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Life Skills in the Foundation Phase

A multiple case study into how Life Skills is enacted in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

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Abstract

In this study, teachers' understanding of the Life Skills subject in the Foundation Phase, and the consistencies and/or disjunctures that exist between teachers' classroom practice and the Life Skills CAPS has been investigated. Although three study areas are outlined in the Life Skills CAPS, only one study area, viz Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, was explored. Two Grade 3 teachers at two different schools in Johannesburg were interviewed, and observed teaching Life Skills lessons.

The data revealed that the two teachers regard the teaching and learning of Life Skills very differently. Due to the scope of the subject, particular aspects are foregrounded, while other aspects are downplayed or avoided. The teacher in the private school context foregrounded science-based content related to Beginning Knowledge, and the public school teacher foregrounded a values-based focus related to Personal and Social Well-being. This indicated that not all aspects included in the study area Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, are equally addressed.

In addition to different Life Skills aspects being foregrounded or downplayed, the Life Skills subject itself, is not positively regarded, as Languages and Mathematics are considered to be the more important subjects in the Foundation Phase. In order to raise the status of the Life Skills subject, teachers' attitudes towards Life Skills needs to be more positive. However, teachers' attitudes appear to be related to their understanding of the subject. The purpose of Life Skills and each of the study areas is absent in the Life Skills CAPS. Thus, issues essential to the South African context associated with transformation, multicultural and citizenship education, and the various dimensions included in these, are not emphasised, not understood by many teachers, and not included in their teaching practice. The exclusion or downplaying of Life Skills is detrimental to young South African learners.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The subject Life Skills is an essential part of the Foundation Phase curriculum. This is because Life Skills addresses not only the cognitive development of learners, but development in other areas as well, such as social relations and interactions, and the emotional dimensions involved in these. Life Skills also includes physical development and personal well-being. Life Skills is intended to create awareness in learners of the world around them, hence it is not merely about imparting factual knowledge, but encouraging learners to think differently, to better understand their world and their place in it, as well as their place in the world in relation to the people around them (Browne & Haylock, 2008). In the South African context, Life Skills is specifically aimed at issues such as HIV/AIDS, respect for and acceptance of difference and diversity, such as religion and culture, and an understanding of democracy, South Africa's transition to democracy in particular. Therefore, Life Skills focuses on issues of social justice and multicultural education (Department of Education, 2002; Department of Basic Education, 2011a; Nieto & Bode, 2012), which, according to Nieto and Bode (2012, p.58), is 'antiracist, basic, inclusive, pervasive and critical'.

Life Skills is not only about exploring key personal and social issues, as in the examples mentioned above, but also includes scientific, technological, numerical and linguistic topics and issues. Hence, Life Skills essentially encompasses very nearly *all* the knowledge, skills, and values a learner needs in order to successfully function in society.

Due to the pressures placed by government education departments on teachers to focus more on Languages and Mathematics, Life Skills is considered by most teachers to be of less importance than Languages and Mathematics. Life Skills is also a subject that is so broad that, in my experience and years spent teaching in the Foundation Phase, many teachers tend to avoid teaching particular aspects of it. Possible reasons to be considered for how the subject Life Skills is viewed and addressed in the Foundation Phase classroom include: teachers' understanding of the subject and what they feel personally competent teaching (depending on where their expertise lies); how policy documents present the Life Skills subject; and, teachers' varied understandings and interpretations of Life Skills policy, which

could result in very different aspects and issues being tackled in the classroom, or Life Skills not being addressed at all.

In the Foundation Phase, according to current policy, there are three subject areas – Languages, Mathematics and Life Skills. Mathematics stands alone, Languages consists of Home Language and First Additional Language, and all the other disciplines fall under Life Skills. Therefore, Life Skills draws on Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Technology, Life Orientation, the Arts – Music, Drama and Visual Art - and Physical Education.

At the beginning of 2012, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) needed to be implemented by all Foundation Phase teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2011a) (hereafter DBE). The thinking behind the policy change was that the numerous curriculum documents teachers were previously required to work with would be collated into 'a single comprehensive' document (DBE, 2011a). There is a CAPS document for each subject relevant to the Foundation Phase, but the document of interest in relation to this study is the Foundation Phase Life Skills, which outlines how Life Skills is broken down into the following study areas:

1. Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being
2. Creative Arts
3. Physical Education

For the purposes of this research, the Life Skills study area 'Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being' is the primary focus as some schools may have 'experts' in the fields of Art, Music and Physical Education, whereas 'Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being' *has* to be dealt with by the classroom teacher. For 'Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being' teachers are expected to cover a range of issues, Topics and skills, but there are few guidelines for teachers as to how this is to be done in the Foundation Phase Life Skills CAPS. With regard to the content to be addressed, a few limited points are listed under each Topic to guide teachers.

Literature and research on Life Skills in the South African context are not as readily available as for Languages or Literacy and Mathematics. Hence there is a limited pool of literature for teachers to draw on in furthering their own understanding of Life Skills. This lack of

information could also be why Life Skills is not seen as being as important as the other Foundation Phase subjects, or why its definition lacks clarity.

The purpose of each of the CAPS is to explicitly state what each subject encompasses. However, the Life Skills CAPS is vague in its description of the specific content teachers are expected to address in each of the study areas, how this content should be addressed, and most importantly, why the suggested Topics and content are considered essential in relation to the General and Specific Aims listed in the document (DBE, 2011a).

1.2. Research Questions and Aims

In the light of the aforementioned problem statements, the main research question to be pursued in this study is:

- What do Foundation Phase teachers understand by the subject Life Skills?

Following on from this question, is one sub-question:

- What are the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice?

The way in which these two questions have been addressed is through examining how Life Skills is enacted, that is, exploring teachers' classroom practice, in two Grade 3 classrooms in two different schools in Johannesburg.

The aims of this study, emanating from the research questions, include determining if teachers' understanding of the subject is positive or negative and what factors have influenced this understanding; how the importance or lack of importance attributed to Life Skills by teachers impacts on the quality of teaching and learning occurring in the classroom; if the Life Skills CAPS has any bearing on teachers' understanding of the subject; and, what content included in the Life Skills CAPS is included or excluded in the classroom and the reasons for the choices teachers make.

1.3. Terminology

A number of key terms referred to in this research report are outlined below.

1.3.1. Life Skills and life skills

In this research report reference is made to Life Skills and life skills. Life Skills (upper-case L and S) refers to the Foundation Phase subject Life Skills as specified in the CAPS (DBE, 2011a). Reference to life skills (lower-case l and s) is a more general concept. Ebersohn and Eloff (2004, p.43) state that life skills refers to a "wide range of proficiencies that are fundamentally important for the individual's effective functioning in the modern world". The subject Life Skills is in part intended to develop and promote the life skills that learners require in order to better engage in and contribute to their communities. It is this reasoning that forms part of the basis of the subject Life Skills as outlined in the CAPS.

1.3.2. Policy

The term 'policy' is used to refer to the national curriculum in the South African educational context, viz. the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DBE, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), the Life Skills CAPS in particular. Other policy documents are indicated by name.

1.3.3. Practice

The term 'practice' alludes to the teachers' actions in the classroom, and the way in which they present their Life Skills lessons. Carl (2012, p.715) states that practice is the implementation of the curriculum.

1.3.4. Topics and topics

In the Life Skills CAPS (2011a), the prescribed content has been categorised as 'Topics', which are indicated with an upper-case T in this study. This is to distinguish the CAPS 'Topics' from the teachers' lesson 'topics' (lower-case t).

1.4. Purpose of a National Curriculum

The Life Skills CAPS forms part of the Foundation Phase curriculum together with CAPS for Languages and Mathematics. These are the documents currently being utilized by Foundation Phase teachers in their planning and teaching. Aspects to be considered, particularly in relation to the sub-question posed in 1.2., are firstly, the purpose of a national curriculum, and secondly, if content *and* methodology should be included as part of a national curriculum.

According to Hawes (1982, p.1) a curriculum is "what children should learn". He furthermore states that content should be context dependent, and that "occasionally official syllabuses contain very detailed advice for teachers" (1979, p.95). Quicke (1999) states

> [a curriculum] suggests that of all the things that could be learned these particular things have the most value; and it does this with reference to the educational needs of the students to be taught and the social and political context in which teaching and learning take place. In its broadest sense, the curriculum includes the 'how' and 'what' of learning. (Quicke, 1999, p.1)

Hawes (1982) and Quicke (1999) appear to foreground content, but do acknowledge the importance of methodology in curriculum implementation. In the South African context, there seems to be a greater emphasis on the need for the inclusion of methodology. In a report drafted by the Wits School of Education (2009) in relation to the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2002), it is suggested that the curriculum "would be greatly enriched by an engagement with what is actually going on in South African classrooms, and what sorts of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment might best enhance student learning" (Wits School of Education, 2009, p.24).Therefore, based on the arguments by Hawes (1982) and Quicke (1999) and the findings presented in the report drafted by the Wits School of Education (2009), the purpose of a national curriculum appears to be two-fold – to provide an outline of the content to be taught, and where considered necessary, to suggest how teachers could address the content.

Issues related to pedagogy are mentioned in the NCS (2002), such as context-dependent adaptations and an integrated approach to teaching and learning. However, the assumption is made that teachers understand the importance of context, how to make adaptations according to their context, and work with the curriculum in an integrated way (Wits School of Education, 2009). I argue that the Life Skills CAPS is not an improvement on the NCS as these issues have still not been addressed, content is limited and methodology has not been included.

In comparison to Life Skills, more guidance is provided for teachers in the Mathematics and Languages CAPS as specific content has been identified and explained. Examples of the types of questions teachers could ask learners have also been included. In the Mathematics CAPS, strategies have been suggested and explained, such as whole-class teaching, small group teaching and independent work (DBE, 2011c). In the Languages CAPS, a variety of reading approaches have been included and explained, particularly the steps to follow for a

'Group Guided Reading Lesson' (DBE, 2011b). The Life Skills CAPS does not include this amount of detail and/or explanation. This may be due to the large amount of content that falls under the Life Skills subject because of the various disciplines it comprises, or perhaps due to the focus given to Languages and Mathematics (see 1.5.) more attention was given to the drafting of these CAPS than was given to the Life Skills CAPS.

In addition to more detailed content and the inclusion of some methodology, the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Languages has been further supported in selected under-performing school contexts by the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). This is a strategy that includes "the provision of prescriptive daily lesson plans" as well as classroom resources and experts to coach teachers (Fleisch, 2013, p.71). Life Skills has not been included as part of this strategy as the focus is seemingly on basic education. The importance of basic education in the South African context with regard to acknowledging and addressing past inequalities cannot be disputed, and the reasons for the challenges surrounding the provision of basic education are numerous and varied (Fleisch, 2008). However, in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* published by the South African Human Rights Commission in 2006, although a definition of basic education has not been provided, the implication is made that basic education extends beyond learners being competent in Literacy and Mathematics. The report states that basic education "is an indispensable means of realising other human rights effectively in a free society, to appreciate and exercise human rights, to develop the ability to make political and civil choices, and to be able to access economic and social rights" (South African Human Rights Commission, 2006, p.4). If the focus of basic education is only on developing literate and mathematically competent individuals, then the aspect of education stated above would be lost. Nieto and Bode (2012) address this issue in their work on multicultural education.

According to Nieto and Bode (2012), multicultural education *must* be seen as the basic premise in education planning, multicultural education being encapsulated in the General Aims as well as in the Life Skills Specific Aims, although it is not as explicit in the latter. For learners to be able to engage with the world is just as necessary and important as being literate and mathematically proficient. I argue that the Life Skills subject should therefore be viewed as a part of basic education and not as an unnecessary aspect of the South African Foundation Phase curriculum. The implication of this argument is that the subjects comprising the Foundation Phase curriculum, viz Languages, Mathematics and Life Skills, must be considered as equal, rather than one being prioritised over and above another. In

addition to fostering learners' engagement with the world, such as being knowledgeable about human rights and diversity, certain aspects of Life Skills also contribute towards developing pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills. These skills lay the foundation for Languages and Mathematics, such as perceptual-motor development through participation in a Physical Education programme, which Galluhue and Ozmun (1998, p.303) claim, also "promote many of the basic readiness skills required for success in school".

1.5. Rationale

A number of problems exist in relation to the Life Skills subject in the national curriculum, as already noted in the section above. These problems include the prioritisation of the Languages and Mathematics subjects over Life Skills, the enormous scope of Life Skills as presented in the Life Skills CAPS, the inclusion of limited content and the exclusion of methodology.

Much emphasis has been placed on the under-performance of South African learners with regard to both Languages and Mathematics (Department of Education, 2003). The results discussed in the *Systemic Evaluation Report* published by the Department of Education in 2003 show that the participating Grade 3 learners from across South Africa scored the lowest in Mathematics with a score of 30%. The learners' Literacy scores (now called Languages) and Life Skills scores were equal at 54%, although the Literacy result is considered to be 'inflated' due to the combination of 'Listening Comprehension' and 'Reading and Writing' scores (Department of Education, 2003). Learners scored far higher in 'Listening Comprehension' (68%) than in 'Reading and Writing' (39%), so the overall Literacy score is seen as problematic because of the poor performance shown in 'Reading and Writing' (Department of Education, 2003). However, the variations in the scores across Mathematics, Languages and Life Skills were not investigated as part of the 2003 study, as the study focused on the overall performance of the Grade 3 learners and the contextual factors possibly related to their generally poor performance.

Due to the concerns raised regarding the poor Mathematics and Language scores, the Annual National Assessments (ANA) were introduced in 2011. The 2013 results indicate that 59% of Grade 3 learners across South Africa achieved 50% or more for Mathematics, which is an increase from 2012 where only 36% of Grade 3 learners achieved 50% or more. The results also show that 57% of Grade 3 learners achieved 50% or more for Home Language, which is

the same as in 2012 (DBE, 2013b). Even though the results show some increase and stability in what learners are achieving, the results are still considered to be low.

As a result of the consistently low Languages and Mathematics scores, as noted above, these subjects have been prioritised, and it would appear as if Life Skills has fallen by the wayside to a certain degree, resulting in mostly limited attention being given to this subject. The current curriculum makes space for Life Skills but even policy-makers and reported departmental updates in education continue to stress that priority be given to Languages and Mathematics (DBE, 2010a; Western Cape Education Department, 2012). In the 2013 ANA report, where the introduction of the CAPS and the curriculum is discussed, the following statement is included: "The CAPS has provided teachers with curriculum and assessment statements that are clear, succinct and unambiguous to enable them to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills effectively" (DBE, 2013b, p.8). Although the importance of Languages and Mathematics cannot be disputed, the fact remains that Life Skills is a subject that forms part of the current curriculum, yet it is not acknowledged. In addition, as noted in 1.4., the subject Life Skills provides the foundation to many literacy and mathematics skills, as well as developing an understanding of the context within which these 'basic' skills are used.

I argue that the apparent neglect of the Life Skills subject is a concern because of the valuable role Life Skills plays in the development of the Foundation Phase learner. In my personal experience of Foundation Phase teaching, I observed that many teachers tended to fit Life Skills lessons in where there was a space in the day or only once Languages and Mathematics had been addressed. This shows that teachers did not seem to consider Life Skills as seriously as the other two Foundation Phase subjects.

In the Life Skills CAPS a number of subjects have been merged. Anything not related to Languages or Mathematics is allotted to Life Skills, making this a multi-disciplinary subject. In order to implement the Life Skills curriculum in the classroom, teachers have to possess particular skills and knowledge (Marsh, 1992). There are high expectations with regard to the diversity of skills and knowledge that teachers are expected to have in order to address Life Skills as per the CAPS requirements, and as Ferguson (2011, p.44) noted, "learners are reliant on the assumed knowledge, values and professional competences of their teachers". Teachers are expected to be expert in the teaching of Art, Music, Physical Education, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Technology. In addition to this, teachers are required to be competent

in the handling of the more sensitive and crucial issues encompassed by Personal and Social Well-being, such as abuse, violence, religion and values. This places great responsibility, as well as great strain, on teachers' capabilities. Art, Music, Physical Education, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Technology and Personal and Social Well-being are all essential components in the holistic development of learners, and in preparing them to better function in their communities and society. However, while the significance of these components is apparent, the question that arises is: how realistic is it to expect a teacher to be equally knowledgeable in all of these areas of the Life Skills subject?

In addition to being knowledgeable in all of the abovementioned aspects of Life Skills related to content and content selection, teachers are also required to have pedagogical knowledge. According to Dewey (1963), teachers communicate knowledge and skills. In order for this 'communication' to successfully occur, teachers need to be well versed in a variety of methods, but more than this, they need to be willing to experiment with these methods in their classrooms in order to ascertain which work best (Marsh, 1992). Dewey (1963) warned though that what is effective with one group of learners may not necessarily be effective with another group. This means that teachers also need to have an understanding of their learners in order to determine which methods could possibly be the most effective and what content the most appropriate for each particular class of learners. The selection of Life Skills content and method/s would be based on teachers' understanding of the varied social, cultural and economic contexts that currently prevail in South Africa.

Another concept central to the work of Dewey (1916; 1963) in education is that of experience. This entails considering both the experiences that learners bring into the classroom, as well as creating experiences in the classroom from which learners learn. Both kinds of experiences are equally important in the teaching and learning of Life Skills, with "the quality of the experience" being key (Dewey, 1963, p.27). This 'quality' relates back to teachers' pedagogical knowledge and how they are able to select and implement appropriate methods to ensure this quality (Shulman, 2004).

According to Piaget (as cited in Kessen & Kuhlman, 1970, p.18) "the development of knowledge seems to be the result of a process of elaboration that is based essentially on the activity of the child". As this activity must be practical and physical in nature, it relates to Dewey's notion of experience. Learners need to engage and interact with their environment, people, and concrete objects, and through the use of their senses come to learn about and start

to develop an understanding of their world, such as in the study areas Beginning Knowledge and Creative Arts. The more activity taking place, the greater the amount of experience gained and knowledge that will be constructed by the learner through the processes of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. Kessen and Kuhlman (1970, p.98) state that "assimilation involves the action of the person on objects and the changes produced in him as a consequence of his action ... accommodation involves the action of the environment on the person". So, accommodation forces a response and assimilation is the response. Equilibration occurs when the processes of assimilation and accommodation are balanced. It is through the learner's interaction with his/her environment that this balance is continuously upset and the restoration of balance is where learning occurs (Kessen & Kuhlman, 1970).

Life Skills is an important aspect of learners' development because it not only expands the knowledge base of learners as related to disciplinary subjects, but also provides space for topics and issues to be discussed that have been identified as essential in citizenship education as included in the General Aims stated in the National Curriculum Statement (DBE, 2011a). If the focus in classrooms is on Literacy and Mathematics alone then these other aspects may be addressed too implicitly or not addressed at all. I argue that being literate and mathematically efficient is only a part of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that learners require to function within society more largely.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes can be addressed by teachers considering all aspects of learners' development. These aspects include cognitive, physical, affective or emotional, social and creative development. For Gallahue and Ozmun (1998) it is also important for teachers to be aware of learners' physical development and how this development will influence the teacher's decisions in choosing appropriate Life Skills content for activities. These physical or play activities in turn aid cognitive and affective development. Lewis (1986) emphasises that cognitive and affective development go hand in hand, and that affective development is an important factor in how learners develop socially and how they are able to form relationships (Lewis, 1986). Creativity is associated not only with art, music and drama, but also with the way in which learners think and problem solve (Kaufman & Bauer, 2006).

Even though the interconnectedness of the abovementioned aspects of development need to be considered, so too does the interconnectedness of the Foundation Phase subjects. Life Skills elements may be incorporated into Mathematics and Languages lessons, but more than

this, the subject Life Skills provides a space for particular aspects of learners' development to be addressed, and these in turn enhance Languages and Mathematics teaching and learning. The study area Physical Education allows for a focus on physical development where very specific skills are introduced and practiced, such as spatial perception which is essential for Mathematics (Gallahue & Ozmun, 1998). Beginning Knowledge provides a focus on scientific enquiry skills and specialised content, which requires particular reading and comprehension, so enhancing Languages (Altieri, 2011). Personal and Social Well-being provides a safe space for sensitive issues to be addressed through discussion without the teacher placing unnecessary pressure on the learners to produce a piece of work at the end of the lesson. Creative Arts provides the learners with an expressive outlet and encourages learners to view the world differently, as well as engage with issues of difference and diversity in discussing existing works of art (Ministry of Education, 2001).These examples highlight the specific aims of Life Skills which, if absorbed into Languages or Mathematics, may not have the same impact or intended outcome as could be achieved through Life Skills as a stand-alone subject.

It could be argued that the Life Skills CAPS is problematic in that the links between the Foundation Phase subjects and how one supports or encourages development in another is not outlined. It could further be argued that the integration of issues related to citizenship education through the exploration of aspects such as difference and diversity, values, and creating understanding of the various social, cultural and economic contexts found in South Africa, is not nearly explicit enough. These are mentioned in the Life Skills CAPS but are not outlined in sufficient enough detail for teachers to understand their importance and their role in learners' development, as has been considered in The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a)

Consequently, given the importance and value of the Life Skills subject, engaging with two Grade 3 teachers and listening to their views on the teaching and learning of Life Skills has been enlightening. Understanding what teachers prioritise and why, and seeing how these translate into the teaching and learning of Life Skills reveals what teachers are able to manage and cope with and what is realistic in terms of how much of and which parts of the Life Skills curriculum is addressed. The study has also allowed for the teachers' different understandings and interpretations of Life Skills to come to the fore, which is important in that it provides insight into how the subject is viewed and what is emphasised, downplayed or avoided in the classroom.

1.6. Research Methodology

This qualitative, multiple case study explores teachers' understandings of Life Skills. It compares what teachers understand Life Skills to be with how they practice Life Skills in the classroom. Furthermore, the multiple case study design is used to show the consistencies and disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice in two particular school contexts – one a public school, and the other a private school. The research was conducted in two Grade 3 classes at two primary schools in Johannesburg.

The one school is a private school in the northwest of Johannesburg where the learners mainly come from affluent families living in the surrounding suburbs. The other school is a public school in the west of Johannesburg. Learners attending this school come from the surrounding area and is populated with children from families from a lower socio-economic context than the learners at the private school.

These schools were selected because the socio-economic contrast between the school contexts has allowed for a comparison to be made in what teachers understand by Life Skills, and also in how they address Life Skills in their respective school contexts.

Data were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with each Grade 3 teacher at their respective schools. The interviews were supplemented by a series of four observations of the participant teachers teaching Life Skills in their Grade 3 classrooms.

