled them to equip themselves for the task. Olivier (1997) argues for supporting the importance of an interactive and social constructivist approach in organisational and structural mediation. The following learning principles are recommended by the proponents of curriculum transformation in South Africa: self-learning, self-development, cross-curricular thinking, social interrelationships and a focus on the development of higher-order thinking skills, communication and decision-making. These learning principles underpin learner-centred mediation in classrooms. Schraw, (2006) in his discussions about traditional theories, conceives of knowledge as a commodity capable of being transmitted, more or less intact, from one individual to another.

The teacher helps with the development of certain skills in the learners, such as, for example; beginning, engaging with, and completing a task, including gathering information, thinking about the task and situation, and expressing thoughts, feelings and/or actions related to the task and situation (Shuell, 2013). According to Rooth, (2005) the methods\strategies for teaching Life Orientation are not merely information giving, but practical, active and participatory methods which are experiential. Skills practice is core to the development of the competencies associated with Life Orientation's outcomes and assessment standards. Student-activating teaching methods are intended to challenge students to acts of knowledge construction, rather than knowledge acquisition, and, consequently, to deepen student learning beyond the levels of reproduction and rote-learning (Struyven et al., 2006).

## 5.4 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In responding to the question about the content of the subject, Life Orientation, (L.O.) the interviewees mentioned the following, among other things: most interviewees stressed that the content covers issues around the learners' holistic development; issues are aimed at preparing learners for the future; the content is about preparing learners to be able to make informed decisions about their future careers; it is about strategies to teach learners to make correct choices and also about preparing learners to know and understand citizenship and to become responsible citizens in the future. Issues covering democracy and human rights are also part of the content.

About giving opportunities to the learners to explore and learn better, they mentioned that they give them these opportunities as they teach learners to do research or self-study; they also mentioned strategies like group discussions and debates, role play and internet search in the form of video-clips and the use of controversial statements to encourage the generation of ideas and opinions through open discussions and debates. While engaging in these debates and group discussions, learners also learn to respect others and their opinions.

Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that the subject, L.O., was very significant as a compulsory subject in the FET Band, adding that, it is at this stage that learners require a lot of guidance to make the correct and informed decisions about their lives; they are being prepared for future study as they learn about different careers; they also learn study skills and study methods; they learn about behaving in a responsible manner and to consider others in what they do. The interviewees also mentioned the learning of coping and adaptation skills. It was emphasised that it was imperative that a standardised form of formative and summative assessment was key to success in this subject to achieve the required outcomes.

Regarding the strategies used by teachers to teach L.O. in the FET Band, the interviewees mentioned the following strategies: group presentations by learners to develop and encourage presentation skills that go with positive self-esteem and self-confidence, organised debates, role-play, group discussions and research to

encourage the identification of relevant information and to be able to identify the sources of information by learners.

On the issue of other subjects that are influenced by the knowledge provided by L.O., the feeling was that most subjects are influenced by the knowledge provided by L.O. as this subject is a multi-disciplinary subject. A special reference was made to subjects like English, Social Sciences and Business Studies which were pinpointed as subjects that have special and close relationships with the subject, L.O.

A question was posed to check whether teachers consider and encourage learners' ideas (opinions) and suggestions that contribute to their learning: the same sentiments were shared regarding the importance of encouraging learners' opinions so that teachers can understand the way learners think about life issues and other controversial elements of life; morals and values and the understanding and knowledge of good and bad behaviour. They also mentioned that there are no wrong or right ideas and suggestions regarding life issues, as long as a learner is able to support his/her opinion or base it on a certain fact.

The findings discussed as a summary above relate very well to the conceptual framework that was identified for the study, and are in total agreement with the literature that was reviewed for this study. New knowledge which the researcher discovered through this data, was that participants had a strong feeling about the level of L.O. teachers' preparedness and training. They indicated that qualified teachers with specialised knowledge must teach the subject. The participants viewed L.O. as an invaluable subject which needs to be treated in the same manner as other subjects in the FET curriculum, especially in order to maintain its value as a compulsory subject. Participants voiced their deepest concerns about the issue of time allocation that they regarded as undermining the subject, and as being critical to the proper upbringing and good development of learners in the FET band. Participants regarded L.O. as the subject that teaches learners to be independent, yet responsible towards the self and others and to be responsible for the choices and decisions they make towards building their future.



In conclusion, the interviewees strongly supported the value of the subject, L.O., indicating that they felt it was being undermined at schools by colleagues offering subjects that are treated as special subjects. It was mentioned that, in some schools, L.O. teachers are requested by school principals and school management teams to give their periods to teachers who are teaching subjects which are treated as special subjects, in order to allow them to spend more time on these subjects instead of L.O., which is regarded as a subject with less value. They said that this attitude discourages learners from taking the subject seriously, and, even more damage is caused when they learn that the subject's score from their examination is not considered towards the entry point system at tertiary institutions.

