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An exploration of Grade 3 and 4 learners' experiences of the Foundation Phase Life Skills Curriculum in one urban ex- model C school

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Abstract

This study explored Grade 3 and 4 learners' experiences of the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum in one urban ex-model C school**.** The aims of this research were to understand learners' perceptions of the importance of being taught Life Skills and to examine their perspectives of the applicability of Life Skills in their lives. The research focused on what learners' understanding of the Life Skills curriculum is, to what extent they think it is relevant to their lives and what their experiences revealed about the curriculum. This was done to address the limited research available in South Africa on learners' experiences of the Life Skills curriculum. This research was conducted with children because they are thinking, agentic beings who are capable of expressing their views of the world and should be heard. It took place in an ex model C school located in an upper middle class suburb of Johannesburg. Considering that the study sought to understand learners' experiences, a qualitative research approach was used. The data were collected from a total of 15 learners by conducting four semi-structured focus group interviews, each interview comprised of 4 boys and 4 girls at a time. In order to analyse the data thematic content analysis was done in order to identify themes. From the analysis, themes were identified and findings from these revealed that children thought the Life Skills curriculum was important and helped them develop skills for their lives. They were able to identify topics that interested them or affected them, with safety being a major concern. They also showed an awareness of what it means to be socially responsible in their interactions with others. It is clear that teachers need to be more aware of how the curriculum supports children's everyday needs. More research may need to be done with township, rural and/ or private schools to further understand Foundation Phase learners' experiences with the Life Skills Curriculum.

Keywords: Learners, agentic being, Life Skills curriculum.