1.7. Data Analysis

The data collected have been analysed using the concepts 'meaning condensation' (Kvale, 1996) and 'practical knowledge' (Elbaz, 1983).

Kvale's (1996) notion of 'meaning condensation' has been used as a means to analyse the data elicited from the semi-structured interviews.

As consistencies and/or disjunctures between Life Skills CAPS and teacher's practice have also been explored, data analysis in this regard was conducted deductively as particular themes were identified as points to explore in the data prior to the data collection. The specific themes investigated were context, content and lesson implementation.

Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' has been used as a lens to analyse the data collected from both the semi-structured interviews and the series of observations.

The abovementioned concepts are further explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

1.8. Structure

The structure of this research report is as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the Life Skills subject as specified in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), as well as the problems associated with the teaching and learning of the subject. The research aims, questions, rationale and methodology are briefly outlined.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical framework and literature. Various definitions of Life Skills are explored, and the South African Life Skills curriculum is considered in more detail.

In **Chapter 3** the research design for this multiple case study is outlined. This includes the delimitations of the study, the research site, participants and methods, as well as the ethical considerations and an explanation of how the data collected is analysed using Kvale's (1996) 'condensation approach' and Elbaz's (1986) concept of 'practical knowledge'.

Chapter 4 presents the data collected and the results of the analysis of the data according to the themes context, content, lesson implementation and integration. This chapter also includes a comparison of the two school contexts investigated.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by providing a summary of the research conducted, stating conclusions related to the research questions posed in Chapter 1, and provides a number of recommendations connected to the value of the teaching and learning of the Life Skills subject in the Foundation Phase.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, the teaching and learning of the subject Life Skills in the Foundation Phase was problematised in considering the priority, or lack thereof, given to Life Skills in relation to basic education as well as the content knowledge, skills and competences required of teachers in addressing this multi-disciplinary subject. The following chapter explores and compares various definitions and concepts of Life Skills as presented in the literature, gives a brief overview of South African educational policy and the current curriculum, being the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), and explores the Life Skills curriculum more specifically. Teacher practice is also considered in relation to Elbaz's (1983) notion of practical knowledge, and experiential and context related learning as proposed by Dewey (1916; 1963).

2.2. Life Skills

The subject Life Skills is one that needs to be explicitly defined in order for teachers to better understand what it entails. A number of definitions are contemplated, contrasted and compared in order to determine if these definitions provide an adequate explanation of Life Skills.

In the Foundation Phase the structure of the subject Life Skills has changed from being separately named subjects - such as History, Geography, Science and Guidance - to a multi-disciplinary miscellany of content. In the Intersen, Senior and FET phases, these subjects are dealt with separately, which allows for teachers to become expert in their particular subject, rather than needing to be knowledgeable in all of them as seems to be required of Life Skills teachers in the Foundation Phase.

It is important to explore how Life Skills as a subject in general is defined in relation to Life Skills in the CAPS, especially considering how the study areas, viz. Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, Creative Arts and Physical Education, cover such a wide and diverse range of content and skills. A number of definitions are examined below from the literature to establish how Life Skills is conceptualised.

The Malawi Ministry of Education (as cited in Chirwa, 2009, p.16) defines Life Skills as "an interactive process of teaching and learning ... [that] develop(s) attitudes and skills which

enable [learners] to cope with challenges of life". It is further stated in the policy that these attitudes and skills are to be achieved in relation to holistic learning.

Ebersohn and Eloff (2004) write about the much broader concept 'life skills' as opposed to the subject Life Skills, and define 'life skills' as follows:

> The concept "life skills" is self-explanatory and is the general term for all the skills and capacities that an individual needs to be able to enrich his or her life in a meaningful way. All interpretations of the concept "life skills" have the following in common: the focus in each case is on those skills and strategies that enable an individual to act in accordance to the demands of self, others and the environment. In other words, the skills that are essential for individuals to cope independently and proficiently with day-to-day activities, demand and change in various environments.
>
> (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2004, p.43)

It is stated in the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a, p.8) that "the Life Skills subject is central to the holistic development of learners. It is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners, and with the way in which these are integrated". It is further stated that "Life Skills is a cross cutting subject that should support and strengthen the teaching of the other core Foundation Phase subjects namely Languages and Mathematics" (DBE, 2011a, p.8). This statement then clearly illustrates the importance of the Life Skills subject, and the importance of integrating Life Skills into Languages and Mathematics teaching and learning. If Life Skills is intended to 'support and strengthen' the other Foundation Phase subjects, the role of Life Skills in the Foundation Phase classroom should be viewed by teachers as being essential, and a part of, rather than separate to, the teaching and learning of Languages and Mathematics (Altieri, 2011).

However, this does not mean that there is no need for the Life Skills subject, as within this space the same content could be addressed from a different perspective. For example, a text based on a particular Life Skills Topic integrated into a Literacy lesson with a Literacy focus perhaps on language construction, would have a different focus when the same text is used in a Life Skills lesson where the critical issues and concepts can then be interrogated and discussed, and the development of scientific skill perhaps emphasised. I argue that this element of learning may be lost if the subject Life Skills is only viewed as one to be integrated into other subjects, rather than as a subject in its own right.

Although in reading the definitions it would seem that there is agreement, it is clear that while there are similarities across the three definitions, there are also aspects that have been included in some definitions and excluded in others.

Therefore, Ebersohn and Eloff's (2004) statement that the concept life skills is 'self-explanatory' is problematic, as one, shared, definitive view of how this is translated into the subject Life Skills and what this encompasses has not been offered, even between the few definitions that have been found. The definitions are based on individual views of Life Skills and therefore include aspects which each party places more importance on.

However, if one considers the definitions more broadly the points of similarity become more evident. There is a focus on skills development and holistic learning, speaking to the diversity of Life Skills, and the diversity of skills and capabilities Life Skills teachers need to possess. There is also importance placed on the development of these skills in preparing learners to successfully engage with the world at large. This is a sentiment which lies very much at the heart of Life Skills in the CAPS.

However, the reconceptualisation of Life Skills as presented in the CAPS is still a fairly recent addition to the Foundation Phase. How then does the current structure of the South African curriculum compare with an international curriculum? The Life Skills curriculum utilised in England has been selected for this comparison.

2.2.1. Life Skills Curricula

The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a) includes not only Life Skills related subjects but also Languages and Mathematics. Teachers are then working with one document instead of four as is the case with the CAPS documents. As previously stated the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a) comprises three study areas, but The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a) lists each Life Skills related aspect separately. These have been tabulated below:

Life Skills CAPS	**National Curriculum in England**
Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being	Science; Design and Technology; Geography; History
Creative Arts	Art, Craft and Design; Music
Physical Education	Physical Education

Provision is made for ‘Computing’ in the Life Skills curriculum specific to England, which the Life Skills CAPS makes no mention of. There is no specific study area or subject in England’s curriculum that matches ‘Personal and Social Well-being’, but in the introduction to the curriculum document it is stated that:

> Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:
>
> - promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
> - prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. (Department for Education, 2013a, p.5)

These stipulations then show that recognition has been given to the development of learners personally and socially, although it is in this regard that the Life Skills CAPS provides a little more detail of what Personal and Social Well-being should entail, specifically for the South African context (DBE, 2011a).

In the National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a) the purpose and aims are provided for every study area, which in the Life Skills CAPS is quite vague. In this regard, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002) was perhaps a more useful document as each subject, then termed a learning area, was listed, defined and given purpose separately. In the Life Skills CAPS, by collapsing six Life Skills related learning areas into three study areas, and attempting to develop a more concise document, much of the essential detail has been lost, particularly the purpose and importance each aspect holds for Life Skills teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. Both curricula, for England and South Africa, assume that teachers will take responsibility for further research and planning.

One aspect of the Life Skills curriculum in the study area of Beginning Knowledge, namely History, will be used as an example to illustrate the way in which the various policies present Life Skills.

2.2.2. How History is Presented in Policy

In each of the policy documents History is introduced as follows:

The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a, p.188) states that

> A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.
>
> (Department for Education, 2013a, p.188)

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002) (RNCS) (Department of Education, 2002, p.126) states that

> A study of History within the General Education and Training Band enables learners progressively to develop:
>
> - a general knowledge and understanding of the history of all people who reside in South Africa;
> - an understanding of our diverse past and mutual grasp of how that informs our present reality (historical consciousness);
> - an understanding of the interpretation of heritage and its role in constructing identity;
> - an appreciation of the special contribution of oral tradition and archaeology, and the impact of the environment on historical developments;
> - the ability to become critically responsible citizens within a context where human and environmental rights are fostered;
> - an understanding of the patterns of social development and the impact of technology on society and the environment;

- an understanding of organisations and how to interact with and participate in them; and
- the skill of interacting critically with information from a range of sources, including sources that offer different perspectives of the same event or issue.

(Department of Education, 2002, p.126)

The Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a, p.8) states that

> The content and concepts of Beginning Knowledge have been drawn from Social Sciences (History and Geography), Natural Sciences and Technology.
>
> (DBE, 2011, p.8)

The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a) provides a clear and concise overview of the teaching objectives of History, which could be applicable to the South African context as well. This overview is specific to learners aged five to eleven, whereas the RNCS introduction included all grades in the General Education and Training Band, therefore, Grades R-9. When comparing the Life Skills CAPS to both the RNCS and The National Curriculum in England, the amount of detail lacking is evident, which is problematic as teachers may fail to see the purpose of History and thus the potential value of this aspect of the Life Skills curriculum.

The *Manifesto on values, education and democracy* (hereafter the *Manifesto*) (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.41) states that History "nurture(s) a spirit of critical enquiry and assist(s) in the formation of historical consciousness". History is considered to be an essential part of the South African curriculum because of the role it plays in instilling values in learners. History is therefore included in the *Manifesto* as one of sixteen 'educational strategies' through which values are taught (Ministry of Education, 2001).

In Grade 3 Term 4, a three week topic, 'How people lived long ago', is included in the Life Skills CAPS. The Life Skills workbook (DBE, 2013c) includes a number of activities and some content, but the teacher would need to research and add information, as the content is limited and many of the activities rely on the learners' previous knowledge or assumed knowledge. For example, learners are required to discuss in pairs interesting aspects included in a picture of farm life in the past and then report back, but no additional information is provided. If learners choose to discuss the pictures of transport included, the types of

transport and the reasons for the use of these particular types of transport are not included. Other activities include:

- adding to a timeline
- completing a family tree and asking questions about one's ancestors
- considering someone else's story of their childhood and considering if it is better to be a child now or in the past
- identifying past and present items such as telephones, lanterns, computers and so on.

This analysis of only one study area of the Life Skills curriculum and one Topic within the study area highlights a number of problematic issues. These issues include: an overall and specific purpose is lacking in the Life Skills CAPS; much is assumed by the curriculum writers about the content and pedagogical knowledge of teachers; activities rely on learners' previous knowledge and only minimally extend this into new knowledge, which is problematic according to Moll, Bradbury and Winkler (2001) because school knowledge must teach the learners unfamiliar content; and both the Life Skills CAPS and the relevant workbooks are not comprehensive in relation to content.

The Life Skills subject is not confined to only content specific disciplines such as History as outlined above, but also includes elements related to the promotion of citizenship – one such element being values education. Values in Life Skills is discussed in the next section.

2.2.3. Values in Life Skills

Ten fundamental values have been identified in the *Manifesto* for inclusion in the curriculum, namely democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu or human dignity, an open society, accountability, rule of law, respect, and reconciliation (Ministry of Education, 2001). When considering the Life Skills CAPS, as well as the Department of Education workbooks supplied to schools in an attempt to guide and support Life Skills teaching and learning, it is not clear if these values have been adequately addressed.

It appears as if values may receive more attention in the South African curriculum than in The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a), although England has a separate curriculum document, viz. *Citizenship Programmes of Study* (Department for

Education, 2013b), that deals with values and social and political issues. However, the Citizenship Programmes are only introduced in key stages 3 and 4, or for learners aged between eleven and sixteen, therefore excluding Foundation Phase learners. In The National Curriculum in England (Department for Education, 2013a) examples of values are included in Physical Education, such as fairness and respect, and as a part of History, thus being more implicitly than explicitly included.

According to Nieuwenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007, p.1) values are "established, reinforced, refined and confirmed in the priceless hours of school and student life" and that "each individual must redefine, attach and impart meaning to a value in order to internalise the value as an abstract concept" (Nieuwenhuis et al, 2007, p.77). However, an analysis of the Life Skills CAPS reveals that values are not always explicit. While values are explicitly mentioned in the General Aims of the South African Curriculum (DBE, 2011), values are implicitly suggested in Life Skills content, such as in the History topic discussed in 2.2.2., or in the religion components, for example, "Festivals and special days that people in the community celebrate" (DBE, 2011a, p.56). The most explicit values content appears in the Topic 'Rights and Responsibilities', but the extent to which a focus on values occurs is teacher dependent.

Niewenhuis et al (2007, p.77) states that "values should be 'taught' in such a manner that they are absorbed and lived by young South Africans and not merely obeyed as an imposition". One way in which he suggests this be accomplished is through the teacher acting as a role-model for learners. Hence teaching values can then be partly addressed in the 'how' of teaching rather than only in the 'what' of teaching. Values can be imparted through the teacher's conduct rather than only through the content.

In the foreword of the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.ii), former Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal referred to the document as being "a call to all to embrace the spirit of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa". As both Nieuwenhuis et al (2007) and Asmal have stated, the embracing of the ten fundamental values apply to all South Africans, and in this way it may then be possible for these values to be perpetuated in our learners.

Another of the sixteen 'educational strategies' noted in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) is that of 'Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools'. It is essential that teachers address values through dialogue and discussion as learners are then not

only being exposed to values, but also able to better critically understand values (Niewenhuis et al, 2007). It is believed that "dialogue is one of the values most desired – and most lacking – in South African schools" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.23).

According to Kazepides (2010) dialogue makes learners' participation active rather than passive. The purpose that Kazepides (2010) attaches to dialogue resonates with the intention of the 'educational strategy' of 'Nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools', as he states that "the pursuit of truth and understanding are what give the process of dialogical engagement its direction and purpose and makes that process so unique, substantive, and valuable" (Kazepides, 2010, p.92). Younnis (in Woodhead, Faulkner & Littleton, 1999, p.18) similarly argues that "a social system that includes co-construction and cooperation logically leads to a third aspect of mutual understanding", which relates to the value of democracy stated previously, being one of ten fundamental values for the South African context (Ministry of Education, 2001). As critical dialogue is a pedagogical approach not included in the Life Skills CAPS, this raises the following questions: Are teachers enabling these types of democratic dialogue with learners in Life Skills? Do teachers have enough of an understanding of dialogue in order to engage learners in meaningful and focused Life Skills and values discussions?

Kazepides (2010, p.92) states that "genuine dialogue is particularly demanding; it requires respect, trust, open-mindedness, and a willingness to listen and risk one's own preconceptions, fixed beliefs, biases, and prejudices in the pursuit of truth". This is very different to the more conversational approaches I have witnessed in the classroom where teachers do not necessarily have a specific focus, but ask random questions for the learners to answer, rather than giving them the space to engage more critically in the topics at hand. Kazepides (2010) and the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) imply a more critical approach to dialogue that requires a particular understanding and skill set on the teacher's part.

Dialogue can also be used as a pedagogical tool to develop learners personally and socially. One of the key features of Life Skills would appear to be that it should entail the development of learners in a personal and social capacity in order to function in and contribute to the society in which they live, hence encapsulating the principles of citizenship and multicultural education (Arthur, Davies & Hahn, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Ramsey, 1987).

The development of learners in a personal and social capacity, however, would differ from one school context to the next. It is therefore essential for the Foundation Phase Life Skills teacher to be aware of his/her particular school context, as well as the varied home contexts of the learners.

2.2.4. The Selection of Life Skills Content

As pointed out above, the selection of Life Skills content requires the Foundation Phase teacher to be cognisant of the social backgrounds of his/her learners. According to Dewey (1963), when working with young learners, determining what would be contextually appropriate or understanding what learners have already experienced or know is essential. Altieri (2011, pp.24-25) too states that "experiences in [children's] homes and communities can be woven into the classroom lessons, and formal lessons can be taken outside the classroom and applied in home and community situations". Unfortunately, in today's world, and especially in the South African context, this is a challenge for teachers. Learners come from such varied backgrounds and experiences, many of which the teacher herself cannot begin to comprehend. Foundation Phase teachers are therefore faced with a difficult task. However, an awareness that varied contexts exist and having some understanding of what these entail, is a good starting point. Content selection for specific classes should be based on the teacher's knowledge of a specific class and of particular learners.

According to Ebersohn and Eloff (2004, p.41), "people have always used life skills as a resource for mastering, refining and utilizing the dynamic circumstances of life". These authors suggest that life skills can be addressed in the classroom by means of an asset-based approach. This approach, advocated by Ebersohn and Eloff (2004), focuses on development and the building of relationships but in a way where the contributions made by learners are taken into account, rather than what needs to be 'fixed' in learners. For the teacher, this means seriously considering what learners bring to the teaching and learning situation and using their strengths, rather than focusing on their weaknesses, or labelling learners as being lacking in some way, and/or needing help.

It is for this reason that Dewey (1963, p.46) stated that "... the responsibility for understanding the needs and capacities of individuals who are learning *at a given time* ..." (emphasis added) rests with the teacher.

It could be argued that when a teacher establishes the individual abilities and contexts of the learners, the teacher is better able to understand what the learners bring to the classroom and think about creative and innovative ways of using this information in order to make the teaching and learning experience more meaningful for the learners (Dewey, 1963). Merely because a teacher has designed teaching aids and lessons, and that these may have been successful with a certain group of learners, does not mean these will be successful with all groups of learners. Rather these would need to be tailored to suit the needs of each class. Meadows (1993, p.70) supports Dewey's claim when stating that "much of cognition and learning depends on identifying the relevant knowledge which the learner already has in existing memory so that this knowledge can be used as a starting-point for learning what is new".

Some of the abilities that teachers should be cognisant of are learners' cognitive, physical, affective or emotional, social and creative abilities. For Briggs and Hansen (2012) these abilities or 'domains' are interrelated and can be successfully developed through a play-based approach at any age – child to adult. With regard to learners in primary school, Briggs and Hansen (2012) have identified six key roles of learners that teachers need to be aware of and develop, these being autonomous learners, creative learners, investigators, problem solvers, reflective learners and social learners. Each role develops a combination of the abilities or 'domains' listed above. Perhaps the one ability not as prevalent or as explicit as the others is physical ability. Learners' physical abilities, or motor development, is a field explored by Gallahue and Ozmun (1998), who also emphasise the importance of viewing learners' abilities or 'domains' as interrelated, as well as the impact that physical development has on cognitive, affective and social development.

When considering the Foundation Phase child, teachers should include each of these abilities or 'domains' in their practice where possible, rather than focusing only on the cognitive. Kaufman and Baer (2006, p.237) comment that "creativity abounds in young children's thought" and Lewis (in Curry, 1986) emphasises the importance of affective factors in learning. In discussing physical aspects of development, Gallahue and Ozmun (1998, p.193) state that "children's play is the primary mode by which they learn about their bodies and movement capabilities. It also serves as an important facilitator of cognitive and affective growth in the young child". Hence focusing on only one aspect, or focusing on various aspects but in isolation, is not recommended.

A key purpose of the Life Skills curriculum is to prepare learners for life beyond school by developing young adults who will be able to positively contribute to society. According to Lewis (in Curry, 1986), success beyond the school environment is not dependent on cognitive ability alone, but on affective factors too. When learners experience positive emotions in their younger years cognitive development is aided. Meadows (1993) however, argues that social factors are an important element in cognitive development. Gallahue and Ozmun (1998, p.324) claim that "as a child's social world and the influence of others expands, he or she develops a greater sense of independence". Therefore, Gallahue and Ozmun (1998) contend that social interactions also aid learners in becoming autonomous learners, being able to take the initiative, being responsible, and building trust. It could be argued that these aspects, as well as that of independence, then link back to the affective domain, so connecting cognitive, affective and social capabilities.

Gallahue and Ozmun (1998) believe that young learners are eager to learn with guidance, are imaginative, curious, creative, and that their learning is more concrete than abstract. Kaufman and Baer (2006, p.221) extend this notion of creativity by stating that "children organise knowledge in creative ways from a very young age". Kaufman and Baer (2006) have shown that this level of creativity is greater in classrooms that are learner-centred as opposed to teacher-centred. What Gallahue and Ozmun (1998) and Kaufman and Baer (2006) have argued regarding how young children learn, should then impact on the way in which teachers address Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. The Life Skills CAPS and workbooks are not adequate to promote learning that is concrete, creative and learner-centred (see 2.2.2). Rather the onus is on the teacher to use these documents to plan and then structure lessons that are concrete, creative and learner-centred, but more than this, to develop learners' cognitive, physical, affective or emotional, social and creative abilities. This level of planning thus requires teachers to factor in the contextual nature of Life Skills teaching and learning.

Teachers acknowledging context is what Dewey (1963) terms progressive education. When referring to a more traditional approach Dewey (1963) stated that

> the traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. (Dewey, 1963, pp.18-19)

This statement implies that a traditional approach to education has no connection or relevance to the lives of the learners that the teacher has in front of her. The focus of teaching here is on the transmission of knowledge only.

For Dewey (1963) valuable learning occurs through experience rather than transmission of content. Therefore, it is the role of the teacher to create these experiences for learners (Briggs & Hansen, 2012) as well as to make learning relevant through mediation by drawing on and making links to what learners may already have experienced in their social contexts. This would come from the 'social knowledge' that Elbaz (1983) refers to as an aspect of 'practical knowledge' discussed further along in this chapter (see 2.4.3). Hence, experience within the classroom, is linked to experience of the world beyond the classroom, but teachers need to bear in mind that different learners will interpret the experiences in different ways, based on each individual learner's previous experiences of people and place.

The content teachers need to mediate included in a formal curriculum is termed school knowledge, where "specialised, formal knowledge is usually marked out through specific language representing specific concepts" (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002, p.134). On the other end of the spectrum we find everyday knowledge which is the knowledge that learners come into the classroom with (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002). Dewey (1963) advocated that everyday knowledge be acknowledged and drawn on in order for school knowledge to become more relevant and accessible. Therefore, teachers are not only required to make links to everyday knowledge in the classroom but to move on and extend learners' knowledge base. Moll et al (2001, p.73) argue that school knowledge "enables us to move beyond the concrete, local, and practical limitations of our everyday experience and to develop our abilities to think abstractly".