The feeling was that this subject needed to be treated with the same respect as all other subjects within the school curriculum, as it is of great significance in grooming and shaping the lives of the learners in the FET Band in different ways. The same feelings were also shared regarding the number of periods allocated to this subject. Interviewees felt that at least four periods per week should be allocated, instead of the two periods currently allocated per week. A formal standardised form of assessment was identified as a tool to help add some value to this subject. Tertiary institutions needed to recognise the L.O. scores for the entry point system to add value to this subject. Teachers teaching the subject need to be qualified and to have specialised knowledge for them to be appointed as L.O. teachers and also need to be passionate about teaching the subject.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the qualitative data that was collected using the semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data from interviews with nine teachers from nine different secondary schools was analysed using the three themes that were identified by the researcher. Over and above the three main themes, sub-themes were also identified with the purpose of analysing and interpreting data. The voices of the participants were used to present the data that was collected; this approach made it possible to analyse and interpret the data. The next chapter will discuss the findings and the recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The discussions will be done by comparing the findings of the study to the research questions. The three research questions were developed during the initial stage of the research process. There were also three themes or attributes that were identified and used to answer the research questions.

The following are the three research questions that were developed:

- What paradigm informs the mediation strategies of teachers of Life Orientation?
- How do teachers' mediation strategies align content, intended outcomes and assessment for daily learning activities?
- Why do teachers perceive their mediation strategies as being congruent with the attainment of the Life Orientation curriculum statement and learning outcomes?

To answer the above questions the three themes or attributes were used: (i) Life Orientation academic value, (ii) Life Orientation teacher preparedness and training and (iii) Life orientation mediation strategies.

#### **6.2 LIFE ORIENTATION ACADEMIC VALUE**

It is evident and very clear from the findings that Life Orientation is regarded as a subject that can bring about the required change and improvement in the lives of the learners. Learners are seen as having problems and facing a number of challenges in their development to adulthood. According to the findings, the only solution available to address learners' problems and their challenges is the effective and proper implementation of the subject L.O. Learners are on their journey to become future

citizens and responsible adults and, with the support of the subject, L.O., it becomes possible for them to become responsible future citizens.

L.O. helps to develop the learners holistically and, in so doing, helps to prepare the learners physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and mentally. Total development of the learner will help in grooming and shaping a learner to become an adult, in future, who will be physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and mentally stable. L.O. gives learners an opportunity for exposure to healthy lifestyles as one of the solutions towards addressing their problems and challenges that they are faced with on a daily basis. Adopting healthy lifestyles is seen as one of the ways of assisting the learners to become competent adults and to improve their mental capabilities. Learners are taught to avoid drugs, alcohol and unhealthy dependence-producing substances to stay healthy and for their continued sound academic performance.

L.O. has been identified as a subject that helps the learners make informed decisions when it comes to life choices, whether these relate to choosing a career, a partner, a friend or a study method. This subject makes it easy for the learners to understand and know the processes and procedures that are necessary when one has to make such a choice or decision. When learners are properly guided and supported using L.O., they do not regret the choices or the decisions they normally make, as they have the wisdom to make informed choices or decisions.

This subject is also associated with the task of teaching good and positive behaviour to the learners. Learners sometimes do not know how to behave in an acceptable manner and, with the help of the subject, L.O., learners are taught appropriate behaviour and self-discipline. When learners know how to behave and are able to exercise self-discipline, this makes a positive contribution towards their academic performance and their goal achievement.

### **6.3 L.O. TEACHER PREPAREDNESS AND TRAINING**

The tendency to hire teachers who are not well-equipped and prepared to teach the subject was strongly discouraged by the respondents. It appeared that the subject, L.O. was often sacrificed when it came to the allocation of teachers to teach this

subject. Some respondents pointed out that, in some schools, mostly in the rural areas, those who had not been trained as teachers were given the task of teaching this subject. This behaviour was incorrect and inadequate for the provision of effective teaching and learning to the learners. Well-trained and prepared teachers are required to offer this subject for the benefit of the learners and for the effective teaching and learning of the subject.

Teacher training institutions equip and prepare student teachers with the pedagogic skills and knowledge that they require to fulfil their obligations as effective teachers who are able to provide learners with the required understanding and knowledge. A teacher who is well-prepared and trained for his/her job will have a better understanding of the methods and strategies that are necessary to effectively transfer information from one person to another. Teaching methods and strategies form the basics of the work of a teacher, which s/he has to include in his/her planning before the actual teaching process begins. This means that a teacher needs to identify the teaching strategies that will make his/her teaching simple and easy to understand before s/he starts the actual teaching. If a school hires a person who was not trained or prepared as a professional teacher, one wonders what the classroom interactions are like during the processes of teaching and learning.

It also appears that some learners are not interested in learning the subject and that this was directly associated with the manner in which this subject was treated. Some indications were made that certain subjects were treated as priority subjects at the expense of L.O. Cases were mentioned where teaching periods allocated to L.O. were sacrificed for other subjects which shows the unbalanced treatment of subjects in the curriculum. This behaviour had a negative impact on the manner in which learners showed their passion and respect towards the subject and its content.

#### **6.4 L.O. MEDIATION STRATEGIES**

Life Orientation teaching and learning is not only about information giving, as Rooth (2005) argues, it also involves practical activities and interactions. This argument alone provides a strong indication that there are special and specific teaching strategies and methods that are suitable for the teaching and learning of this subject.