The Life Skills study areas are in fact school knowledge, as these include not only specific language, terminology and skills that learners would not necessarily be exposed to in their everyday lives (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002), but also many abstract concepts (Moll et al, 2001). Based on my experience, many teachers feel that Life Skills content is everyday knowledge that children should be exposed to and/or learn about outside of school. However, Moll et al (2001, p.83) warn that a "reliance on everyday experience can limit our learning". One could argue that this applies to the Life Skills subject as well. Personal and Social Well-being may well include elements of everyday knowledge, but the extent of such knowledge would depend on the learners' backgrounds and home lives. Even where the content could be

considered as everyday knowledge, learners need to be extended beyond this (Moll et al, 2001). This extension of knowledge would appear to be limited when considering both the minimal content and activities, oftentimes reliant on existing knowledge, included in the Life Skills workbooks (DBE, 2013c).The assumption needs to be made that the writers of the Life Skills CAPS view the study areas of Life Skills as school knowledge, but perhaps, due to the limited scope of the document and the way in which Life Skills has been presented, some teachers have interpreted Life Skills as everyday knowledge rather than as school knowledge.

In the next section, a brief account is included of how the Life Skills CAPS came about.

2.3. Life Skills Curriculum and Policy Statement

Prior to the introduction of CAPS, all teachers were required to utilise the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Department of Education, 2002) in their planning and teaching. However, according to Weber (2008) many teachers found the RNCS difficult to work with, due to the lack of detail regarding the planning and content of day to day teaching; policy expectations were unrealistic in assuming that teachers would possess a broad spectrum of knowledge to draw on in working with the more integrated Outcomes Based Education (OBE) approach; and it was found that teachers favoured certain areas and neglected others based on the knowledge they did have. Other problematic issues that arose were the pressures on teachers with regard to increased workloads because of assessments, lesson preparation, and administrative work (Weber, 2008). Weber (2008) also noted that even though teachers understood Curriculum 2005, underpinned by the principles of OBE, hence a learner-centred approach where learners play an active role in knowledge construction, in practice the opposite was found to be true. Teachers, for the most part, still followed a more traditional way of teaching and were reliant on and followed textbooks and teaching guides rather than exercising the autonomy given to them related to content and method that the RNCS provided (Weber, 2008).

In October 2009, a Task Team presented their findings on the implementation of the RNCS (2002) to the Minister of Education, Angela Motshekga, in which the following concerns were raised:

- The RNCS was lacking in clarity
- Teachers were struggling with its implementation

- Teachers were faced with increased workloads
- Teachers were confused
- Teachers were stressed
- Learners were underperforming
- A huge change had occurred in a short period of time
- Documents were not user-friendly – they were long, repetitive, and often contradictory
- Outcomes and assessment standards were distracting teachers from designing valuable lessons and assessment tasks.

(Department of Education, 2009)

These concerns are in line with those highlighted by Weber (2008). It was clear that although the OBE model and new educational policy seemed sound on paper in practice it was going horribly awry.

The Task Team put forward a number of recommendations. These included a streamlining of curriculum documents which needed to be more specific with regard to content, concepts and skills teachers would be required to develop in the classroom. It is further stated in the *Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement* (2009) that these recommended changes not be a re-occurrence of past curricula, but rather a means to empower disadvantaged teachers with regard to what and how to teach in order to build their self-confidence and to positively impact on the quality of teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2009). It was acknowledged that the need for a curriculum that would provide teachers with greater structure and support, and that would hopefully address the concerns raised by the Task Team's investigation into the implementation of the RNCS (2002), was required.

Based on the recommendations of the Task Team, curriculum documents were reworked. The result being that the curriculum documents currently being utilised in South African classrooms in the Foundation Phase are the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements

(CAPS) (2011) for Languages, Mathematics and Life Skills. These documents are more prescriptive and concise than the RNCS (2002).

The Life Skills CAPS was first implemented in the Foundation Phase in January 2012. When comparing Life Skills CAPS to the Languages and Mathematics curricula, it becomes evident that the level of guidance included in the Life Skills CAPS as to how teachers should approach this subject is limited. Specific content and methods are not included, rather only suggested topics and brief points to be covered are included under each topic.

The Specific Aims included in the Life Skills CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.8) state that children should be

> exposed to a range of knowledge, skills and values that strengthen their
>
> - physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development;
> - creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music, drama and visual art activities;
> - knowledge of personal health and safety;
> - understanding of the relationship between people and the environment;
> - awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science.
>
> (DBE, 2011a, p.8)

How teachers are supposed to achieve these aims is uncertain as the direction included in the Life Skills CAPS is insufficient. This particular document, especially when compared to the Language and Mathematics CAPS for Foundation Phase, does not appear to fulfil the recommendations as proposed by the Task Team in 2009. Specific, detailed content is not provided, nor suggestions as to how teachers could address content. Skills are listed but not explained. Understandably, the amount of content is so vast and should vary from one context to the next, that including it all would be impractical. However, the importance of teachers conducting their own research and investigations is not explicitly stated, hence many teachers only work from the Life Skills CAPS rather than supplementing it. The expectation may be that teachers should be researching and investigating in any event without this aspect of teaching and learning needing to be included in official documentation, but this does not appear to be the case, based on my interactions with Foundation Phase teachers.

Returning to the Specific Aims in the Life Skills CAPS, even though these are critical and pertinent to the holistic development of learners, they require a very high level of expertise in teachers in order to meet them. Therefore, it can be argued that the subject knowledge of teachers will determine which of the aims would be addressed, but expecting each aim to be met may be unrealistic as this would require an individual teacher to be a specialist in various disciplines.

In the next section the Life Skills CAPS will be critically analysed drawing on Bernstein's (1990, 2000) notions of classification and framing, and the competence and performance models of pedagogic practice.

2.3.1. An Analysis of the Life Skills Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

According to Bernstein (1990, p.23), classification is "the strength of the insulation that creates a space in which a category can become specific", meaning that classification is associated with the relationships that exist or not between the various study areas or subjects. In the case of Life Skills, integration of content is emphasised both within the subject of Life Skills as well as across all of the Foundation Phase subjects (DBE, 2011a). This implies that the 'insulation' between the 'categories' or subjects or discipline areas comprising Life Skills, is not strong, resulting in weak classification.

Framing refers to "the principle regulating the communicative practices of the social relations within the reproduction of discursive resources" (Bernstein, 1990, p.36). In other words, framing is linked to the control exercised by the teacher and/or learners in the selection of content and what they choose to include or exclude as part of Life Skills teaching and learning. The Life Skills CAPS provides Topics and content, but ultimately, the decision to work with the Topics, and the choice of specific content related to the Topics rests with those present in the classroom. If the teacher makes the decision then framing is strong. If the learners are allowed more control and say in the decision, then framing is weak (Bernstein, 1990). However, the type of framing cannot be determined from the Life Skills CAPS, but would rather be dependent on individual teachers, and if they value the voices and contexts of the learners in their classrooms.

Bernstein (2000) proposes two models of pedagogic practice, one focuses on competence and the other on performance. The competence model of pedagogic practice implies that the

teacher possesses skills, abilities and a sound theory base in order to work more flexibly with content. The teacher also takes the knowledge that learners already possess into account and questions learners to determine their thinking. The level of autonomy that the teacher gives to the learners is higher than in the performance model (Bernstein, 2000).

A key element in successful teaching and learning for Marsh (1992) is having teachers who are empowered. The competence model of pedagogic practice allows for diverse thinking and thus creates and contributes to this empowerment. Teacher empowerment, according to Carl (2012, p.1), "does not mean unrestrained and unstructured actions, but rather increasing the learning outcomes and other experiences which may flow from them, thereby contributing towards developing the learner's potential". Hence, with regard to curriculum, teachers should be willing to experiment and make the curriculum as meaningful as possible rather than viewing it as a step by step process. Carl (2012) also states that this cannot be achieved without teachers possessing particular skills and abilities.

Bernstein's (2000) performance model of pedagogic practice focuses on practice that is routine based. There is a 'sameness' in how content is addressed. Pedagogy is more structured and regulated in this model. The teacher focuses on what learners are able to produce and this end product is assessed and considered representative of the learners' understanding of the specific content addressed (Bernstein, 2000). The idea of 'sameness' is what Coleman (2003, p.42) terms being 'context blind'. A context blind curriculum occurs where all schools, teachers, and learners are viewed in the same way. Context, and how this will impact on the implementation of the curriculum, is not taken into consideration. A curriculum is provided and teachers are simply expected to carry this out.

Based on the preamble included in the Life Skills CAPS, the impression given is that policy-makers expect teachers to work according to Bernstein's (2000) competence model of pedagogic practice. However, the structure of the Life Skills CAPS and layout of the various study areas, seem to promote the performance model of pedagogic practice. The flexibility of the competence model of pedagogic practice relies on teachers using their initiative and working with the curriculum in different and creative ways that will appeal to their learners (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). My argument is that if Life Skills is not given the same recognition as Languages and Mathematics, given the level of planning required and time constraints placed on teachers, then the step by step approach is the easier option. Teachers may merely follow the policy document and the recommended learning support materials, such as the

workbooks. Therefore, the approach taken would be the performance model of pedagogic practice.

However, I propose that if teachers possess what Elbaz (1983) terms 'practical knowledge', they could be more inclined towards the competence model of pedagogic practice where teaching and learning of Life Skills is concerned. In the next section, Elbaz's (1983) conceptualisation of 'practical knowledge' will be discussed.

2.4. Teachers' Practical Knowledge

In *School and Society* published in 1916, Dewey wrote that 'old education' is defined by "its passivity of attitude, its mechanical massing of children, its uniformity of curriculum and method". Dewey also stated that:

> It [old education] may be summed up by stating that the centre of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself. On that basis there is not much to be said about the *life* of the child. (Dewey, 1916, p.35)

According to Dewey (1916) this means that the needs of the learners are not considered in schooling. Rather there is a set curriculum that needs to be taught, which may be far removed from the experiences of the learner, but these experiences count for very little in any event. In the school setting learners are expected to sit quietly, listen and learn. For Dewey (1916) this was not appropriate. He advocated an education where learners are active participants and that allows for individuality to flourish. The way that Dewey (1916) argued this could be accomplished is through experiential learning. Experiential learning, according to Lewis and Jackson (in Jackson & Caffarella, 1994, p.5) is "learning from experience or learning by doing". Moon (2004) extends this by stating that experiential learning is a deliberate and facilitated act which leads to meaningful discovery and knowledge construction. Therefore, experiential learning empowers learners as they have greater responsibility for their own learning.

A key argument in this study is a move away from 'old education' to an approach that more seriously considers the learner, the existing knowledge they possess, and the benefits of experiential learning. These considerations are dependent on the knowledge of the teacher. Elbaz (1983) explores the concept of the 'practical knowledge' of the teacher, which very simply is knowing "how to do things" (1983, p.14). Elbaz (1983, p.170) further explains that

an awareness of ‘practical knowledge’ may result in “a greater self-understanding and professional growth” in teachers.

Elbaz (1983) uses the term ‘practical knowledge’ as an umbrella term that encompasses a particular set of ‘knowledges’ that operate interdependently, these being situational, personal, social, experiential and theoretical knowledges.

Elbaz (1983) investigates the above knowledges within the following categories:

- knowledge of self and milieu
- subject matter knowledge, and
- knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

Elbaz (1983) conducted a study with a particular teacher in order to ascertain the role of the teacher in school curriculum development, and the teacher selected for the study was chosen because she was “a committed and successful teacher” (Elbaz, 1983, p.26). Elbaz (1983) found that curriculum development teams did not seem to value the contributions of teachers, but rather expected teachers to change and adapt to whatever was deemed current at the time. Elbaz (1983) explored the concept of ‘practical knowledge’ in her study in attempting to foreground the vast knowledge base of teachers, and the valuable contributions teachers make to teaching and learning. However, Elbaz (1983) emphasises that ‘practical knowledge’ is “individual and attuned to each teacher’s unique purposes”. Therefore, although the assumption is made that all teachers possess ‘practical knowledge’, what this looks like differs from teacher to teacher, as will the degrees of strengths and weaknesses across the knowledges and categories. Although it was Elbaz’s (1983) intention to foreground teachers as knowledgeable and active agents, and for this to be acknowledged by curriculum designers, in a South African context, the opposite appears to be the case. Curriculum designers may have assumed too much regarding the knowledges that teachers actually possess to successfully teach the multi-disciplinary subject that Life Skills is (see 1.5).

However, drawing from Elbaz (1983) and Dewey (1916), I argue that it is important, for a number of reasons, for teachers to be aware of their ‘practical knowledge’ in order that Life Skills is taught effectively. In the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a) the contextual nature of Life Skills is emphasised in the statements that “teachers are encouraged to adapt the topics so that they are suitable for their school contexts” (p.14) and that “teachers are also

encouraged to choose their own topics should they judge these to be more appropriate" (p.14). In order to select topics appropriately in relation to school contexts, Elbaz (1983) argued that a teacher needs to have 'situational knowledge', that is, an awareness of the context she is working in, and 'social knowledge', that is, an understanding of the learners' contexts (Elbaz, 1983). These knowledges would also be required to address controversial issues as these would be based on what children are exposed to, or as issues arise. Therefore, teachers would need to be aware of issues pertinent to the learners in their classroom, be sensitive to how these issues are addressed, and possess confidence enough to handle these issues.

The CAPS indicates that Life Skills should 'support and strengthen' Languages and Mathematics (DBE, 2011a, p.8), since integration is key in teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. For this reason, one could argue, as both Elbaz (1983) and Altieri (2011) have done, that a teacher needs to have good subject matter knowledge and more importantly, curriculum knowledge, in order for successful integration to occur (Altieri, 2011; Elbaz, 1983). Therefore the teacher needs to have a good understanding of every Foundation Phase subject to be able to see the links or points of integration. Furthermore, the teacher needs to have 'instructional knowledge' and 'theoretical knowledge' to know how to address Life Skills content, to assist learners to understand the content, and also to recognise the links between subjects (Elbaz, 1983).

Each of Elbaz's (1983) 'knowledges' are outlined below, as it is these that serve as the lens through which the findings, which emanated from the data, are analysed and discussed in Chapter 4.

2.4.1. Situational knowledge

Situational knowledge is defined by Elbaz (1983) as the teachers' ability to make sense of the classroom and school situations they find themselves in. This knowledge concerns the application of theory to practice with adaptations relevant to one's school and/or classroom context. In the context of this study, the adaptations required for Life Skills content and its implementation, in private and public school contexts, would differ, therefore requiring teachers to be mindful of their "specific situation, tasks and purposes" (Elbaz, 1983, p.16) in interpreting and working with the Life Skills CAPS.

Situational knowledge allows the teacher to use the other 'knowledges' or a combination of them in particular educational settings for particular activities or for particular reasons. Elbaz (1983) explains that what occurs in one setting will be adapted or changed for another setting based on the circumstances and learners the teacher is presented with. Situational knowledge implies that there cannot be a sameness to the teacher's approach or interactions with learners, rather the teacher responds appropriately to the different situations she faces based on her theoretical knowledge and experiences. Marsh (1992, p.46) contends that "teachers filter the objectives and conceive of ways of enacting them, they make sense of the teaching context and make the necessary adjustments". This was also essential for Dewey (1916), as his concept of experiential learning was based on the notion that teachers are able to meaningfully adapt and link content to the learners' context in order for the learners to make better sense of it.

2.4.2. Personal knowledge

Elbaz (1983) defines personal knowledge as the type of knowledge that gives meaning to experiences, and is used by the teacher to interpret different situations to ascertain how to respond appropriately. Personal knowledge is based on an individual teacher's perceptions, points of view, and experiences. Thus each teacher will respond differently and in the way that he/she feels is the most appropriate at that time. What the teacher considers to be appropriate will also influence how she will work with particular content and/or activities, such as the religious aspects included in the Life Skills CAPS. Another aspect of personal knowledge for Elbaz (1983), is that a teacher acknowledge the knowledge she does possess, rather than view herself as 'less than'. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the Life Skills CAPS and the knowledge teachers are expected to have across a range of disciplines.

Personal knowledge also includes a teacher's sense of commitment to teaching and learning and the responsibilities attached to these, including to develop learners as best as possible through an approach to teaching and learning that is "active, constructive and purposive" (Elbaz, 1983, p.17).

2.4.3. Social knowledge

Social knowledge, according to Elbaz (1983), is based on teachers' understanding of the learners in their classrooms, including the contexts from which they come, their family backgrounds, and "ethnic and economic factors" (Elbaz, 1983, p.18; Street, 1995). Social

knowledge also influences the expectations that teachers have of their learners or the constraints placed on them.

Social knowledge is essential for teachers to be able to provide suitable support and scaffolding for learners in the classroom. Moll et al (2001, p.103) state that "scaffolding refers to the help teachers give learners that enables them to extend their knowledge and to try something they would otherwise not manage on their own". Social knowledge entails teachers understanding learners' contexts in order to extend their knowledge appropriately. Utilising learners' previous knowledge maximises the teaching and learning situation as this furthers learners' understanding of new content (Dewey, 1916; Street, 1995).

With regard to Life Skills teaching and learning, social knowledge is important for a teacher to have since it allows her to make decisions regarding content selection, appropriate to the particular school context (Dewey, 1916; Moll et al, 2001). Elbaz (1983) states that although social knowledge is important, it is not as important as the other knowledges. Furthermore Elbaz (1983, p.18) states that she is 'less interested in detecting social bias', as her focus is on teachers' awareness of and, in particular', control over their social environments.

In the South African context, it could be argued that social knowledge is the most crucial of the knowledges, as it is essential that teachers *are* conscious of the diverse social, economic and cultural contexts from which learners come to better tailor the school curriculum to suit their needs. The teacher claiming to be, or being, ignorant cannot be accepted, as promoting the transformational agenda of the national curriculum is part of the South African teachers' duty.

2.4.4. Experiential knowledge

Experiential knowledge is defined by Elbaz (1983) as knowledge based on the experiences of the teacher and how these impact on her teaching, interactions and/or behaviour in the classroom. Experiential knowledge is closely linked to personal knowledge. Experiential knowledge also requires teachers to be cognisant of the impact of their teaching on their learners, hence including a reflective element (Elbaz, 1983).

Elbaz (1983) views experiential knowledge from the teacher's perspective. However, it could be argued that it is equally important to consider the learners' experiences as well. Moll et al (2001) state that

> human beings are curious by nature. Just think of how small children begin to observe and explore the world. They are constantly active – looking, touching, and tasting. (Moll et al, 2001, p.76)

Therefore, a teacher's experiential knowledge should influence how she interacts with her learners, and the learning experiences she creates for her learners.

According to Elbaz (1983, p.18) "implicit in the situational, personal and social orientations of the teacher's knowledge is its experiential base". Experiences dictate how a teacher sees the world and interacts with others. For this reason, in the classroom the teacher cannot be seen as neutral or objective as her constructs of the world will in some way effect the way in which she teaches or behaves in the classroom. This may also be the reason for teachers opting to include or exclude certain topics in Life Skills teaching, particularly when considering the more controversial or sensitive aspects. These aspects may be uncomfortable for some teachers to address depending on their own experiences, their beliefs, as well as what they believe the learners have been or should be exposed to.

2.4.5. Theoretical knowledge

According to Elbaz (1983), theoretical knowledge includes the teacher's personal view of educational theory utilised in the classroom as well as content knowledge. It is expected that theory impacts on the way in which content knowledge is 'shaped', although this would be dependent on the theories the teacher has been exposed to (Elbaz, 1983). Elbaz (1983) also refers to theoretical knowledge as theory being specific to particular lessons or topics that the teacher has researched and incorporated.

In relation to Life Skills, theoretical knowledge may greatly influence the way in which particular concepts are addressed where personal views are more difficult to separate from the content to be dealt with, such as issues related to religion and values. It may also impact on what content is viewed as being more or less important.

The broader categories of 'practical knowledge' identified by Elbaz (1983) will now be discussed, that is knowledge of self and milieu, subject matter knowledge, and knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

2.4.6. Knowledge of self and milieu

Elbaz (1983) defines knowledge of self as being about the teacher – her values, character, abilities and resourcefulness – as well as the management of the space in which teaching and learning occurs. For Elbaz (1983, p.46) knowledge of self includes a teacher having an "image of herself as teacher and professional". It is an awareness of one's responsibilities and capabilities in relation to personality, attitudes, and strengths and weaknesses, which inform how a teacher views her position in the classroom and school. In addition, being self-aware enables a teacher to comprehend how the abovementioned factors influence how he/she sees him/herself and/or compare themselves in relation to others.

In the context of this study, knowledge of self, or self-awareness, is essential to teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, as some of the issues included in the Life Skills CAPS are sensitive in nature. Thus, addressing these issues require the teacher to be conscious of his/her own prejudices and attitudes towards issues, such as religion, where the teacher should explore the diversity related to religion rather than openly favouring one over another. In addition, the teacher needs to consider how he/she positions him/herself in relation to others, especially the learners in the classroom, as this positioning will influence how the teacher views and acknowledges the diversities of the learners.

Knowledge of milieu, according to Elbaz (1983), is the understanding of one's surroundings or setting within the school and classroom, and how this is made up of different bodies and behaviours. Understanding the school and classroom dynamics enables a teacher to be able to create appropriate social spaces for the learners in her classroom, where relationships and interactions between the teacher and the learners, and between learners themselves, can be developed. In a South African context which is characterised by diversity, it would be important for these social spaces to be representative of democracy and related values. Although Elbaz (1983) seems to focus on the classroom and school specifically, the 'political milieu' (p.52) of South Africa needs to be recognised, because the importance of the broader political agenda related to transformation, which informs the national curriculum, cannot be ignored. The political milieu includes teachers understanding the multicultural and citizenship aspects of the curriculum, and more specifically how these are relevant in the Life Skills curriculum.

2.4.7. Subject matter knowledge

Elbaz (1983) states that subject matter knowledge is the knowledge a teacher possesses in relation to the subject/s he/she teaches. It is the content and skills related to specific subjects, as well as the teacher being able to select and adapt content to suit different classroom contexts, or 'intellectual spaces' (Elbaz, 1983, p.149). Subject matter knowledge requires a teacher to have a clear conception of his/her subject or discipline (Elbaz, 1983). With regard to Life Skills, however, this clarity may be more challenging for teachers to attain due to the scope of content across a number of disciplines.

Where the teacher is required to be knowledgeable across subjects, subject matter knowledge would also involve the teacher's ability to draw on content across the subjects and address these in the classroom in an integrated way (Altieri, 2011). Shulman (2004, p.202) extends this by stating that "the teacher need not only understand *that* something is so; the teacher must further understand *why* it is so". An additional element to subject matter is also an understanding of which issues are more or less important within a particular discipline or subject (Shulman, 2004). According to Elbaz (1983) this should be linked to learners' needs.

The Life Skills study area 'Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being' is multi-disciplinary (see 1.5), implying that a teacher's knowledge base needs to be broad within a particular discipline and across a number of disciplines. Therefore, the expectations Elbaz (1983) and Shulman (2004) place on teachers' knowledge would be greater in the South African context, owing to the sheer amount of content and skills that Life Skills encompasses. It may not then be realistic for South African Foundation Phase teachers to possess in depth subject matter knowledge of all the disciplines that contribute to Life Skills.

Altieri (2011) argues that the content knowledge, or subject matter knowledge, associated with Life Skills provides the context for Literacy and Mathematics teaching, thus allowing learners to see the relevance of Literacy and Mathematics in real life situations. Altieri (2011) claims furthermore, that the provision of context may lead to promoting further independent learning which utilises Literacy and Mathematics skills, so effectively, learners are transferring, practicing and using the skills learnt in the classroom in the outside world. Practicing these skills, particularly in the Foundation Phase context, needs to involve practical activities and activities that allow for more interaction and sharing of ideas and opinions (Jackson & Caffarella, 1994; Moon, 2004), rather than written activities only. Teachers need to have sound content knowledge to be able to extend learners beyond their

everyday experiences (Moll et al, 2001), as well as understand the way in which content areas connect (Shulman, 2004). For Life Skills, this is both within the subject across the various study areas, as well as across the Foundation Phase subjects, namely Life Skills, Languages and Mathematics (DBE, 2011a).

2.4.8. Knowledge of curriculum and instruction

According to Elbaz (1983) knowledge of curriculum is related to the development of context appropriate units of work, lessons and teaching aids, at a school level, and how these are then managed and taught. For Elbaz (1983) knowledge of curriculum is essential in that this is what a teacher draws on when developing a teaching and learning programme for the year, or even a section of a programme. Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa are expected to utilise their 'knowledge of curriculum' to extend the Topics included in the Life Skills CAPS in a manner that will best suit their particular learners and school context.

Shulman (2004) states that teachers need to be aware of and familiar with the curricula of other subjects as well, rather than only one's own in order to better make connections for learners. In the Foundation Phase, this goes without saying, as Foundation Phase teachers teach all subjects of the curriculum rather than only one. A unit of lessons and individual lessons need to be planned not only in relation to the required curriculum content but also according to the needs of the learners (Dewey, 1916). Knowledge of curriculum also includes the teacher's capacity to determine the success of her approaches to teaching and learning, as well as assess the learners' performance (Elbaz, 1983).

Knowledge of instruction includes a number of aspects according to Elbaz (1983). These aspects include the teacher's teaching style, an awareness of learning styles and theories of learning, and the inclusion of 'spontaneity' (Elbaz, 1983, p.95). Spontaneity, according to Elbaz (1983), is the teacher's ability to be flexible within a particular, planned lesson. In addition to these aspects, is the teacher contemplating the progression of content and skills within a unit of work, and across a number of units of work. Where South African teachers follow the Life Skills CAPS and workbooks, the progression is provided, and thus only needs to be considered where the teacher has opted to change the order of the Topics (DBE, 2011a).

Knowledge of instruction further includes how the teacher interacts with the learners in her classroom, organisational aspects in preparation for and during lessons, and the teaching and learning strategies utilised. According to Pratt (1980), initially teachers tend to teach their

learners the way in which they themselves were taught, but as teachers become more experienced they use their previous teaching experience to dictate the way forward. Knowledge of instruction also requires that a teacher be able to reflect on the day's lessons and consider how these could be improved or reworked in the future (Elbaz, 1983).

The various dimensions of the teacher's 'practical knowledge' as discussed above (see 2.4.) require a teacher to understand the learners in her class, her own abilities, and the spaces in which teaching and learning occur. In addition, the teacher needs to be able to select relevant content and teach this content in the most appropriate way. Therefore, a Life Skills teacher cannot prepare for Life Skills teaching and learning without considering all of the above aspects and expect it to be a success. The selection, organisation and presentation of Life Skills content is vital, and most importantly, context dependent. These factors play an important role in successful Life Skills teaching and learning.

Each of the 'practical knowledge' elements will be considered in relation to the data elicited from the two case studies of the Grade 3 teachers discussed in Chapter 4.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on Foundation Phase Life Skills in the South African context. Although no one definition of Life Skills exists, there appears to be consensus that it should be focused on developing learners in such a way that they are able to make positive contributions to society and promote learners engagement with the world. The Ministry of Education (2001) and Niewenhuis et al (2007) emphasise the importance of values education in this regard.

The Life Skills subject includes a wide and diverse range of content, which should be treated as school knowledge rather than everyday knowledge (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002; Moll et al, 2001). However, there appears to be some confusion on this point due to limited content and method being provided in the Life Skills CAPS to guide Foundation Phase teachers.

Ebersohn and Eloff (2004), Elbaz (1983) and Dewey (1963) claim that it is essential for teachers to not only be knowledgeable about teaching and learning, but also about the learners in the classroom. This knowledge of where learners come from and what learners already know plays an important role in what and how Life Skills teaching and learning will occur. The teacher needs to utilise this information about her learners and adapt her teaching

accordingly. In addition to context, Dewey (1916; 1963) stresses the importance that experience plays in the appropriate selection and handling of content.

The above needs to occur in conjunction with an understanding of curriculum and how Life Skills has been presented in policy. However, in drawing on Bernsteins's (2000) competence and performance models of pedagogic practice, it would appear as if policy intends for teachers to approach Life Skills teaching and learning using the competence model of pedagogic practice, but that perhaps due to teachers' limited understanding of Life Skills and the value this subject holds, that the performance model of pedagogic practice is utilised instead.

Elbaz (1983) outlines the knowledges that comprise 'practical knowledge', viz situational, personal, social, experiential, and theoretical knowledge. The implication of 'practical knowledge' for Life Skills teaching and learning is that teachers may be able to make better links for the learners between the new Life Skills learning and their existing knowledge based on knowledge of their contexts; teachers may better engage with learners through being able to adapt content and their approach to Life Skills lessons; and teachers may understand why they have reservations about dealing with particular aspects of the Life Skills curriculum, for example more controversial issues.

I argue that Life Skills as a subject is an important one and by teachers drawing on all aspects of 'practical knowledge' rather than only a few, they will be able to make Life Skills teaching and learning more relevant and meaningful for Foundation Phase learners.

In the following chapter, the research design is outlined.

Chapter 3 – Research Design

3.1. Introduction

Based on the literature presented in Chapter 2, the importance of Life Skills teaching and learning, as well as the problems that exist, were explored. This chapter presents the research design for this study on teachers' understanding and implementation of the Life Skills subject in the Foundation Phase, specifically Grade 3, in an attempt to understand how the participant teachers view Life Skills, and the challenges they encounter in their respective contexts.

The research design includes giving consideration to the type of study, being a qualitative, multiple case study; the delimitations of the study; the research site; the research participants; credibility, validity and reliability; the research methods; ethical considerations, and how the data collected were analysed. The data were used to answer the research questions, these questions being:

- What do Foundation Phase teachers understand by the subject Life Skills?
- What are the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice?

Lichtman (2006, p.206) states that "since it is the researcher who is the conduit through which all information flows, we need to recognise that the researcher shapes the research". This 'shaping' will be dependent on the experiences of the researcher and his/her role in the research, whose experiences and role/s Merriam (1995) stresses should be made explicit.

As a teacher in the Foundation Phase, and subsequently a university tutor involved in educating students entering the teaching profession, I came into contact with many practicing teachers. The subject Life Skills became an area of concern to me as I heard many teachers' criticisms of Life Skills and their negativity towards teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. In the majority of cases, these criticisms were in direct contradiction to the views as outlined in Chapter 2 regarding the nature and significance of including Life Skills in education (see 2.2 and 2.3).

My intention with this research therefore was to investigate the possible reasons why Life Skills in the Foundation Phase is viewed negatively by many teachers, and how this negativity could influence the teaching and learning of Life Skills. My role in the research

was exploratory rather than for intervention, hence the reason for interviewing and observing the participant teachers, and not to impose my opinions or interfere in their teaching practice.

3.2. Qualitative Multiple Case Study

This study was a qualitative research study. Qualitative research entails conducting research within a particular context or contexts. It "describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.315). Creswell (2008, p.46) defines qualitative research as being "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants" and "describes and analyses these words for themes". The 'participants' in this study were two Grade 3 teachers and their 'words' reflect their own experiences and opinions.

Rule and John (2011, p.4) define case study research as "a systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge". According to Kvale (1996), case study research allows the researcher to construct knowledge and understanding about a particular situation or person. In this study two Grade 3 teachers in two different school contexts, one a public school, and the other a private school, were selected for this research in order to gain insight into the understanding and practice of Life Skills. The intention was not to make generalisations based on these case studies, but rather to explore each context in depth and then to compare these.

Each school context explored is a case study which "promotes better understanding of a practice or issue" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.333). The issues explored in this study included: if teachers' attitudes towards Life Skills influence their practice; how the importance or lack of importance attributed to Life Skills by teachers impacts on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom; if the content and structure of the Life Skills CAPS has any bearing on teachers' understanding of the subject; and what content included in the Life Skills CAPS is included or excluded in the teaching of particular topics by the teachers and the reasons for their choices.

Stake (2006, p.22) states that "an important reason for doing the multicase study is to examine how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments". Therefore, the influence of the two school contexts on the teachers' understanding of relevant life skills and the teaching of the subject Life Skills, content selection and the reasons behind the

selection, the exclusion of content and the reasons for these exclusions, are significant in this study.

3.3. Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this research was confined to two schools in a specific area in Johannesburg and two Grade 3 teachers. The study was therefore limited to one grade and to one study area within the subject Life Skills, viz. Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being.

3.4. Research Site

As has already been noted in the sections above, the research was conducted in two Grade 3 classrooms at two different primary schools in Johannesburg. The one school is a private school in the northwest of Johannesburg and learners attending are mainly from affluent families and live in the surrounding suburbs. The other school is a public school in the west of Johannesburg. Learners attending this school are also from the surrounding area and comprise learners from families from a lower socio-economic context than at the private school.

These schools were selected because the socio-economic contrast between the school contexts may influence what teachers understand by Life Skills. The two contexts were therefore compared with regard to how teachers address Life Skills in their respective schools. The two school contexts may also show how teachers in different environments have both varied and similar understandings of Life Skills, and how these understandings then impact on the teaching and learning of the subject (Elbaz, 1983; Street, 1995).

3.5. Research Participants

The selection of the two Grade 3 teachers at each of the primary schools was purposively conducted as their selection was based on their number of years of teaching experience. The reason for this criterion is that teachers having taught for longer periods of time would have had more experience of working with various policies and curricula, as well as with teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. It was therefore anticipated that these teachers would be able to provide more insight than younger, less experienced teachers.

The teacher located at the private school falls into the 40-49 year age bracket, and has been teaching in the Foundation Phase for twenty years. The first five years were spent teaching at

a public school, and the following fifteen years at private schools. Her highest qualification is a Higher Diploma in Education which was acquired from the Johannesburg College of Education in 1993. This teacher has been at her current school for three years.

The teacher located at the public school, falls into the 50-59 year age bracket, and has been teaching for twenty seven years, although only the last three years have been in the Foundation Phase. She has taught in the senior phase in primary schools and in high schools. All of her years teaching have been at public schools. Her highest qualification is an Honours in Education acquired from the University of Natal in 1993. This teacher has been at her current school for five years.

Both teachers were interviewed in their classrooms after the school day had ended. Prior to each interview, both teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study, reminded of the audio recording of the interviews for transcription purposes, and reassured that during the subsequent observations only field notes would be taken. They were also assured that there would be no interference whatsoever from the researcher during the observations.

3.6. Credibility, Validity and Reliability

Denscombe (2008) argues that the credibility of qualitative research is difficult to establish given that a repetition of the research is unlikely to have the same or similar outcomes. Possible reasons for this, according to Denscombe (2008), are that space, time and social dimensions differ, as well as the perceptions and interpretations of data of the researcher. Merriam (1995) also comments on the problems related to the repetition of qualitative research by stating that as this type of research involves people, and that their behaviours, interactions, emotions and points of view are always changing, it is, therefore, highly probable that the results generated by the data will vary if an attempt is made to repeat a study.

With regard to case study research, validity and reliability present more of a challenge. According to Zainal (2007, p.4), case study research "help[s] to explain the complexities of real-life situations". Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2002) relate the 'real-life situation', which in this research comprises the Grade 3 Life Skills classroom, the teacher and the learners, to context. Cohen et al (2002) argue that context needs to be recognised as a strength of case study research, as the context within which the research is being conducted is fundamental to understanding the events which transpire and how these events are handled by those

operating within particular contexts. The challenge related to validity and reliability then is that the 'sample' used is limited and specific (Zainal, 2007). Thus, Cohen et al (2002) argue that it is not necessary for case studies to demonstrate reliability requiring repetition, but rather that validity and reliability be present in the research methods. For this reason, in this study, validity was ensured by collecting data in at least three ways: by conducting semi-structured interviews with each of the participating Grade 3 teachers, during a series of four (non-participant) observations of each teacher teaching Life Skills, and by allowing for participant checking of the transcripts.

As noted earlier in the chapter (see 3.2), the purpose of utilising a multiple case study approach was an attempt to understand instances of teachers' views and attitudes towards Life Skills. It was also acknowledged that drawing generalisations from the case studies explored was not the intention of this research.

Denscombe (2008, p.335) states that "the idea of validity hinges around the extent to which research data and the methods for obtaining the data are deemed accurate, honest and on target". In addition, validity also implies the corroboration of findings (Denscombe, 2008). In this research, corroboration took the form of comparing the interview responses to the observations of teachers' actual classroom practice during Life Skills lessons. However, as Denscombe (2008) notes, it is difficult to verify interview comments as these are personal to the interviewee. Therefore, as was done in this research, the transcribed comments were checked at a later stage by the teachers to confirm that the essence of their comments had been accurately captured.

Reliability entails the research instruments being neutral and consistent (Cohen et al, 2002; Denscombe, 2008). In this research, the same interview questions and observation schedules were used in both case studies to ensure consistency (Appendices A and B respectively).

3.7. Research Methods

For this research, data were collected in numerous ways as outlined in the previous section. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the participant teachers prior to a series of classroom observations, and afterwards, if necessary, a post-observation interview to clarify or validate what had been observed. In this way the validity and reliability of the case studies were ensured (Yazan, 2015). The rationale behind the selection of the research methods was that interviews and observations were the most reasonable options to allow for

the teachers to be the focus of the research. That the teachers were the focus of the research was important given how my interest in the topic of Life Skills teaching in the Foundation Phase came about (see 3.1).

3.7.1. Semi-structured Interviews

According to Kvale (1996, p.32) the "qualitative research interview aims at obtaining nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's life world". In order to achieve this, before conducting a semi-structured interview, the interviewer must have formulated possible questions to be asked. These are possible questions only because the interviewer may need to change the order and form of questions depending on the responses given by the interviewee in expressing their views and recounting their experiences (Kvale, 1996). As the intention was to ascertain each participating teacher's understanding and experiences of Life Skills, the semi-structured interview provided the leeway to establish the teachers' perspectives on Life Skills prior to the observations. The possible questions were prepared beforehand and included in an interview schedule (Appendix A), thus the questions asked during each interview were directly related to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. The same interview schedule was used with both Grade 3 teachers at the respective schools for the purposes of standardisation. The interviews were transcribed immediately afterwards.

An advantage of collecting data by way of semi-structured interviews was that, as Denscombe (2008, p.174) states, it is a means to "gain insights into things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences". As Life Skills in the Foundation Phase appears to be one of the more unclear, contentious subjects, the semi-structured interview gave the teachers the space to discuss the Life Skills subject from their perspectives, and offer their views on what they believe to be more or less important and/or valuable aspects of the subject in the Foundation Phase.

Conversely, the level of skill required by the interviewer could be a disadvantage (Denscombe, 2008; Kvale, 1996). As a novice researcher, my experience in conducting interviews is limited, and therefore, I may have missed opportunities to gain further insight into the teachers' views and understandings of Life Skills by not probing for more in depth responses in places. However, as previously mentioned (see 3.6), the transcripts were presented to the participating teachers for amendment or additional comments, to validate what had been transcribed.

3.7.2. Observations

Rule and John (2011, p.82) state that in case study research "observation is a fruitful means of getting a lively sense of action in the case and for generating thick descriptions of the case". With this in mind, the semi-structured interviews were therefore followed by a series of four observations of the participants teaching Life Skills in Grade 3. These observations were recorded by note taking according to an observation schedule (Appendix B) (Kawulich, 2005). The purpose of the observation schedule is to focus only on specific aspects during observation, that are related to both the interview questions and research questions (see 3.1). This technique of aligning interview questions, research questions and the observation schedule was integral to enhancing the validity of the study (Merriam as cited in Yazan, 2015).

An advantage of using the observations of Life Skills lessons as a data collection method was that these provided me with the opportunity to witness first-hand what the participating Grade 3 teachers actually do during Life Skills lessons in their 'natural settings' (Denscombe, 2008, p.207), that is, in their own classrooms with their own learners. As the semi-structured interviews had been conducted prior to the observations, the observations served to further validate the comments and opinions the participating teachers expressed during the interviews.

3.7.3. Post-observation Interviews

The lesson observations gave rise to informal 'conversation interviews' following the classroom observations, so that the teachers could clarify any aspects of their Life Skills lesson that I was uncertain about. Questions for these types of interviews cannot be planned ahead of time as these "emerge from the immediate context" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.351). Therefore, where clarity was required for the sake of validity, an informal conversation was sometimes required. This was an important aspect of the study as there were a few occasions during observations where the teacher's actions required further explanation.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent to conduct the research was obtained from the principals of both schools, both teachers, the parents of the learners in the two Grade 3 classes, as well as the learners themselves. Permission was sought from and granted by the Gauteng Department of

Education to conduct research at the public school. Ethics clearance was also approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand to conduct the research.

All participants were advised that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any point during the research without providing reasons for their withdrawal and that this would not be held against them. Participants were also advised that their participation would be kept confidential and their identities anonymous, thus actual identities would not be revealed in any of the writings or reports related to this study.

The participating teachers were advised that the purpose of the research was not to critique their teaching practice. Rather the purpose was to gain insight into their perspectives on the Life Skills subject.

3.9. Data Analysis

Kvale (1996) proposes five approaches that can be utilised in analysing data obtained from interviews, these being condensation, categorisation, narrative, interpretation and *ad hoc* (which involves utilising a number of different approaches to generate meaning). For this study, *condensation* was specifically applied to the analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. The condensation approach involves working with the data in a five step process as outlined below (Kvale, 1996):

1. The transcriptions are read in their entirety for a general sense of meaning.
2. 'Natural meaning units' are identified – from the participants' actual words.
3. The theme contained in each 'natural meaning unit' is stated as concisely as possible.
4. Each 'natural meaning unit' is then analysed and related back to the research questions.
5. The most important themes are then condensed into one statement.

Prior to utilizing Kvale's (1996) five step process, I identified specific themes for investigation, viz. *context, content,* and *lesson implementation*. The data required for this aspect of the study came from both the interviews and observations. However, some data analysis was also inductive in that an additional theme emerged from the data collected, namely *integration*.

The selected themes specified above were determined in relation to the research questions (see 1.2) and the two school contexts in which the research was conducted, to ascertain the teachers' understanding of the subject Life Skills. In my opinion as the researcher, this includes understanding the content to be taught, how best to teach content, and the context in which one is teaching. These themes also lend themselves to understanding the teachers' knowledge of the curriculum currently in use, how they deal with various aspects of Life Skills evident in what they choose to include or exclude, the reasons behind these choices, the teaching and learning strategies employed, and to establish if the Life Skills CAPS requirements are being met.

In addition, Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' (see 2.4.) was used as the theoretical lens through which to analyse the data collected from both the semi-structured interviews and the series of observations.

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter the design of this qualitative, multiple case study research on teachers' understanding and implementation of the Life Skills subject in the Foundation Phase was outlined. This included the delimitations of the study; the research site and participants; credibility, validity and reliability; the research methods; ethical considerations; and the modes of data analysis.

The research sites comprised two different primary schools in Johannesburg, and the participants, one Grade 3 teacher at each school. The data were collected by way of semi-structured interviews and four observations with the two Grade 3 teachers at their respective schools.

Kvale's (1996) condensation approach, involving a five step process, was explained as a mode to analyse the semi-structured interview data, in relation to the themes context, content, lesson implementation and integration. Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge', as outlined in 2.4, was also highlighted as an additional mode to further analyse the semi-structured interview data as well as the data elicited from the observations.

A problem that arises when two case studies are utilised (see 3.3) is the possibility of polarisation, particularly when considering the two different school contexts in which each teacher was located. Denscombe (p.36) states that, "the idea of a case study is that a spotlight is focused on individual instances rather than a wide spectrum", and in this research due to

the two school contexts selected, differences rather than similarities in the teachers' views and approaches to Life Skills teaching and learning emerged.

The analysis and findings based on the data collected are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the data collected by way of semi-structured interviews with two Grade 3 teachers and observations of Life Skills lessons are presented. The semi-structured interview transcriptions were analysed using Kvale's (1996) condensation approach, as outlined in the previous chapter (see 3.8). Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' (see 2.4), which is defined as knowledge that encompasses a particular set of 'knowledges', these being situational, personal, social, experiential and theoretical knowledges, was used to interpret the semi-structured interview data and the observation data. The literature pertaining to Life Skills, as discussed in Chapter 2, is also referred to in relation to the data analysed, including Bernstein (1990, 2000) and Dewey (1916, 1963).

The private and public school contexts were analysed separately according to themes, viz. context, content, lesson implementation, and integration. The findings were also presented and discussed separately. Following on from this, the school contexts were then compared and contrasted in order to address the research questions (see 1.2).

4.2. Data collection

The data analysed and discussed in this chapter were obtained by conducting semi-structured interviews with each of the participating Grade 3 teachers, and observing a series of four Life Skills lessons in each school context.

4.2.1. Semi-structured interview data

Prior to each of the semi-structured interviews, I met with each teacher to explain the purpose of the research and to reiterate that the interviews conducted after school hours would be audio recorded for transcription purposes.

The transcripts were provided for each of the Grade 3 teachers to peruse in order to ensure that their responses had been accurately captured, and for the teachers to add any additional comments. The teacher at the private school was satisfied with the transcript and had no additional comments. The teacher at the public school did not alter or add to the transcript, but provided a written summary of what she felt were the most salient points regarding Life Skills. Of particular interest were her comments regarding what she perceives to be the

unnecessary teaching of 'content-based subjects', namely Natural and Social Sciences. In her opinion, the learners can research the content related to these subjects for themselves.