Respondents identified strategies that worked very well in the teaching of the subject. Among such strategies, respondents mentioned discussions of controversial issues. These discussions were controlled and aimed at the sharing of opinions and feelings concerning an issue which was deemed controversial. This strategy makes a very important contribution to the development of the learners' knowledge and engenders the understanding that learners have to respect and embrace diversity of all kinds. This teaches them that people are different in the way that they think and feel about issues and that this is normal and healthy.

Role-play made it possible for the learners to be able to sensitise the way other people behave and do things differently. Playing the role of a person who exhibits very bad behaviour will teach the learners about the causes of bad behaviour since they will have to portray that person by trying to think and do things like him\her. On the other hand, playing the role of a person who exhibits good behaviour and is prosperous in life teaches the learners about the actions, character of a person who behaves well and the benefits that come from hard work and good behaviour.

Without doubt, a learner will always cherish and value the information that s/he has discovered and searched for on his\her own. Identifying and selecting relevant information is a very important skill that can make a positive contribution to the academic life of the learners. If this skill is developed through self-discovery as a teaching and learning strategy, this will mean that the learners will become active participants in their knowledge development and in the way that they form knowledge (epistemology).

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

New knowledge discovered through this data, by the researcher, is that participants felt very strongly about the level of L.O. teachers' preparedness and training. They indicated that qualified teachers with specialised knowledge should teach the subject. They also indicated that there should be special and specific mediation strategies which are designed to make the teaching and learning of L.O. easy and accepted as a dynamic subject. Participants viewed L.O. as an invaluable subject that needs to be treated in the same manner as other subjects in the FET curriculum in order to

maintain its value as a compulsory subject. Participants voiced their deepest concerns about the issue of time which gets allocated to this subject. Others were of the view that this tends to undermine the subject that they deemed critical to the proper upbringing and good development of the learners especially in the FET band. Participants regarded L.O. as a subject that teaches learners to be independent, yet responsible towards the self and others and to be responsible for the choices and decisions they make towards building their future.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study recommends that Life Orientation be treated in the same manner as other subjects in the curriculum and that this needs to be indicated in the allocation of time for teaching the subject. It is very disturbing to learn that this subject is frequently sacrificed to benefit other 'priority' subjects in the FET curriculum. It should always be remembered that this subject was introduced for the purpose of the holistic development of the learners. With the identified academic value of the subject, L.O., it cannot be doubted that the subject is indispensable within the FET curriculum.

Teacher preparedness and training should focus on the development of the specialised knowledge and understanding of the L.O. subject content. Only teachers who are qualified as specialists in the subject should teach the subject to ensure the effective teaching and learning of the subject. Teacher training and preparedness and introduction of special and specific L.O. mediation strategies should be a priority, thus contributing to the effective teaching and learning of L.O. as a dynamic and broad-ranging subject.

A standardised form of assessment needs to be developed in order to assess the subject in a formal and standardised manner. The assessment of the subject, L.O., should be similar to that of other subjects in the FET curriculum. National and provincial formal assessments should be designed to measure the competency of both teachers and the learners throughout the teaching and learning of the subject, L.O. Developing from this initiative, other issues would become easy to address, for example, the recognition of the subject scores by the tertiary institutions in their entry points systems.

Tertiary institutions need to recognise the subject scores within their entry points systems to boost the subject's value. As indicated and recommended above, the introduction of a standardised formal assessment system for the subject, L.O., by the national and provincial departments of education, will contribute to the recognition of the subject scores by the tertiary institutions. All subjects that are assessed in a standardised, formal system within the FET curriculum are taken seriously and given the value that they deserve. This is shown in the manner in which their teaching time is allocated, and by the selection and allocation of the teachers who teach these subjects, besides which, it is always guaranteed that there is effective teaching and learning taking place for the benefit of the learners.

There should be a continuous teacher development system put in place to capacitate teachers since the subject is very dynamic and also broad in range and scope. In-service teacher development programmes should be designed for this subject as these would contribute positively towards the effective teaching and learning of this subject. The in-service teacher training programmes should aim at identifying new developments and changes in the focus area of the subject and train the teachers accordingly.

Cluster groups should be formed for L.O. teachers to obtain the required support in the effective and learning of the subject content. Teachers who teach L.O. should be discouraged from working in isolation and should be able to obtain group support. Individual ideas cannot compare to collective ideas, and it is the collection of ideas that will help improve the teaching of the subject.

Life Orientation should be treated as a special subject in the way that it is taught in schools. This can be done by focusing more on projects, debates about controversial issues regarding daily life and also through community engagements by the learners. This broadly mean that the quality of interaction between an individual (learner) and the environment via an intentional (the teacher) plays a pivotal role in the cognitive development of that individual (learner).

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the conclusions of the study and recommendations. The research questions were reiterated to form a link with the conclusions made regarding the research findings. Life Orientation's academic value, Life Orientation teacher preparedness and training and Life Orientation mediation strategies were the three themes used to discuss the conclusions of the study. The contribution to the body of knowledge by this study was also discussed and lastly, recommendations were made for future research and contributions.



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