Each of the semi-structured interviews was analysed using Kvale's (1996) condensation approach which involves a five step process as outlined in Chapter 3 (see 3.8). The analysis of the semi-structured interview conducted with the Grade 3 teacher at the private school is presented under point 4.3 and the analysis of the semi-structured interview conducted with the Grade 3 teacher at the public school is presented under point 4.4. The two case studies are analysed and discussed according to a thematic structure (Rule & John, 2011). This means that the themes identified deductively, viz. context, content, and lesson implementation, and the theme that emerged inductively, viz. integration, have been used as theme headings in discussing each case study.

In the next section, the series of observations, which followed the semi-structured interviews, are outlined, as the observations were used to supplement the findings and discussion of the semi-structured interviews in 4.3 and 4.4.

4.2.2. Observation data

Two Grade 3 classes were the sites of a series of four observations of Life Skills lessons. The Grade 3 class at the private school consisted of thirteen girls and ten boys making a total of twenty three learners. The Grade 3 class at the public school consisted of seventeen girls and seventeen boys making a total of thirty four learners.

No data were collected during the initial classroom visits as the purpose of these visits was for the learners to become comfortable with my presence in their classroom.

The three subsequent visits for the purposes of data collection occurred as follows:

Private School		Public School	
Date	Time	Date	Time
30 May 2013	12:33 to 13:15	6 June 2013	10:15 to 11:00
6 June 2013	12:30 to 13:20	11 June 2013	11:23 to 11:55
12 June 2013	12:30 to 13:15	13 June 2013	10:05 to 10:40

The Life Skills lessons observed are described below:

Private School
Topic : SPACE
Observation 1 – 'The Solar System'
The lesson began with a whole-class discussion on the solar system during which the classroom data projector was utilised for showing a variety of images of the solar system. Learners were then instructed to get into groups of three, and use non-fiction books, posters and dictionaries, to research the solar system. During the report back session the teacher collated the points contributed by the learners to write a definition of the solar system.
Observation 2 – 'The Planets'
The learners sang 'The Planets Song' and were then shown a video clip entitled 'From the Big Bang to Me' that a learner had brought to class as an introduction to the lesson. The teacher briefly commented on the planets depicted. Following this, the learners individually researched the planets using non-fiction books, posters and differentiated information cards. The learners then moved into groups to share the facts they had found.
Observation 3 – 'Space Suits'
The teacher read the storybook 'Here Come the Aliens' to introduce the notion that much is still unknown about space and that living beings are able to survive in space. This she linked to space exploration. A whole-class discussion followed beginning with a recap of information on astronauts that had previously been covered. Then the importance, use, function and structure of space suits was discussed - the sequence in which a space suit is put on being the primary focus. The whole-class role play activity was linked to this sequencing.
Public School
Topic : RECYCLING
Observation 1 – 'Recycling at Home'
The lesson began with a whole-class discussion on items that could be recycled using photocopied pictures of various items to prompt the learners to respond. In pairs, the learners were required to read and sort sentences under the headings 'Good Shopper' and

'Bad Shopper'. The purpose of the activity was to encourage learners to think about the environment, waste materials and recyclable materials.
Topic: DIFFERENT PLACES OF WORSHIP
Observation 2 – 'Different Religions'
In this group work activity, each group of five or six learners was given an A2 poster including information on a particular religion. The teacher wrote ten questions/headings on the chalk board to guide the learners in their group discussion. The learners were required to individually record their answers in order to present these in the next lesson.
Observation 3 – 'Group Presentations'
Each group of learners came forward with their written notes and the poster they had used to answer the questions posed by the teacher, in order to share their answers with the class. The answers were read from the notes made during the previous lesson, while the rest of the class and the teacher listened. The teacher did not comment on the religion content, but praised groups for working well together and helping each other during the group work activity and presentations.

In the next section, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, supplemented by the observation data, are analysed and the findings discussed in order to ascertain if there is alignment or discrepancy between the teachers' interview comments and their practice.

4.2.3. The approach to the analysis of the data elicited from the Grade 3 teachers

Each semi-structured interview transcription was analysed according to a thematic structure (Rule & John, 2011), using Kvale's (1996) condensation approach, according to the themes content, context and lesson implementation, which were deductively selected (see 3.8). During the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, a fourth theme, namely integration, emerged.

A general sense of meaning (Kvale, 1996) was acquired from an initial reading of each of the transcripts. Extracts from the transcriptions, being the 'natural meaning units' (Kvale, 1996),

were identified according to the abovementioned themes, and tabulated together with a concise statement that attempts to capture the meaning of the teachers' words (see Appendix M and Appendix N). The concise statements were then grouped according to the themes, and further sub-divided into condensed statements (Kvale, 1996). The findings related to each of the condensed statements are presented in 4.3.1 and 4.4.1 and discussed in 4.3.3 and 4.4.3, for the private and public school contexts respectively.

The discussion, and thereafter, the comparison and analysis of the private and public school contexts, draw on Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' (see 2.4). Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' was selected as a theoretical lens for the analysis and interpretation of data elicited for this study because it encompasses the key themes. 'Practical knowledge' speaks to the importance of teachers making appropriate choices with regard to content selected for Life Skills lessons, based on the contexts of the learners in their classroom, and within a curricular framework.

Stake (2006, p.39) states that "many readers look to the cross-case analysis to find what is common across the cases, not what is unique to each". Stake (2006) emphasises that the differences that exist are more important, these being dictated by context or situated experience. However, this requires that each case be studied in detail first before the cross-case analysis occurs, particularly as the two case studies are taken from two different socio-economic and classroom contexts.

The private school context is explored in 4.3 and the public school context in 4.4.

4.3. Analysis of the semi-structured interview and observation data elicited from the Grade 3 teacher at the private school

The initial reading of the transcript indicated that Life Skills, according to this teacher, is an important subject because of the insight it gives learners into the world around them. Furthermore, this teacher does not consider Life Skills to be as important as Literacy and Mathematics. It seems her focus is the study area Beginning Knowledge, where a variety of teaching methods are employed in addressing and integrating the content with other Life Skills areas and Foundation Phase subjects. This teacher uses the Life Skills CAPS as a guideline to ensure that requirements are met.

In the next section, the findings are presented according to the themes and the condensed statements (italicised) identified in the data.

4.3.1. Presentation of findings in relation to the themes and condensed statements

- Context

Context and Religion

The analysis of the data seems to indicate that at this private school, although religion is viewed as important, Christianity is prioritised and Bible lessons form a part of the school curriculum. The teacher explained that lesson plans for the Bible lessons are designed by a team at the school rather than by the teachers themselves. This indicates that the school is very particular in what they want their 'religious education' to entail. Furthermore, the teacher explained that in the classroom other religions are acknowledged when the need arises, such as when a learner of a religion other than Christianity is present. According to the teacher, the acknowledgement is not always in the religious content addressed, but in giving non-Christian learners the option to not participate in religious lessons that are Christian based, for example the Jehovah's Witness learner in the class.

According to the Life Skills CAPS (2011a), religion is an aspect of the curriculum that should be addressed on an ongoing basis and includes the exploration of diverse religions. This entails teachers highlighting important religious days and celebrations as they occur throughout the year across religions. The teacher indicated that celebratory days other than those linked to the Christian faith are explored, but that this occurs as part of a lesson topic (see 1.3.4), such as 'South Africa'. It is also stated in the *Manifesto* that the inclusion of all religions and all learners is an important factor in teaching and learning in a democratic society (Ministry of Education, 2001) (see 2.2.3).

In this private school context, Christianity is the dominant religion. Other religions are addressed, but Christianity is the focus, meaning that religion is dealt with from a belief perspective rather than in an attempt to promote and create an understanding of difference and diversity within a democratic framework. As this school bases their topics on the Life Skills CAPS, religion and what it encompasses in a South African context should be present. Therefore, a disjuncture exists between the Life Skills CAPS and this teacher's practice.

Context Influencing Content Selection

The private school teacher stated that being at a private school means that parents have higher expectations because of the higher fees that they are paying. Consequently, one of her main concerns regarding Life Skills teaching and learning is how to constantly engage and extend learners. The teacher remarked that content is adapted, left out or integrated depending on the needs of the learners. Moll et al (2001) contend that the extension of knowledge is an important aspect of school knowledge, and that this is one way in which school knowledge is set apart from everyday knowledge. It is the opinion of this private school teacher that it is important to extend the content included in the Life Skills CAPS to better suit her learners. She explained that context plays an important role in content selection, but could present a challenge in selecting appropriate content as learners are exposed to different experiences and originate from different backgrounds. She specifically referred to her learners as being privileged and exposed to *more*, rather than *different* experiences, and provided examples from a technological perspective to support her claim, such as that learners may have access to the internet through computers and/or i-Pads.

In the interview the teacher commented that the contents of the Life Skills CAPS is inappropriate for a private school context. She suggested that the contents are more appropriate for the public school context, implying that generally learners at public schools have been exposed to less, and do not have as much content knowledge as learners at private schools. Therefore she believes that the needs of public school learners should be addressed at a lower level. In the Life Skills CAPS (2011a), teachers are encouraged to adapt the Topics and related content according to their school contexts in order to make it as appropriate as possible.

The teacher stated that more controversial aspects of the Life Skills curriculum, such as abuse or HIV/AIDS, need not be addressed because these are not relevant to her learners. She further explained that the learners' parents also do not want these sensitive issues to be addressed with their children. It is for this reason that the teacher is reluctant to address Personal and Social Well-being aspects of the curriculum, and possibly the reason why the lessons observed focused on Beginning Knowledge.

In 2001 it was stated in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) that HIV/AIDS numbers are rising as one in nine people are infected and the most new infections occur in the 15-25 age bracket. Nine years later HIV/AIDS is still a concerning issue as the Department of Basic

Education (2010b, p.17) stated in the document *Integrated Strategy on HIV and AIDS 2011-2015* that

> HIV prevalence figures indicate that the proportion of young people infected with HIV increases significantly between childhood (2 - 14 years) and youth (15 - 24 years), suggesting that as children progress from childhood to youth their vulnerability to HIV infection increases substantially. This also indicates that late childhood and early youth years (15 - 17 years) are a particularly important period for prevention interventions that are aimed at reducing risk of HIV infection.
>
> (DBE, 2010b, p.17)

Even though the perception may be that the learners at this private school possibly are not directly affected by HIV/AIDS, the above quotation suggests that young learners still need to be made aware from a preventative stand point, which would apply regardless of context. Similarly, other controversial or sensitive aspects of the Life Skills curriculum may impact the lives of 'unlikely' learners, whether directly, or indirectly through their interactions with others. Thus, creating an awareness of and a sensitivity towards these issues are important.

As the teacher is aware of learners' context and the need to extend and adapt content and Topics, there is a consistency between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice. In this school, school knowledge is foregrounded and is the foremost consideration when the teachers are planning Life Skills Topics/topics. Content is carefully selected based on the context of this private school's learners, thus tailoring the school's curriculum to suit the needs of their learners. The content and Topics/topics related to Beginning Knowledge (viz. Social and Natural Sciences) seem to be a more important consideration than the other Life Skills aspects, as the Topics/topics (see 1.3.4) the teacher continually referred to were 'Little Creatures' and 'Space'. However, as this teacher chooses to exclude some of the suggested content related to Personal and Social Well-being, there is clearly some disjuncture between policy and the teacher's practice as well. The teacher assumes that certain controversial aspects included in the CAPS do not need to be addressed, as private school learners are not affected by the harsh realities of life that the Life Skills CAPS includes. Even though the aspects making up the study area of Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being do not appear to be equally addressed, what is important is that there is *new* learning happening within this private school classroom context.

- Content

Linking Content to Context

According to the teacher, Life Skills is a very broad subject with regard to content and skills. Life Skills is indeed presented this way in the CAPS (2011a), due to the great scope of the subject as well as each of the study areas.

During the interview, the private school teacher indicated that she attempts to make links between lessons within a Topic/topic, and considers learners' prior knowledge, which stems from their context, and new learning as part of the planning process. The teacher also spoke about making links to assist learners to see the 'bigger picture' and the significance of the content being addressed to their everyday lives. The example she referred to was the Topic 'Space' and how learners needed to understand the aspects comprising space and how these impact the earth. However, in the series of lessons observed, these links were not noted, although may have been included in other 'Space' lessons not observed.

The teacher stated that context is an important aspect of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase in order to ensure that the new Life Skills learning is relevant to learners, and to make this new learning as accessible as possible by referring to what is already known and then extending this. During Observation 3 content previously covered was revised and extended, when the teacher recapped the sequence of donning a space suit and further explained the reasons for the various components of the space suit being required, as well as their function.

Therefore, there is consistency between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice, as the content selected by the teacher to further extend learners is influenced by their context and prior knowledge.

Content and Life Skills CAPS

The teacher stated during the interview that the CAPS is inadequate. She used the words 'airy-fairy', 'repetitive', 'horrible', and 'awful' when sharing her views on the Life Skills CAPS. The teacher furthermore commented that as, in her opinion, the Life Skills CAPS is lacking in any kind of detail and does not include the extension of content she believes is required in her particular school context (cf. Moll et al, 2001), the Grade 3 team "plan and refer back" instead of using the Life Skills CAPS as a starting point. The teacher commented,

"we take our themes we've got – maybe the wrong way round – and then we double-check that we've covered what they want us to cover". She also stated that as the team develops a Life Skills curriculum, and thereafter lesson plans, they believe to be more appropriate for their context, both the learners' existing knowledge and new learning is taken into account.

The Life Skills CAPS (2011a) includes the minimum requirements that learners should meet. This does not however mean that teachers cannot further extend learners. There may be confusion around this aspect of the curriculum. Though there appears to be some misunderstanding in the way the Life Skills CAPS should be interpreted, the teacher is still working with the Life Skills CAPS as envisaged by curriculum designers. The way in which she works with the Life Skills CAPS is based on her own training and teaching experience, therefore resulting in unintentional consistency between policy and practice.

- Lesson Implementation

Variety of Approaches

The private school teacher emphasised during the interview that she strongly believes that being reliant only on discussion is inadequate. She stated that practical work is also essential, and a variety of methods and approaches must be incorporated into teaching and learning, such as discussion, individual work, paired work, and group work. Briggs and Hansen (2012) discuss the importance of varied activities and the impact these have, not only on learning, but also on the holistic development of learners, personally and socially. Variety is factored into the teacher's planning as she expressed her desire to present lessons that are 'fun' and 'interesting', encouraging active participation and interaction. The teacher further explained that not only will varied teaching and learning strategies motivate her learners, but more importantly, strategies that promote interaction and collaboration among the learners, will encourage independence and taking responsibility for their own learning. Thus, she believes learners will develop skills that they will be able to apply beyond the classroom to further their own learning. A variety of strategies were observed. During Observation 1, the learners were involved in a group research task related to the solar system. During Observation 2, the learners were involved in an individual research task using multiple resources.

Moreover, the teacher stated that she deems technology to be important, such as the use of the internet and digital visual aids, including video clips, pictures and photographs. She explained that the 'data projector' also allows the learners to see the way in which she uses

the internet as a research tool. These digital elements were observed during Observations 1 and 2 where images of the solar system and planets were displayed, as well as a video clip.

The Life Skills CAPS (2011a) does not prescribe or suggest methods or resources to be used in the teaching of the study area of Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being. However, this teacher is cognisant of pedagogical choices being equally as important as content selection. Although the Life Skills CAPS does not include pedagogy, the General Aims, such as 'active and critical learning' (p.4) and 'credibility, quality and efficiency' (p.5), imply that teachers think carefully about their pedagogical choices and move away from a rote and traditional approach to teaching. Therefore, this private school teacher demonstrates consistency between policy and practice in the varied ways in which she addresses content as she attempts to encourage learners to think for themselves by more actively involving them in their learning.

Role of Learners

In the interview the teacher pointed out that she expects learners to engage in hands-on, practical learning activities in the classroom that require interacting with peers, through collaboration with other learners, as well as individual work. Examples of these types of learner engagement were observed in Observations 1, 2 and 3. Additionally, the teacher stated that she also includes activities that require self-study on the part of the learners beyond the classroom, such as included in the 'Little Creatures' Topic where learners were asked to research and provide feedback on a 'creature' not addressed as part of the Topic. She also encourages learners to make contributions to lessons. During Observation 2, this was demonstrated where the teacher played a video-clip related to the 'Space' Topic that a learner had brought to class, that she had found while further exploring the 'Space' Topic at home.

Even though Personal and Social Well-being is a feature of the Life Skills curriculum that is downplayed and/or avoided, certain aspects are being implicitly addressed, as the teacher commented a number of times during the interview about the importance of valuing learners' contributions. Valuing learners' contributions may result in their affective development by promoting their self-esteem and confidence, thus nurturing positive attitudes in learners towards the learning of new knowledge.

The Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011) states that the national curriculum "aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own

lives" (p.4), and should encourage "an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths" (p.4). These statements imply that learners should possess the skills to make appropriate choices, be critical thinkers, and be decision-makers. Therefore, these skills need to be developed and practiced in the classroom in order for learners to be able to successfully apply these in their world. This aligns with Briggs and Hansen's (2012) views of developing autonomous learners (see 2.2.4), which is fundamental with regard to Life Skills, as autonomy is a trait required in order for learners to be able to make valuable contributions to society through the choices and decisions they make. Hence, consistency exists between policy and this teacher's practice.

- Integration

Integration of Values

The teacher commented that because the links between Life Skills, Literacy and Mathematics are strong, values can be addressed in every subject. The teacher provided the example of incorporating the value of sharing into a Mathematics lesson with a focus on fractions. Although the fractions concept includes a sharing element, the teacher did not see that this is different to the *value* of sharing. According to Niewenhuis et al (2007), values can be addressed implicitly, as the teacher suggests, but also explicitly. I argue that further discussion about values is required over and above what is implicit in the Mathematics lesson (see 4.3.2.).

Values are implicitly included in the Life Skills CAPS (2011a) in the General Aims, but examples of values that should be addressed are excluded. With regard to Life Skills content, the term 'values' is only mentioned as part of Personal and Social Well-being. Particular values are included in the discussion of this study areas as learners being encouraged to "respect the rights of others and to show tolerance for cultural and religious diversity in order to contribute to a democratic society" (DBE, 2011a, p.9). This is problematic as although values are essential, which values and how these relate to a democratic framework are vague in the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a). This lack of clarity could impact in how teachers then address values in the classroom. Integration is also an aspect included in the CAPS. The teacher incorporates both values and integration into her approach, however this appears to downplay the importance of values in the Life Skills curriculum.

The teacher demonstrates consistency with policy as values are considered important and are addressed. However, some disjuncture also exists as it is unclear how the 'sharing' example provided aligns with the General Aims, and if values are sufficiently addressed through integration.

Integration of Content

During the interview the teacher stated that integration should be considered across subjects, across the Life Skills study areas, and across topics, as she believes that integration is essential for developing the whole child, part of this development including the ability to use knowledge beyond the classroom. Altieri (2011, p.10) states that without integration learners "will be less equipped to deal with out-of-school literacy demands" and will possess less content knowledge, which, as mentioned previously, appears to be foregrounded at this particular school. A few examples of integration provided by the teacher were:

- Beginning Knowledge and Technology –where learners use their knowledge of 'Little Creatures' in their Robotics class to design and programme a 'creature'
- Creative Arts and Beginning Knowledge - the topic 'Little Creatures' is used in a visual art lesson requiring learners to draw spider webs, and
- Literacy and Beginning Knowledge - the life cycle of a butterfly forms the basis of a piece of creative writing.

Integration was also observed in Observation 3, where the content addressed, being the putting on and function of a space suit, was integrated with a Literacy lesson focusing on the skill of sequencing.

The Life Skills CAPS encourages teachers to "integrate the content from the different study areas where possible and appropriate" (DBE, 2011, p.14). As integration is regarded as being valuable and for this reason implemented by the teacher, there is consistency between policy and her practice. The extent of the integration would imply that classification is weak (Bernstein, 1990), as appears to be the intention of the national curriculum that this private school also utilises (see 2.3.1). However, the examples of integration provided relate to more superficial elements of the Life Skills curriculum, rather than elements, such as transformation and diversity, that underpin the curriculum and are necessary to address in the South African context.

In the next section, the findings presented in 4.3.1 are discussed using Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge'.

4.3.2. Discussion and interpretation of findings for the private school context

The analysis of the data seems to show that in this private, Christian school context there are both positive and negative findings related to Life Skills teaching and learning.

In the private school context, Christianity is the dominant religion. Nieto and Bode (2012, p.352) claim that discussion on religions will "expand [learners'] perspectives about religious freedoms in a democratic society, engage students in school by affirming identity, and build community". Both the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) and Nieto and Bode (2012) emphasise that religion education is more than merely learning facts about a myriad of religions. Hence, where one religion becomes the focus of the school curriculum, the democratic and citizenship element of religion may be lost.

Elbaz (1983) refers to situational knowledge (see 2.4.1) as the knowledge teachers use to make sense of their particular school and classroom contexts. With regard to religion, it would seem that teachers at this private school are not required to use their situational knowledge as the religious or Bible lessons are designed by a third party. The teachers have little input in Bible lessons, and are merely required to follow the curriculum as set out. However, there was an instance when the private school teacher used her situational knowledge. One of her Grade 3 learners brought a video clip entitled 'From the Big Bang to Me' to class. Even though the concept of the 'Big Bang' may have contradicted the Christian beliefs advocated at the school, the teacher was comfortable enough in her school situation to show the video clip regardless of the ethos of the school. However, after playing the clip, she focused on the planets mentioned in the clip, as this was the lesson's focus, and she did not comment on the 'Big Bang' aspect. This could indicate that although the teacher felt confident enough to play the clip, her situational knowledge dictated that she should avoid foregrounding a theory that contradicts creation as included in the Bible. It was interesting to note that the teacher's own point of view, that is her personal knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.2) related to the 'Big Bang', appeared to be accepting of the theory. However, the symbiotic relationship between her situational and personal knowledge played a part in the decision she made. Elbaz (1983) also relates personal knowledge to a sense of responsibility, which this teacher has to both the school and her learners' parents. Even though the teacher's own Christian beliefs did not appear to be strong, her sense of professionalism, or knowledge

of self, as defined by Elbaz (1983) (see 2.4.6), allows her to follow the Christian ethos of the school.

The example previously discussed is one vignette drawn from the observation data. However, in approaching the teaching of religion more broadly, the teacher's experiential knowledge, being the impact of her experiences on her teaching (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.4), appears to override all else, as due to her extensive teaching experience in private school contexts, she foregrounds science-based content, or Beginning Knowledge, over Personal and Social Well-being. This has implications for creating an awareness of diversity in learners, as emphasised in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) and by Nieto and Bode (2012). It is not clear if the diversity aspects addressed are due to diversity being part of the curriculum and thus have to be addressed, even if downplayed, or because the teacher's knowledge of milieu (see 2.4.6) is strong.

The private school teacher stated that selecting content according to the learners' context is important. Street (1995) views teachers' awareness of learners' contexts as a learning opportunity rather than a challenge. Knowledge of learners' contexts and their prior knowledge allows for links to be made between everyday and school learning, which leads to a much richer learning experience. This corresponds with Dewey's (1916) notion of 'progressive education' and the importance of context in Life Skills teaching and learning. In the light of Street's (1995) argument, this teacher's statement made during the interview that the Life Skills CAPS is a starting point, but additional content must be added to extend learners and hold their interest, is valid. This demonstrates the teacher's personal knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.2) in that she feels a responsibility towards developing her learners as best as she can. The development of a Life Skills school curriculum requires the teacher to draw on what Elbaz (1983) refers to as knowledge of curriculum (see 2.4.8) in order to design appropriate units of work, lessons and teaching aids, for each Topic/topic. The teacher adding content to the Life Skills CAPS Topics to extend her learners, aligns with Moll et al's (2001) view on the importance and purpose of school learning. Content is then not only CAPS based, but also what is deemed appropriate by the teacher based on the learners' context. As she deems developing an appropriate Life Skills school curriculum as part of her professional identity, this is an example of knowledge of self (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.6). The content of the Topics/topics, based on those suggested in the Life Skills CAPS, is determined and researched by the teachers in collaboration, suggesting that the framing of content is strong (cf. Bernstein, 1990) (see 2.3.1).

The teacher commented that she believes private school learners require more extension than public school learners. It could be argued that those learners who have 'been exposed to less' have experience and knowledge in areas that those learners 'exposed to more' do not have. The teacher does not appear to acknowledge that some public school learners are at the 'level' of private school learners, and that some learners in private schools may not have as much content knowledge or life experience (as defined by this teacher) as public school learners. Therefore, public school learners could possess different knowledge, and be more or less knowledgeable about particular topics, but not necessarily operate at different levels or require less extension.

This view corresponds with Elbaz's (1983) notion of social knowledge (see 2.4.3). Social knowledge, according to Elbaz (1983), is the understanding teachers have of the learners in their classroom, which influences the expectations teachers place on learners. This private school teacher makes a deficit comparison between her learners and those at a public school, which demonstrates a narrow view of knowledge of mileu (see 2.4.6). Elements of diversity, that should be included as part of knowledge of milieu in a South African context, do not appear to be valued at this private school. The teacher's social knowledge leads her to foreground aspects of wealth and privilege in her learners, as well as high academic expectations. Part of this expectation, in the teacher's opinion as stated during the interview, is due to the parents' expectations of private schooling. Hence, the emphasis she places on Beginning Knowledge aspects of the Life Skills curriculum. The teacher's awareness of parental demands, and her role in meeting these academic demands, speaks to her knowledge of self (see 2.4.6) in the way in which she positions herself to the parents. This perhaps indicates her desire to meet parents' demands over the needs of the learners living and growing up in a socially and culturally diverse society.

The teacher's social knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) has influenced her view of learners as being more or less capable. Perhaps the minimum requirements outlined in the Life Skills CAPS perpetuates this misconception of 'more/less', and has resulted in teachers having a negative attitude towards the National Curriculum, as it is seen to underestimate learners' abilities and/or not cater to all learners. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Life Skills CAPS is inadequate, but rather that it provides guidelines for all teachers to extend as they deem appropriate for their particular school contexts.

The extension of content does occur at this private school, as well as the integration of content. Elbaz (1983) states that integration relies on a teacher's subject matter knowledge (see 2.4.7), which includes teachers having a good understanding of the subjects they teach. For this private school teacher, integration of Beginning Knowledge and Creative Arts was highlighted in the interview. She also provided a number of examples indicating integration of Beginning Knowledge aspects and Literacy.

However, the integration of Personal and Social Well-being aspects, such as values, appears to be somewhat problematic based on the teacher's example of integrating the value of sharing with a Mathematics lesson. Sharing as a *value* does not simply involve dividing an object or objects into equal, smaller parts, as could be implied from a Mathematics perspective. Learners need to consider for example, why we share, with whom we share, when it is appropriate or not to share, and if sharing has to be done equally or fairly. This is a discussion that may contradict rather than align with the concept of sharing in a Mathematics lesson. Therefore, the Life Skills space is a more appropriate one in which learners could interrogate the value of sharing. The teacher's subject matter knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) with regard to integration appears to be better utilised where Beginning Knowledge aspects are integrated with Literacy, rather than where Personal and Social Well-being aspects are integrated with Mathematics, as in the example provided.

Elbaz's (1983) subject matter knowledge is also evident in the teachers designing of Life Skills Topics/topics, as the school curriculum is more sciences-based than focusing on personal and social development. The progression of lessons through team planning and the use of integration make learning more connected for the learners. The teacher's perception of a 'bigger picture' corresponds with the characteristics of school knowledge highlighted by Moll et al (2001), being that school knowledge must be systematic and networked. This implies that the new learning cannot be random, isolated facts, but learners need to be able to make connections between the concepts they are working with in order to make sense of the new learning and its relevance to their lives. Relevance is essential in teaching and learning for Dewey (1916) and Hoadley and Jansen (2002) as content must link to context, as well as build on what learners know.

The way that the selected content is presented to the learners draws on teachers' knowledge of instruction (see 2.4.8). An aspect of knowledge of instruction, according to Elbaz (1983), is the use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies. The teacher stated during the

interview that varied approaches make lessons more appealing to and interesting for the learners, as well as help make the learners responsible for their own learning. This corresponds with Briggs and Hansen (2012, p.16), who state that encouraging responsibility goes hand in hand with the 'child as autonomous learner', where learners are allowed more independence in their work, interactions and learning. This private school teacher's knowledge of instruction (Elbaz, 1983) appears to be strong, and it is this knowledge that guides her implementation choices in attempting to create a meaningful learning space where learners are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge.

Elbaz's (1983) situational knowledge (see 2.4.1), subject matter knowledge (see 2.4.7), and knowledge of instruction (see 2.4.8) appear to underpin this private school teacher's understanding of Life Skills, her content selection, and her implementation of Life Skills lessons.

In the next section the data obtained from the semi-structured interview with the public school teacher and the classroom observations, will be analysed and the findings presented.

4.4. Analysis of the semi-structured interview and observation data elicited from the Grade 3 teacher at the public school

The initial reading of the semi-structured interview transcript indicated that the public school teacher acknowledges that although the teaching of life skills (see 1.3.) is important, there is no need for a Life Skills subject. She believes that integration with other subjects could be used as a means of addressing some of the Life Skills curriculum, where the selection of content is the choice of the teacher. The teacher considers the content knowledge related to Beginning Knowledge to be unimportant, and that the emphasis should rather be on skills that will help learners to function better in their everyday lives, such as conflict resolution. It is the teacher's opinion that Life Skills should not include any religious issues.

In the next section, the findings are presented according to the themes and condensed statements (italicised) identified in the data.

4.4.1. Presentation of findings in relation to the themes and condensed statements

- Context

Context of Learners Influencing Content

The analysis of this data indicates that it is important for the public school teacher to relate Life Skills content to what learners are familiar with. The teacher commented in the interview that content should be tailored to suit the context of the learners in the class, thereby making content personally relevant. An example of personal relevance suggested by the teacher was encouraging learners to research historical topics drawing on the knowledge of family members for the Topic 'How People Lived Long Ago'. However, the teacher's choice of wording, 'maybe give them this topic …', implies that this is an activity that could be done rather than an activity that had actually been done. Planned examples of making explicit links for learners was not evident in the series of observations. An arbitrary example was included in Observation 1 where the teacher asked the learners to consider the waste items from their own homes and asked if these were recyclable.

Regarding more controversial issues, the teacher explained that although issues such as abuse are difficult to address, she discusses these when required. During my initial visit to the class, where data were not being collected, the discussion moved from 'Rights and Responsibilities' to traumas currently being experienced by some of the learners at home. Learners began to openly speak about issues they were currently experiencing at home with their parents. The most common issue seemed to be parents fighting with each other and learners overhearing this, or having the fighting occur in front of them. The teacher stated that this became a more pressing discussion than the one planned, and she thus made the decision to present the intended lesson another time. This discussion was sensitively handled by the teacher, and the 'difficulties' expressed during the semi-structured interview, were not apparent.

Therefore, this public school teacher demonstrates consistency between policy and her practice, as in some instances the learners' contexts impact on the content she addresses in the classroom, albeit reluctantly. However, there is also evidence of some disjuncture in that although the importance of context was acknowledged, it is unclear that this is always carried through into practice.

CAPS and Religion

The teacher stated in the interview that she would conduct discussions on religion thereby adhering to the requirements of the Life Skills curriculum. However, she indicated that the content of the discussions would come from the learners themselves. The teacher's response to the inclusion of 'Religious and other special days' was: "I don't think it's important. I don't want to discuss other religions, or religions other than my own with children". The reasons that the teacher provided for her reluctance to address religion in her classroom were that religion was not addressed at her previous school, religion is an emotive topic, and she fears misrepresenting or misinterpreting a religion. She also stated that she does not want to "influence a child into becoming a Christian or becoming a Hindu or a Muslim or a Buddist".

In spite of the teacher saying that religion should not form part of the Life Skills curriculum, I observed religion being addressed in Observations 2 and 3. The learners found the group work activity enjoyable and were excited to present their work. They were required to read an A2 poster on a particular religion in order to answer questions posed by the teacher. It appears that the sensitivity alluded to by the teacher is based on her own perceptions of religion, as the learners were positively engaged in the activity regardless of the religion they were required to work with.

The teacher's approach to religion minimises her involvement and input. The teacher went so far as to state in the interview that she would not even comment on learners' contributions. This situation was corroborated in Observations 2 and 3, where the learners were required to find and present information on various religions. The teacher limited her involvement during the research lesson, and limited her comments during the presentation. She commented on how groups had worked together, rather than on the content of their presentations.

During the semi-structured interview, the teacher expanded on the idea of making learners responsible for content, by possibly asking them to bring in clothing, foods, objects, and so on, specific to their culture and religion, thus bringing the learners' everyday experiences into the classroom to be shared. However, the teacher explained that this type of activity would allow her to remove herself from the teaching equation, and leave the 'teaching' of the various religions to the learners. She stated that she is not comfortable teaching the religion aspect of the Life Skills curriculum, but she does so, despite her reluctance, as addressing religion is a curriculum requirement.

Consequently, due to her approach, she limits her interactions with her learners, and distances herself from particular content. This is problematic as the teacher needs to mediate the religion aspect of the Life Skills curriculum (DBE, 2011a), thus extending learners' knowledge and creating more of an awareness of the role that difference and diversity play in the South African context.

There is consistency between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice as she includes lessons on religion, albeit reluctantly. However, disjuncture also exists, as the teacher appears not to understand religion education and its importance in the curriculum of a diverse society, as well as her role in addressing issues of religious diversity.

Context Influencing Issues of Diversity

In the interview, the public school teacher stated that her class is 'monocultural' as the majority of her learners are black and Christian, and that the diversity in her classroom is not extreme. Nieto and Bode (2012) warn against teachers believing that one, broad shared aspect in learners, supposes a sameness in all aspects. The notion of sameness in relation to equity is important, but this teacher makes assumptions about the sameness of the learners in her class according to their race and religion. This implies that the teacher's definition of diversity is limited.

One exception was noted where the teacher acknowledged difference. During Observation 2, the teacher singled out the one Hindi child present in the class, and asked her to explain the wearing of white to funerals as part of her religion to the rest of the class.

Implicit in the General Aims included in the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a), is the importance of multicultural education (cf Nieto & Bode, 2012). Culture, according to Nieto and Bode (2012, p.159), "is too complex and too varied for us to conclude that all those who share a particular background behave in the same way or believe the same things". Broadly categorising people is problematic as understanding difference and diversity, through engagement with the Life Skills curriculum is essential to living in the South African context.

As diversity and the diversity present in the classroom is narrowly viewed by the public school teacher, disjuncture exists between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice.

- Content

Content and Life Skills CAPS

Many schools have been provided with workbooks for the Foundation Phase subjects, and tend to follow the sequence of Topics and lessons as they appear in the Life Skills workbooks. In response to a question on the role of the workbooks, the teacher stated that the content included in the Life Skills workbooks is sufficient, and only sometimes would be added to by herself. The teacher further commented in the interview that she believes the workbooks to be useful as she said "I don't have to go photocopy worksheets, and just know I'll slot it in when I've got free time". The workbooks were not utilised in any of the lessons observed. The teacher explained that, in her opinion, teaching values and practical issues that learners can use in their everyday lives is more important than the science related Topics. She further explained that she believes that these Topics include aspects too advanced for Foundation Phase learners, and hold little value. When it comes to other issues, such as National Days, the teacher stated that these should be discussed informally. When questioned about the addressing of 'special days', she provided Worker's Day as an example rather than one with more cultural significance. This may again relate to the teacher's reluctance to address issues of religion and cultural diversity in the classroom, or her lack of knowledge of cultural and religious days.

However, despite the teacher favouring some Life Skills content over others, she commented that content is dictated by the Life Skills CAPS and must be strictly adhered to. However, this is not the case as in the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011, p.14) it is stated that "the sequence of the topics can be changed" provided progression is included, and "teachers are also encouraged to choose their own topics should they judge these to be more appropriate". Teachers do have more leeway in their decision-making than is understood by the public school teacher, although she focuses more intently on specific aspects she deems appropriate, rather than on the Life Skills curriculum more broadly.

It therefore seems that this teacher prioritises some content, and downplays other content. As she is quite specific in her choices regarding content, this would suggest that framing is strong (cf. Bernstein, 1990), although not as strong as in the private school context. This is because the private school teacher participates with other colleagues in developing an adapted and more appropriate version of the Life Skills curriculum, whereas the public school teacher follows the official curriculum, for the most part, as presented in the workbooks. However, as

the public school teacher uses the Life Skills workbooks to guide lessons and activities, there must be consistency between policy and practice, even though the workbook activities may not always be appropriate (see 2.2.2).

Prioritised Content/Subjects

The teacher commented in relation to the prioritisation of Life Skills content:

> I think each teacher is going to (*sic*) put emphasis to something she or he enjoys, and because of that they're going to …. we're going to emphasise according to our own preference.

This appears to be the case with this teacher, as her preference is not 'Beginning Knowledge' and other content-heavy aspects of the Life Skills curriculum. She claimed she has a "poor memory" which is a reason why Beginning Knowledge presents a challenge for her. She explained that her preference is what she considers to be more relevant to the everyday lives of her learners, such as Rights and Responsibilities, anger management, friendships, and bullying, as these issues she considers to be "lifelong skills". She expressed her dislike towards the 'Insects' Topic in the interview with the phrases: "unimportant", "don't care", "who cares", "terrible", and "not interested".

The teacher stated that she utilises Life Skills teaching time for the other Foundation Phase subjects. She further stated that Life Skills is taught when required, or when there is spare time to complete a number of activities in the Life Skills workbook to confirm that Life Skills teaching is indeed taking place.

The teacher stated that Literacy is more important than the Life Skills study area of Beginning Knowledge (made up of Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology). Hence, topic related content should be covered in Literacy lessons with a Literacy slant. The teacher's view is that Literacy should have the greater focus, and the examples she provided include learners being able to spell 'abdomen' and 'thorax' and to use these in sentences as part of the Topic 'Insects'. However, during the series of observations, this overlap was not evident, as the specified Life Skills focus was maintained in each of the lessons. This overlap may have been more apparent if Literacy lessons had also been observed.

The problems that emerge from the abovementioned points are that the Life Skills time allocations are not adhered to, as a greater focus is placed on the other two Foundation Phase

subjects. The reduced amount of time then spent on Life Skills may result in content not being addressed in sufficient depth. Furthermore, where Life Skills elements are incorporated elsewhere, such as Literacy, then these elements are not as comprehensively addressed as they would be in a dedicated Life Skills lesson.

There appears to be disjuncture between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice as the teacher places more value on Literacy, rather than regarding the Foundation Phase subjects as being of equal importance, and thus the time allocated to Life Skills is used for the other subjects.

- Lesson Implementation

Implementation and Policy

The teacher remarked that policy dictates how Foundation Phase teachers should teach Life Skills, but that teachers do not necessarily agree with it. Hoadley and Jansen (2002, p.191) state that "there is always resistance to change" when it comes to curriculum. However, it appears that it is the teacher's misunderstanding of policy rather than her 'resistance' to implementing it that is the problem, as at no point are teaching and learning methods prescribed in the Life Skills CAPS related to the study area Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being. However, the teacher attempted to involve the learners in various ways in Life Skills lessons, such as paired work in Observation 1, a group research task in Observation 2, and group presentations in Observation 3.

This misunderstanding of the curriculum, and the implications for implementation of Life Skills lessons may well exist for other teachers as well.

Teacher's Perceptions of Learners' View of Life Skills Lessons

The main method chosen by this teacher, as she stated in the interview and as observed in Observation 1, is whole-class discussion. The teacher emphasised that the learners enjoy Life Skills lessons and find these 'easy' because the majority of lessons are discussion based. Another type of discussion activity the teacher mentioned is where learners would be encouraged to engage in discussion with older family members in order to better understand the past. She also stated that this activity could be concluded by the learners presenting a '*little* speech' (italics added), which downplays the importance of the activity and the possible learning opportunities for learners.

The danger is that a strategy that appears to resonate with the learners is then over-utilised. Discussion may also limit the amount of input the teacher provides, and where discussion, or reporting back becomes the learners' responsibility, then teacher input is further reduced.

Therefore, there is consistency between policy and the teacher's practice in that she attempts to involve the learners in Life Skills lessons through discussion. However, there is also disjuncture as the teacher's approach to addressing Life Skills is restricted to discussion, and the new content that forms the basis of these discussions appears to be limited. In the light of Moll et al's (2001) argument for school knowledge, in addition to acknowledging what learners know, the extension of content is required in order for the learning experience to be a more valuable one.

- Integration

Integration and Values

In the interview the teacher commented that in her opinion, Life Skills permeates all subjects and should not be limited to specific lessons. Therefore, aspects of Life Skills, such as the values example the teacher provided, should be integrated into every lesson. During Observation 3 an instance was discussed where one learner had hit and laughed at another learner while the group was rehearsing for their presentation. The teacher commented that "physical hurt passes but hurt feelings are remembered". She connected the incident to the current Topic of 'Religion' by highlighting the concepts of respect and love, thus demonstrating an implicit approach to the teaching of values.

The Life Skills CAPS (2011a) refers to an integrated approach across the subjects and within the Life Skills study areas. However, where integration is not planned, but rather viewed as an opportunity to address related content or issues only as they arise, the new content may be limited, and issues addressed through integration superficially handled.

There is consistency between policy and the teacher's practice, as the teacher deems addressing values as important, linking these to the real world of the learners. Integration has also been incorporated as stipulated in policy, but relying solely on points of integration to address Life Skills concepts, or values as in the teacher's example, results in infrequent and vague addressing of content.

Integration and Literacy

The teacher stated that Literacy in the Foundation Phase is more important than Beginning Knowledge. She believes that Life Skills topics should be included in Literacy and be used as a Literacy focus, rather than a Life Skills focus. However, although the teacher suggested ways to integrate Life Skills into Literacy, her use of phrases such as 'I would maybe…' and 'I would try …', suggest what *could* be done rather than what has already been done.

The Life Skills CAPS (2011a, p.8) states that Life Skills should "support and strengthen the teaching of the other core Foundation Phase subjects", thus an implicit reference is made to integration. However, this does not negate the need for Life Skills specific lessons, or place Life Skills as a less important subject, as appears to be the understanding of this teacher.

Therefore, while the teacher claimed the integration of subjects to be an important aspect of Life Skills/Literacy teaching and learning, her responses seem to indicate that integration would be considered rather than actually implemented. This indicates a disjuncture between the Life Skills CAPS and the teacher's practice.

4.4.2. Discussion and interpretation of findings for the public school context

The analysis of the data seems to show that within this public school context there are, as in the private school context, positive and negative findings related to Life Skills teaching and learning.

There is an awareness by the public school teacher of the importance of preparing her learners for the world beyond the classroom and some of the tools required for this. The teacher's responses seem to indicate that when more pertinent issues linked to Personal and Social Well-being are addressed, that this is reactive rather than proactive. She judges the need to discuss particular issues based on topics the learners raise, or incidences that occur in the classroom or on the playground. Elbaz (1983) highlights the importance of teachers' being aware of learners' contexts as part of their social knowledge (see 2.4.3.). However, in this case, the teacher is using this knowledge to indicate when and how often particular issues need to be discussed, rather than in dictating content selection and presentation. Elbaz's (1983) social knowledge also includes the level of expectation teachers place on learners. This teacher appears to have expectations of learners' behaviour rather than their academic achievements. The teacher referred to learners as being 'innocent' and 'beautiful', but as Haynes and Murris (2012, p.42) note "innocence is not a property of childhood but of adults'

desires". Excell (2011, p.74) extends this claim by stating that "hiding children away from a world of which they are already a part is self-deceptive on the part of the adult". Therefore, the difficulty in discussing controversial or sensitive issues may be based on the teacher's construction of what it means to be a child/learner. This is based on the teacher's personal knowledge as defined by Elbaz (1983) (see 2.4.2), where the teacher's perceptions give meaning to her experiences. For this public school teacher, her personal knowledge appears to frame her view of learners as innocent and fragile, resulting in her reluctance to address particular issues unless necessary.

However, the public school teacher seemed to show a greater awareness than the private school teacher of the impact of context in the classroom with her statement:

> When we're talking about families, I'm aware that a child's lost his mom ... so family backgrounds. If I know a child was abused, I would be very careful about that ... where children live ... very wary of a child who lives in a squatter camp most weekends. So, sensitive to the child's background.

The teacher is therefore aware of the importance of being cognisant of learners' social contexts and the impact this has on her approach to certain issues. This appears to align with Elbaz's (1983) social knowledge (see 2.4.3), albeit limited to acknowledging the learners' contexts, as this knowledge does not extend to mediating and/or scaffolding content. There is also evidence of knowledge of milieu (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.6) by the teacher as the acknowledgement of the varied living conditions and family structures of her learners allows her to approach certain topics with more sensitivity.

With regard to content, the teacher foregrounds everyday knowledge. The inclusion of school knowledge should be an important consideration in extending learner knowledge, but this appears to be absent. Possible reasons could be linked to planning, or a lack thereof, as the Life Skills workbooks are used as a guide to content and activities, which in themselves are limited (see 2.2.2). According to Elbaz (1983), subject matter knowledge (see 2.4.7), curriculum knowledge (see 2.4.8) and situational knowledge (see 2.4.1) require the teacher to select and work with content in particular ways. These knowledges are not apparent due to the teacher's use of the Life Skills workbooks, thus negating the need to develop units of work and/or lessons. As units of work are not developed, content is not selected, varied, adapted, or extended. This means that only the minimum requirements of the Life Skills curriculum are being addressed.

Religion is a component of Life Skills that is implicit in the CAPS. Other than 'festivals and special days' needing to be discussed, no purpose is provided in order to indicate the alignment between the Life Skills curriculum and the General Aims of the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a). In the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) a distinction is made between 'religious education' and 'religion education'. 'Religious education' focuses on a particular religion whereas 'religion education' is intended to introduce learners to the many diverse religions that form part of South African culture. According to the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.45), 'religion education' extends beyond merely investigating religions, but rather provides a "broader civil toleration of others" linked to national unity, identity and values.

A large part of this teacher's values and character, or knowledge of self as defined by Elbaz (1983) (see 2.4.6), is linked to her identity as a Christian, which impacts on her attitude towards and enactment of religion education. She commented that part of her reluctance to address issues of religion is because she does not want to be responsible for influencing a learner to change their religion. This level of influence, however, would be greater in the home than school. It is not the intention of 'religion education' that learners convert from one religion to another arbitrarily, but rather to become more aware of yet another aspect of diversity that has shaped our country (Ministry of Education, 2001). The teacher's concern is acknowledged in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) where it is emphasised that one religion cannot be endorsed over another. However, the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) also states that in order to promote diversity, learners should be exposed to the diversity of religions represented in South African society. Thus, 'Introducing Religion Education into Schools' is one of the sixteen educational strategies included in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Nevertheless, the teacher regards values education as being necessary and important, and acknowledged that values can be addressed through religion, as mentioned in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001). However, this teacher had a strong negative opinion about and an aversion towards addressing religion in the classroom, which she stated in the interview, stems from her own experiences of religion in her upbringing. Hence, her views on religion and addressing religion in the classroom are influenced by her personal and experiential knowledge (Elbaz 1983), being closely linked as Elbaz noted (see 2.4.4). The teacher's experiences have therefore shaped her views on religion in the classroom.

It appears as if this teacher does not understand the value of 'religion education' because she views religion in a narrower sense. She deems this aspect of the national curriculum to be *religious* rather than *religion* education, thus making religion the responsibility of the family rather than the teacher (Ferguson, 2011). Even though there appears to be limited understanding on the part of the teacher as to why religion education is important with regard to values and diversity, the teacher acknowledged values as being essential. Perhaps if the purpose of religion education was made more explicit in the Life Skills CAPS, then this would provide teachers with a clearer understanding and perspective from which to approach religion and values.

Addressing diversity was not seen to be as important as addressing values, as the teacher commented:

> We're teaching in a very monocultural system, I would say. Because if I look at my kiddies, the majority are black ... Christian ... there're a couple of white kids ... so the cultural differences are not extreme.

However, this view is a consequence of her limited understanding of culture and diversity and what these entail, perhaps also due to the personal and experiential knowledge the teacher possesses (Elbaz, 1983) .The teacher stated that teaching diversity in any classroom should be context dependent, hence not always necessary to address, and not necessary in her classroom. This claim is refuted in the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001) which states that highlighting diversity through the exploration of the ten fundamental values derived from South Africa's constitution is key in creating understanding and promoting transformation in our country. According to Elbaz (1983), knowledge of milieu (see 2.4.6) entails an understanding of the space being worked in and the unique qualities individuals bring to that space. In a South African context, this could be extended to include interactions between individuals in different spaces more broadly. Given the diversity that exists in South Africa, this teacher's understanding, or knowledge of milieu, appears to be limited by her personal and experiential knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) in that she views her learners as being similar rather than diverse.

The teacher's comment, included previously, was particularly revealing as according to Nieto and Bode (2012), where a person refuses to see difference, this results in the acceptance of the dominant culture as the norm. In this particular case, it appears as if the dominant culture is based on the teacher's perception, thus race and religion, viz. Christianity, seemingly being

the focus. However, as Nieto and Bode (2012, p.162) state, "there are vast differences among learners within ethnic groups, and these differences may be due not just to culture, but also to social class, [and] language spoken at home". A perceived absence of diversity cannot be the determining factor as to whether diversity should be addressed or not. Learners are exposed to issues of diversity in various guises outside of the school environment in any event, and therefore awareness of diversity needs to be created in the classroom. An acknowledgement of this need related to the broader South African context, requires a deeper understanding of milieu and the political milieu in particular (see 2.4.6) than this teacher seems to possess, based on her comment related to teaching 'in a monocultural system'.

The teacher stated that she does not regard Life Skills as an important subject, as in her experience, "because of pressures of time, [Life Skills] does get side lined", and Life Skills is the "fall guy". She goes on to extend this supposedly shared sentiment to her colleagues and other phases as well. In her opinion learners "don't give it any value. It's nothing to them". But here we need to ask the question: is this a reflection of learners' views of Life Skills, or are teachers' views of Life Skills influencing the way in which learners' view Life Skills? If it is the latter, then how do teachers change this perspective? These issues speak to the main research question (see 1.2). Teachers' current understanding of Life Skills needs to be identified first, before these other issues can be addressed, which are beyond the scope of this study.

Therefore, the public school teacher's perspective on integration is that it is a means to address the required Topics through Literacy, with the priority being given to the development of literacy skills rather than addressing Life Skills content. This is the approach that Altieri (2011) advocates, although she does not prioritise one subject over the other. Rather Altieri (2011) states that Literacy and Life Skills content go hand in hand and that they support each other. Literacy is needed in order to work with Life Skills content, and the Life Skills content provides a context for the development and practice of Literacy. There is a tentative link between this teacher's approach to integrated teaching and Elbaz's (1983) subject matter knowledge. However, according to Elbaz (1983), subject matter knowledge extends beyond integration to focus more on teachers having a deeper understanding for the subject/s they teach. This deeper understanding seems to be lacking for Literacy, based on the example provided of spelling insect body parts, and is lacking for the Life Skills subject, as the teacher does not understand the value of or the need for the subject.

This public school teacher regards integration as a reason for why Life Skills as a stand-alone subject is not required. The teacher is of the opinion that the Beginning Knowledge aspect of Life Skills and the specialised content that accompanies it, has no place in the Foundation Phase context, again evidencing limited subject matter knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) as previously outlined. She linked the worthlessness of Life Skills to both time constraints, as classroom time is better spent on Literacy and Mathematics, and the fact that the learners could research this content for themselves. After reviewing the transcription from the semi-structured interview, the public school teacher provided the following statement: "The teaching of content-based subjects is less important due to the easy accessibility of information via the internet, so skills teaching is more valuable". The 'internet' aspect is a contentious one, as for Moll et al (2001) one of the characteristics of school knowledge is that it is networked and systematic. Therefore, according to Moll et al (2001), a learner randomly trolling the internet for isolated facts is not considered to be school learning. Another characteristic is the presence of a mediator. Access to information may be 'easy' but one needs to consider what content learners find, if they are able to connect the pieces of content they find, and if they are able to understand the content. It is here that the expertise and knowledge of the teacher is required in appropriately mediating the new learning. Mediation requires what Elbaz (1983) defines as theoretical knowledge (see 2.4.5), being an understanding of theory and how teachers use the theory they are familiar with to work with content in particular ways. This teacher seems to lack theoretical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) related to teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase as the importance of content and mediating content is not evident.

One also needs to consider what motivates *Grade 3* learners to want to research and further their learning; if self-study is possible when content/topics have not been introduced in class to spark the learners' interest; and where learners might attempt their own research, if they have the means and access to do this. Therefore, the teacher does not seem to draw on her situational knowledge, defined by Elbaz (1983) as being an awareness of the teaching and learning situation and required adaptations. The teacher stressed the accessibility of content on the internet, but this means of research as appropriate relates back to learners' contexts and if they actually have the access to the internet that the teacher referred to. The teacher's comment suggests that context has not been recognized as firstly, this is avoiding rather than adapting content, and secondly, not all learners may have internet access as assumed by the teacher. The teacher possibly demonstrates a skewed version of Elbaz's (1983) social

knowledge, as the expectations placed on learners that Elbaz (1983) refers to, are viewed by this teacher not as how well or poorly learners perform, but rather expecting them to follow their interests through research. This may be an unrealistic expectation of Grade 3 learners.

However, the teacher also commented during the semi-structured interview on the learners' responses to Life Skills by stating that "They love it! Children love it! They would way rather find out something interesting than do a Maths sum, or do a comprehension, or write sentences". This comment corroborates the need for Life Skills as a separate subject, even though it is the teacher's opinion that this need does not exist. The teacher, therefore, is indirectly acknowledging the need for Life Skills based on her learners' perspective, but she is unable to see the need for herself. Perhaps her personal and experiential knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) is once again clouding her judgement of the value of the Life Skills subject.

Regardless of the content/Topics addressed or deemed important or not by this public school teacher, Life Skills lessons appear to be discussion based for the most part. The teaching and learning strategies teachers select, according to Elbaz (1983) stems from teachers' knowledge of instruction (see 2.4.8). The teacher justifies the use of discussion as her main pedagogical tool by stating that the learners 'love to talk'. At several points in the semi-structured interview she spoke about learners wanting to discuss matters, give their opinions, and share their own experiences. She therefore favours discussion type lessons and appears to be reluctant to experiment with other strategies. A possible lack of planning and reliance on the Life Skills workbooks could account for lessons being discussion based, which therefore are limited to everyday knowledge. Educationalists such as Dewey (1916) and Hoadley and Jansen (2002) maintain that making learning relevant and connected to learners' everyday knowledge is essential (Dewey, 1916), but the extension of everyday knowledge into school knowledge is required in order to create a more valuable and worthwhile experience (Moll et al, 2001). However, in order for new learning to occur I argue that school knowledge (Moll et al, 2010) is required to form the focus of Life Skills lessons, which should be as demanding as the Languages and Mathematics subjects. Although the teacher alluded to new learning, the majority of her comments in the semi-structured interview spoke to learners' previous and everyday knowledge.

Discussion appears effective when considering the learners' positive responses, but one needs to consider if worthwhile learning is actually occurring. Discussion, although essential (see 2.2.3), needs to be conducted in a particular way in order for it to promote valuable teaching

and learning in the Foundation Phase Life Skills class. Life Skills lessons and activities are regarded by the teacher as being more enjoyable, interesting and undemanding when compared to Literacy and Mathematics. The teacher claims that the learners enjoy Life Skills lessons because of the contributions they are able to make based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Perhaps the belief that Life Skills is undemanding stems from the absence of the introduction of new content, or the limited extension of new learning, which Hoadley and Jansen (2002) and Moll et al (2001) claim is crucial for school learning to occur.

A further justification provided by the teacher for discussion is that the Life Skills CAPS dictates how Life Skills content is taught. As the public school teacher noted, "the government … the GDE is telling us how to do it, and so we do it like that". Coleman, Graham-Jolly and Middlewood (2003) comment on teachers' having this indifferent view of curriculum and associate this with teachers not feeling responsible for a curriculum, as they played no or little part in designing it to begin with. Rather the curriculum then is something that is handed to teachers to implement. However, regardless of who the designers are, the national curriculum is not comprehensive and therefore units of work still need to be developed at a school level, where teachers draw on what Elbaz (1983) refers to as knowledge of curriculum (see 2.4.8). In this public school context, the teacher exhibits limited knowledge of curriculum and instruction (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.8) as the Life Skills workbooks are followed, and spur of the moment, discussion-based teaching.

However, as method is not prescribed or even recommended in the Life Skills CAPS, this is a misunderstanding on the teacher's part. Pedagogical decisions are the teachers' to make. Although it may be beneficial for general guidelines and suggestions to be provided, as in the CAPS for Languages and Mathematics (see 1.4), ultimately the teacher needs to decide on the approach that will best suit her learners based on her 'practical knowledge' (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4). Hence, as differing school contexts exist in South Africa, teachers need to demonstrate autonomy with regard to pedagogy, and they need to take ownership of Life Skills teaching and learning. Teacher ownership relates to Elbaz's (1983) knowledge of self (see 2.4.6) which includes teachers exercising responsibility and professionalism. Perhaps the depth of knowledge of self for this public school teacher is slightly deficient as pedagogy and choice are elements of Life Skills teaching and learning that she is unable to acknowledge. As previously noted, the teacher's suggestions related to both activities and points of integration appear to be what could possibly be done, rather than what she has already done.

Elbaz's (1983) personal knowledge (see 2.4.2) appears to underpin this public school teacher's understanding of Life Skills with regard to the value, or lack thereof, placed on the subject, her attitude towards particular content, and her implementation of Life Skills lessons.

The findings and discussion of findings elicited from the data obtained from the private and public school teachers have thus far been separately presented. In the next section, Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge' is again used to compare the private and public school contexts.

4.5. Comparison and analysis of the private and public school contexts

In this section, a comparison of the private and public school contexts is presented in relation to both teachers' understanding of Life Skills, and the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS and their practice. The teachers' understanding and implementation of Life Skills lessons speaks to the two research questions as stated in Chapter 1, being:

- What do Foundation Phase teachers understand by the subject Life Skills?
- What are the consistencies and/or disjunctures between Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice?

According to Elbaz (1983), situational knowledge (see 2.4.1) is linked to the selection and adaptation of context appropriate content. Content is provided in the Life Skills CAPS (DBE, 2011a), although limited, as the expectation is that teachers provide additional content according to their school context. However, this aspect of the curriculum does not appear to be explicit enough, as both teachers were under the impression that the content suggested was the only content to be taught. This speaks to the expectations that teachers place on the Life Skills CAPS. The various CAPS were intended to be more comprehensive and thus provide more support to teachers in their planning (DBE, 2011a), but this seems to have been misunderstood as the CAPS is thought to include all the relevant information and content that teachers require. Therefore, teachers are blaming the CAPS for not extending learners, rather than taking responsibility for their part in lesson designing, based on the Life Skills curriculum. This lack of responsibility speaks to Elbaz's (1983) knowledge of self (see 2.4.6), which is not evident in either teacher due to them not accepting their part in further developing the Life Skills curriculum.

The sense of commitment displayed by the private school teacher is to both the learners and their parents. As she feels more is expected of her at this private school, she has a greater sense of responsibility to extend her learners and ensure that she creates a classroom environment conducive to learning. This she achieves by designing a more suitable Life Skills curriculum for her school context, and utilising various teaching strategies and resources.

The public school teacher, however, follows the Life Skills curriculum as outlined, even though there are aspects that she does not agree with, such as sciences and religion. She commented that:

> Even me talking about being Christian – this is what I believe – I'm already influencing non-Christians to become Christians and I can do that outside in my private life, but as a professional person I don't think I should.

The teacher's reasoning is linked to a perceived sense of responsibility based on her own perceptions of religion, and a misunderstanding of 'religion education'. One needs to consider how many other teachers are in the same position as the purpose behind including 'festivals and special days' is not included in the General Aims or the Specific Aims for Life Skills.

This public school teacher also expressed a sense of commitment and responsibility to the learners in her Grade 3 class regarding content knowledge as she stated:

> I don't believe in just opening this book and saying 'ok, bees spread pollen – interesting – and bees produce honey'. I would go and read up, do research, find out about it, and then try to memorise it. Because I feel, you always need to know so much about a topic to make it interesting.

However, the notion of memorisation of content is very different to having an understanding of content. In order to address or present content in a way that is most beneficial for learners, the teacher knowing more about the topic is essential, but equally essential is an understanding of the content (Shulman, 2004). Engaging with the content at this level, provides a far richer teaching and learning experience than recalling isolated, memorised facts. The teacher's statement is also contradictory in that, although she has related the importance of herself being knowledgeable in order to teach a Topic, on a number of

occasions, she expressed her dislike of and disregard for content-based aspects of the Life Skills curriculum.

Therefore, both teachers demonstrate a sense of commitment and responsibility, but in different ways. The private school teacher emphasises responsibility for content knowledge extension, and the public school teacher emphasises responsibility for personal and social development. There is the added responsibility for the private school teacher to parents, which the public school teacher did not refer to. Implicit in both teacher's responses is their sense of responsibility for their learners, and to a certain degree, encouraging their learners to be responsible themselves.

However, the public school teacher revealed a greater reliance on personal knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) in that her personal knowledge appears to underpin her thinking, attitude and approach to Life Skills, which was negative for the most part. Personal knowledge, as defined by Elbaz (1983) (see 2.4.2), entails the interpretation of situations based on prior experience. Experiential knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.4) extends personal knowledge, in that the teacher then decides on how to interact or behave within particular situations. As previously stated, the public school teacher strongly disagrees with religion education, because of her own upbringing. The private school teacher, relies less on her personal and experiential knowledge and more on her situational and subject matter knowledge to meet curriculum, school and parental requirements (Elbaz, 1983).

Elbaz (1983) states that social knowledge (see 2.4.3) is an awareness of learners' contexts. The private school teacher's social knowledge appears limited to the assumption that learners' home contexts are one of privilege. Whereas, the public school teacher demonstrates a greater awareness of the social issues that may impact on learners, such as having lost parent/s, abuse, and living conditions. However, she does not consider diversity to be an important aspect of social awareness.

Subject matter knowledge (see 2.4.7), according to Elbaz (1983), is the in depth knowledge a teacher possesses of the subject/s he/she teaches. For the Life Skills subject, teachers possessing in depth knowledge may be problematic due to the scope of the subject.

The teachers' dispositions to Life Skills as a subject in the curriculum impacts on what content is seen as being more or less valuable. Both teachers downplay particular aspects of Personal and Social Well-being, such as controversial issues and religion. The public school

teacher also downplays Beginning Knowledge, whereas this appears to be foregrounded by the private school teacher. There is still some consistency between policy and practice though, as where Life Skills aspects are downplayed, these are still reluctantly addressed or when required. Both teachers prioritise Christianity over other religions. This is more acceptable within the private school context as it is a Christian school and parents are aware of this. However, the prioritisation of Christianity by the public school teacher is problematic as this is based on her own religious beliefs and personal preference, rather than curriculum requirements, and a response to the diversity in South African society. In both school contexts, other religious groups were included but appeared to be limited, in that these were perhaps minimally addressed, and Christianity the focus. According to the *Manifesto* (Ministry of Education, 2001), values education is a part of the intention of 'religion education' where learners should be encouraged to seek out and explore what is common to all South Africans. Both the private school teacher and the public school teacher commented on the integration of values into Literacy and/or Mathematics lessons, rather than religion education. More importance was placed on values by the public school teacher to the extent that she commented that, not only values, but all Life Skills elements could be completely integrated into Literacy and Mathematics thus negating the need for Life Skills as a separate subject. The private school teacher spoke about integration more broadly in that she believed the integration of content needs to be considered across subjects, across the Life Skills study areas and across Topics within Life Skills. Hence, speaking to the need for Life Skills as a subject separate but linked to Literacy and Mathematics.

Both teachers stated that they consider Languages and Mathematics to be more important than Life Skills, but this was not evident in the way these teachers conducted the Life Skills lessons observed. Both teachers were well prepared and showed high levels of enthusiasm and positivity. This was particularly unexpected in the public school teacher's case, as two of the lessons observed were religion-based, which she dismissed as unimportant during the interview. The private school teacher demonstrates selection, adaptation and integration of content in the way in which she approaches Life Skills teaching and learning. The public school teacher, however, relies more heavily on the existing curriculum and hence selection and adaptations are not as frequent.

The reason the private school teacher provided for regarding Life Skills as the less important subject was that marks awarded for Life Skills on the learners' reports are not considered when deciding if the learner is to be retained or promoted to the next grade. A seven point

scale is used for assessment in the Foundation Phase, and a learner must achieve a Level 4 in a Home Language, a Level 3 in a First Additional Language and a Level 3 in Mathematics in order to be promoted to the next grade (DBE, n.d.). The perception of a subject as less important, according to Nieuwenhuis et al (2007, p.71), may stem from the lack of assessment, as he claims that "if no fixed assessment opportunities are created, learners and educators may well think that if it cannot be measured, then it cannot be important". Life Skills is also not included in the ANA assessment (see 1.3). Therefore, it may be that this overall lack of assessment is a contributing factor to the way in which Life Skills as a subject is viewed by teachers.

According to Carl (2012), teachers should experiment with a curriculum rather than follow it as a step-by-step process. However, in order to do this teachers need to possess particular skills and abilities. This experimentation aligns with Elbaz's (1983) situational knowledge, as it is this knowledge that allows for appropriate amendments or adaptations to be made. However, Elbaz's (1983) knowledge of curriculum and instruction (see 2.4.8) would also be required, as this knowledge involves the development of units of work and the implementation of these. The private school teacher appears to be more open to experimentation than the public school teacher, as she plays with content and different approaches. The public school teacher is more hesitant in this regard as she enacts the curriculum as presented for the most part, and mainly uses discussion as her approach. According to Moll et al (2001, p.101), "the way in which teachers design learning tasks has an influence on the time and space learners have to construct their own understanding of the work". Therefore, tasks should also be context dependent in order to ensure optimal learning. The private school teacher's pedagogical choices support learners' learning, as she provides the space for learners to conduct their own research and compile their findings rather than providing all the content for them. The public school teacher is more reliant on discussion and the tasks/activities included in the Life Skills workbooks, hence, possibly limiting the learners' opportunities to construct their understanding.

To conclude, the public school teacher's choices with regard to Life Skills teaching and learning appear to be more driven by her personal and experiential knowledge, as outlined by Elbaz (1983). The private school teacher relies more on her situational and subject matter knowledge (Elbaz, 1983). Hence, the aspects of Elbaz's (1983) 'practical knowledge' that these teachers draw on differs. Different knowledges are utilised and different knowledges are lacking. For both teachers, theoretical knowledge (see 2.4.5) and knowledge of milieu

(see 2.4.6) do not seem to be as prevalent as the other knowledges (Elbaz, 1983). Their content selections were based on personal choice and contextual factors, rather than theory. The teachers' knowledge of milieu (Elbaz, 1983) (see 2.4.8), or knowledge of their surroundings appeared limited to the classroom and school context, being foregrounded by Elbaz (1983) in her definition of knowledge of milieu. However, it could be argued that a much broader knowledge of milieu is required, particularly in the South African context, to better understand the high level of diversity that exists, and the way in which this *should* influence the Life Skills teaching and learning occurring in Foundation Phase classrooms.

4.6. Data collection and validity

The data referred to in this chapter were collected using a multi-method approach. The validity of the research is therefore strengthened as semi-structured interviews, observations and post-observation conversations were utilised. Validity is further strengthened by the number of observations, mechanically recording data, and allowing for participant reviews of the transcripts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Reliability was ensured through consistency in the interviews and observations - that is asking the same or similar questions during the interviews, and noting the same points during observations. The use of the interview and observation schedules assisted with this.

4.7. Conclusion

In this chapter the data collected were presented and analysed according to Kvale's (1996) 'condensation approach' and the categories of teachers' 'practical knowledge' as outlined by Elbaz (1983). The data collected were analysed separately according to the two school contexts, viz. private and public. Following this, the data collected from the two school contexts were compared and contrasted in order to highlight the similarities and/or differences in Life Skills teaching and learning, and in teachers' understanding. A number of key issues emerged from the data analysis.

The private school teacher appears to demonstrate Bernstein's (2000) competence model of pedagogic practice. This teacher works flexibly with content, considers context, and involves her learners in discussion through questioning. She also, rather than merely providing content, extends a level of autonomy to learners through research tasks and collaborative efforts in which they discover answers for themselves.

The public school teacher appears to primarily demonstrate Bernstein's (2000) performance model of pedagogic practice. She follows the Life Skills workbooks quite closely, resulting in a 'sameness' in the content addressed, as these workbooks are used in numerous schools. There may also be evidence of Bernstein's (2000) competence model of pedagogic practice as the teacher does on occasion use resources other than the workbooks, and she acknowledges the importance of recognising the learners' contexts, although this seems to be limited to the more controversial aspects of the curriculum.

Each of the teachers seem to have experienced Life Skills teaching and learning differently. The teachers' views on the incorporation of everyday knowledge and school knowledge (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002; Moll et al, 2001) in the teaching and learning of Life Skills differed. Whereas the private school teacher foregrounded school knowledge, and based her selection of content on this and on the learners' context, the public school teacher foregrounded everyday knowledge linked to learners' context and downplayed content.

The private school teacher responded more enthusiastically and positively during the interview and observations to Life Skills, whereas the public school teacher's attitude was more negative. This seems to influence her implementation of Life Skills lessons, although her negative attitude during the observations, was not evident. She does not deem content or Beginning Knowledge to be valuable, and thus the teaching of this aspect of Life Skills infringes on time that could be given to Languages or Mathematics. For the private school teacher, Beginning Knowledge is important and much effort goes into the researching, planning and implementation of these lessons, which demonstrates strong subject matter knowledge (Elbaz, 1983). Due to this strength, the private school teacher also has a good knowledge of self (Elbaz, 1983), which the public school teacher has to a lesser degree as she doubts her own ability and resourcefulness in Life Skills teaching. This may also link to her reluctance to add content to the suggested content or experiment with various methods. The private school teacher is more open to this, which speaks to knowledge of curriculum and instruction (Elbaz, 1983).

Religion appeared to be a sensitive issue, especially for the public school teacher, in that this was a topic she did not feel comfortable addressing or even necessary to address in a school setting. However, she addressed religion regardless in order to comply with curriculum requirements.

With regard to policy, the differences between the private and public schools were greater than the similarities in that the two participating teachers have very different perspectives of the Life Skills CAPS in relation to its usefulness and implementation.

In relation to the research questions (see 1.2), which will be further discussed in the following and final chapter, the private school teacher indicated that Literacy and Mathematics take priority over Life Skills but that Life Skills is still an important subject. The public school teacher foregrounded Literacy and did not view Life Skills as a priority, although she acknowledged the importance of particular aspects of Personal and Social Well-being. This supposes that although varied understandings of Life Skills exist, and various issues are foregrounded, downplayed or avoided in the classroom, there seems to be agreement in positioning Life Skills second to Literacy and/or Mathematics.

Chapter 5 – Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This final chapter includes a summary of the research report which has focused on the Life Skills subject in the Foundation Phase, specifically Grade 3. The research questions stated in Chapter 1 are used as a basis for the discussion on the conclusion of the study. Finally, recommendations are suggested in relation to the teaching and learning of Life Skills in Foundation Phase classrooms.

5.2. Summary

The Life Skills subject is divided into three study areas – Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, Creative Arts, and Physical Education. For the purposes of this qualitative, multiple case study research report, the first study area, Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, has been the focus. Within this study area however, teachers are expected to cover a range of issues, topics and skills with learners, but how this is meant to be done and what content should be covered has not been explicitly included in the Foundation Phase Life Skills CAPS.

In addition to the uncertainty around what and how to teach Life Skills, there are varied notions of what Life Skills entails, and many Life Skills aspects are not properly addressed or addressed at all in Foundation Phase classrooms due to the scope of the subject. This may be dependent on what teachers feel personally comfortable with, where their expertise lies, or their interpretation of policy.

Another enormous problem related to Life Skills teaching and learning is that due to the pressure placed by government education departments on teachers to focus more on Languages and Mathematics, as well as the assessments related to these, Life Skills is considered by most teachers to be a less important subject not holding as much value as Languages and Mathematics.

Possible reasons considered in how the subject Life Skills is viewed and addressed in the Foundation Phase classroom has been: teachers' understanding and perceptions of the subject, how policy documents present the Life Skills subject, and teachers' varied

understandings and interpretations of Life Skills policy, which results in very different aspects and issues being tackled in the classroom.

The research questions formulated to address these issues were:

- What do Foundation Phase teachers understand by the subject Life Skills?
- What are the consistencies and/or disjunctures between Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice?

One private and one public school in Johannesburg were selected, and one Grade 3 class in each school became the research site. The teachers in the classrooms were the research participants. These schools were selected because the socio-economic contrast between the school contexts has allowed for a comparison to be made in what teachers understand by Life Skills, and also in how they then address Life Skills in their respective schools. It also shows how teachers in different environments have both varied and similar perceptions of Life Skills, and how these perceptions then impact on the teaching and learning of the Life Skills subject.

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview being conducted with each teacher at their respective schools, and from a series of four observations of Life Skills lessons in each of the Grade 3 classrooms. The data collected were then analysed according to Kvale's (1996) notion of 'meaning condensation' and Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge'. Each school context was analysed individually, and then compared and/or contrasted.

5.3. Conclusions

The way in which the two research questions have been addressed, is through examining how Life Skills is enacted in the classroom practice of two Grade 3 teachers in two different schools in Johannesburg. The analysis of the data collected has been presented in Chapter 4, and used together with the literature included in Chapter 2 to address the research questions, which are discussed below.

5.3.1. What do Foundation Phase teachers' understand by the subject Life Skills?

The different understandings of Life Skills of the two participant teachers, highlighted the varied understandings of Life Skills that possibly exist among South African Foundation Phase teachers. Due to the broad scope of the subject, understandings for the participant teachers are not simply negative or positive, but a combination of both. This appears to be dependent on a Life Skills aspect or study area, rather than Life Skills as a whole.

The private school teacher's understanding of the Beginning Knowledge aspect of Life Skills was evident in the 'Space' Topic observed, which Topic the teacher described as being "part of a bigger picture". She foregrounds Beginning Knowledge, viz. content knowledge, however, she referred to manners, which were incorporated more implicitly as part of the 'Space' activities. Here learners had to share materials and collaborate with one another, therefore encouraging respectfulness towards each other and of the materials they were using. Even though this teacher stated that Life Skills is not as high a priority as the other Foundation Phase subjects, this was not made evident in the way she presented her Life Skills lessons. She was prepared, focused, enthusiastic, and involved the learners in the learning process as much as possible.

The public school teacher's understanding of Life Skills as a whole appeared to be similar to the private school teacher's in that she stated that Life Skills is important, but that the other Foundation Phase subjects are more important. Nevertheless, she continually dismissed Life Skills as a stand-alone subject, conveyed a negative attitude to the various study areas, and tended to distance herself from content she believed unnecessary to teach, such as religion education. She highlighted the addressing of values which she believes to be important as she aims to "teach [learners] to be good human beings", thus foregrounding Personal and Social Well-being. However, the negativity displayed in the semi-structured interview was not evident during the observations, as the teacher appeared positive, enthusiastic and invested in her learners.

Therefore, regardless of each teacher's attitude towards Life Skills, this was not conveyed to the learners in the implementation of the lessons observed. Their attitudes and understanding seemed to go hand in hand, which was heavily influenced by their personal and school contexts. This in turn impacted on the quality of the lessons taught with regard to depth of content, use of classroom space, and use and availability of resources. Where teachers agreed

with the Topic/content and found it valuable, more effort was evident. Where there was disagreement, a greater level of disengagement was alluded to and/or observed.

Both teachers agreed that Life Skills is a subject not equal in importance to Languages and Mathematics, which may be due to the lack of assessment (see 4.5). However each teacher views certain Life Skills aspects differently. The private school teacher values school knowledge, whereas the public school teacher values previous and everyday knowledge. She therefore, considers Life Skills lessons, focused on science-based content, to be a waste of time, as the skills and values she foregrounds, she claims can be addressed more informally or incidentally through integration. Integration for the private school teacher is a means to strengthen and add value to Life Skills content, specifically Beginning Knowledge aspects, rather than to downplay its value.

Although this study was limited to two participants, the understandings that emerged differed in that one is content-based, and the other values-based. Both teachers understand Life Skills as being about aiding learners to better function in their everyday lives and to develop an understanding of their world, and therefore stress the importance of being aware of learners' contexts, although each teacher approaches this differently. The private school teacher stressed her learners' context as being one of wealth and privilege, and used her understanding of their context to determine what the school Life Skills curriculum should look like, and how it should be implemented. The public school teacher stated her awareness of her learners' contexts, such as their living conditions and family structure. She allowed this knowledge to guide informal discussions, but did not use this knowledge to tailor the school curriculum, as she believes that the national curriculum must be followed as set out in the Life Skills workbooks.

5.3.2. What are the consistencies and/or disjunctures between Life Skills CAPS and teachers' practice?

According to Carl (2012, p.194), "a perception often held by teachers is that the curriculum is developed 'elsewhere' and that they simply need some guidance for the 'correct application' of a curriculum which is handed down to them from the top". The notion of 'correct application' appeared to be the understanding of both teachers as they commented that the Life Skills CAPS was lacking with regard to content and methodology. The private school teacher views the Life Skills CAPS to be inadequate and a guideline only for lesson planning, as it is seen as 'repetitive and airy-fairy'. She therefore relies on her own knowledge,

experience and training, instead of the Life Skills CAPS in addressing Life Skills. The public school teacher's understanding is that the Life Skills CAPS must be strictly adhered to, hence she follows the content and activities as presented in the workbooks. Therefore, the Life Skills CAPS does not appear to aid teachers' understanding of the subject, rather the subject is portrayed in an even lesser light than in previous curricula, where the purpose of Life Skills teaching and learning was included. However, although both teachers highlighted the inadequacies of the Life Skills curriculum, they did not comment on their role in actively working with and extending or adapting the content. Even though the private school teacher used her initiative in developing appropriate school level units of Life Skills work, she was not aware that this is how the curriculum should be worked with. She did this, because she stated that the Life Skills CAPS was inadequate. The public school teacher relied on the Life Skills workbooks and thus the use of initiative was limited. In both cases, the teachers' sense of agency was lacking in that the expectation was that the Life Skills curriculum should be even more comprehensive and provide everything they would require to teach Life Skills, from content to methodology.

A number of disjunctures and consistencies between policy and teachers' practice were noted. The disjunctures common to both teachers are related to the downplaying of the more controversial aspects of the Life Skills curriculum and addressing religion. However, these are issues that appear to be addressed albeit reluctantly. A consistency common to both teachers is that of addressing values in an integrated way. The differences, however, are greater than the commonalities, and the private school teacher demonstrates a greater degree of consistency between policy and practice than does the public school teacher. The private school teacher shows consistency in the way in which she extends the suggested content, how she implements her lessons, and in the integration of content. She also showed unintentional consistency in the way in which she works with the Life Skills CAPS making Topics and content more context appropriate. The public school teacher demonstrated disjuncture between policy and practice by focusing mainly on everyday knowledge and limited extension of school knowledge. Integration, although alluded to, was unclear, as was how she works with the Life Skills CAPS. However, given that this teacher uses the Life Skills workbooks provided, there must be a level of consistency, even though it is not evident that the workbooks comply with the intended Life Skills curriculum requirements.

Moll et al (2001) outline two positions on teaching. The first being only context related, so with more of a focus on everyday knowledge; and the second being content based that can be

applied to context at a later stage, so more focused on school knowledge. The private school teacher's view of Life Skills corresponds with the second category as although context is considered, content is foregrounded. The public school teacher's view of Life Skills corresponds more with the first category, as content is deemed irrelevant. However, as context related issues are only discussed when required, context is also downplayed. In relation to the Life Skills CAPS, it is unclear which position teachers should be taking. When considering Elbaz's (1983) concept of 'practical knowledge', teachers should view both context and content as equally important, and recognise context and content as working hand in hand when designing units of work and lesson plans at a school level.

It appeared as if the teachers' capacity to make meaningful decisions for teaching and learning in Life Skills is limited based on the consistencies and/or disjunctures identified. The teachers are addressing positive and worthwhile aspects of Life Skills, but not across the subject as a whole, and not even across one study area, viz, Beginning Knowledge and Personal and Social Well-being, as explored in this study. Particular aspects are selected and focused on, such as science-based content for the private school teacher and values for the public school teacher (see 5.3.1), and other aspects are downplayed or avoided, such as religion education in both school contexts. Therefore, this could indicate that Life Skills is enacted very differently across schools, and possibly differently by teachers within a school. Where the Life Skills workbooks have been provided to schools, these may serve as a means to standardise Life Skills teaching and learning, and encourage teachers to equally address Life Skills aspects, but where the workbooks have not been provided, the question remains if teachers are able to work with the national curriculum as the private school teacher in this study does? Where workbooks have been provided, does this ensure that quality Life Skills teaching and learning is occurring? Ultimately, it would seem as if teachers' 'practical knowledge' as outlined by Elbaz (1983) (see 2.4) would be the determining factor in how teachers view and address Life Skills, depending on which 'knowledges' are stronger or weaker.

5.4. Delimitations of the Study

According to Stake (2006) at least four cases need to be considered in order for the data and findings to yield substantial results, however, the scope of this study limits this. The limited scope has also resulted in issues that arose not being further investigated, although these are issues that could possibly be addressed in further research. These issues are: the impact of

assessment, or lack thereof, on teachers' perceptions of the Life Skills subject; and, the possible influence that teachers have on learners' attitudes towards Life Skills.

5.5. Recommendations

Based on the analysis and discussion of findings that resulted from this study on the understanding and enactment of Life Skills teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase, a number of recommendations will be made.

It became apparent during the study that teacher understanding of the Life Skills subject is varied and limited. In order for teachers to have a more critical perspective of Life Skills, especially when considering the 'General Aims of the South African Curriculum' (DBE, 2011a), and how Life Skills develops learners holistically, further understanding is required. Teacher understanding could be enhanced through both initial teacher training and courses provided for qualified teachers. It cannot be assumed that a deeper understanding and a more positive attitude towards Life Skills teaching and learning will emanate merely from a change in curriculum. Student teachers and qualified teachers need to be provided with sufficient and appropriate mediation that foregrounds the value of Life Skills for the South African context. The result of the mediation provided could be monitored and researched in teachers' classrooms as well, as a means to gauge the success of the courses, the depth of teacher understanding, possible changes in attitude, and how these impact on the quality and value of Life Skills teaching and learning occurring in the classroom.

The General Aims suggest concepts that Foundation Phase teachers should be exploring with the learners in their classrooms, but clarity is lacking for teachers in this regard. A re-conceptualisation of the Life Skills curriculum may help to make these concepts and the associated content more explicit. The Life Skills CAPS includes content, but this is limited. The purpose of Life Skills is to explore issues such as values, human rights, diversity, religious elements and so on, which fall under the citizenship education umbrella. This however, is implicit in the Life Skills CAPS, and the focus is more on what content to teach, rather than *why* this content should be taught. Life Skills needs to be considered from the top down rather than from the bottom up, thus foregrounding multicultural and citizenship education, namely the purpose of Life Skills, rather than the topics to be taught.

Life Skills should be viewed as the subject through which issues related to multicultural and citizenship education, such as values, human rights, diversity, religious elements and so on,

are explored. This exploration occurs *through* the suggested topics. If the purpose of Life Skills was made more explicit for teachers, there may be greater understanding of Life Skills. This understanding currently appears to be lacking, thus influencing teachers' views of Life Skills, as Life Skills is not seen as being an important subject and then is not properly addressed.

As part of a possible redesigning of the Life Skills curriculum, attention needs to be given to other aspects as well. These may include: detailed explanations of concepts, particularly as not all teachers would be expert in all study areas; more detailed content; suggestions for sources where content can be researched; and, suggestions of various methods that could be utilised in lesson implementation. In addition, the usefulness of the Life Skills work books and activities, with regard to promoting school knowledge (Moll et al, 2001), also needs to be considered.

However, a re-conceptualisation of the Life Skills curriculum in itself is not sufficient. Just as teachers' attitudes may influence learners' attitudes, so could governmental and departmental attitudes influence teachers' attitudes towards the Life Skills subject. The status of Life Skills needs to be raised, and its value in the South African context foregrounded, in order for this subject to be viewed in a more positive light. Therefore, the message conveyed from above should be one that foregrounds the importance of Life Skills within our multicultural society. Thus ensuring that the Life Skills subject becomes a part of basic education, and is not placed second to Languages and Mathematics (cf Nieto and Bode, 2012).

A part of changing teachers' perspectives of Life Skills also includes teachers taking responsibility for their role in Life Skills teaching and learning, related to the selection, adaptation and integration of Life Skills content and skills. This is currently lacking as the 'correct application' of the curriculum as suggested by Carl (2012) appears to be the focus. Teachers may be more concerned with completing the activities as set out in the Life Skills workbooks to prove that Life Skills 'teaching' is indeed occurring, rather than truly understanding the relevance and importance of the Life Skills subject for South African Foundation Phase learners living in a multicultural society.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule for Semi-Structured Interviews

Teacher's Biographical Information

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Qualification (type): _____

From (institution):_____

Obtained (year): _____

Number of years teaching in the Foundation Phase: _____

For which period (eg. 1995 to 2012): _____

Type of school where currently teaching: _____

In what types of schools have other years of teaching been spent, if total years in teaching not all done at current school: _____

_____

Number of children in the class: Girls _____ Boys _____

Research questions	**Why is the information needed?**	**Main questions**	**Follow up questions**	**Guiding points**
What do teachers understand by Life Skills?	To establish what teachers understand by this subject in order to compare whether these views are similar or different across different schools (in relation to location, context, backgrounds of children attending the school) Links to knowledge of curriculum	What is your understanding of Life Skills?	When/where did you first hear about Life Skills? Is Life Skills an important subject? Why? Why not? How does Life Skills compare in importance to the other subjects in the Foundation Phase, namely Mathematics and Languages? What do you think Life Skills should entail? Why?	 Content
How is Life Skills enacted in the Grade 3 classroom?	To establish how teachers are dealing with the various study areas and aspects of Life Skills, what they choose to address or not, and why Links to knowledge of self, milieu, subject matter and instruction	How do you approach Life Skills in your classroom?	Is Life Skills or aspects of it a challenge to address or implement? How do you address challenges? How do children respond to your Life Skills lessons? Why do you think this is the case? How often do you pose questions that require children to integrate and apply what was addressed in class? What do you take into consideration when planning and teaching Life Skills lessons? **Primary focus – Beginning Knowledge** Is there an aspect of this study area that you feel	Methods – group, whole class Controversial aspects, levels of participation Enjoyment, participation Relevance of content/context Context, content, structure of lesson, lesson delivery/methods to be used Social Sciences,

			more/less comfortable addressing? Why? Are all three aspects covered? If no, which are covered and how? If yes, how is each aspect addressed? Is this an important study area? Why/why not? **Primary focus – Personal and Social Well-being** What do you understand by exploring 'festivals and special days'? Are these addressed? Which 'days'? How? A number of sensitive topics are listed in the Grade 3 curriculum, such as HIV/Aids and physical and sexual abuse. Do you address these? If no, why not? If yes, how? How do you accommodate for lessons related to 'cultural and religious diversity'? How do you feel about addressing these topics? Is this an important study area? Why/why not? **Secondary focus – Creative Arts** Who teaches this at the school? How is Creative Arts approached at this school? **Secondary focus – Physical Education** Who teaches Physical Education at this school? How is Physical Education approached at this school?	Natural Sciences, Technology
What are the	To establish whether the	How do you use	Do you use the CAPS for Life Skills?	If no, what is used

consistencies and/or disjunctures between policy and practice?	CAPS requirements are being met or not, and why – or whether the document itself successfully captures the essence of Life Skills and how explicit this is for use by teachers in their classrooms Links to knowledge of curriculum, subject matter and instruction	the CAPS document in planning and teaching Life Skills lessons?	Is it a useful document? Is it a relevant document? CAPS for Life Skills defines the subject as being "central to the holistic development of learners. It is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners, and with the way in which these are integrated" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.8). What does this mean to you? How does the CAPS for Life Skills add to/take away from your understanding of the subject? What is the key focus/purpose of the series of lessons to be observed? How was that decided? Were these planned individually or as a team? How has the CAPS for Life Skills been used to plan these lessons? - Where does the content come from? - Why have you structured the lessons the way you have? - How are you presenting the content? Why this way? How is the key focus/purpose for each lesson being reinforced?	**Consider each lesson in turn** Consideration to context, organisation, methods, implementation Teaching aids, activities

Appendix B

Observation Schedule

Date: _____

Lesson starts: (time) _____

Continuous observations

- Study area _____ Topic _____

Knowledge	Skills	Values

- Summary of content presented

- Description of teaching aids

- Teaching aids used by children/teacher

- Activities (practical/written)

- Approach/strategy used (whole-class: traditional or interactive / groups / teacher guided or independent)

- Seating arrangement

- Input from children / children's response to the lesson

- Does the lesson presented match the planning discussion?

Frequency-count recording A

- How many references are made to context by teacher?

Tally marks:

- How many references are made to context by children?

Tally marks:

- Select Specific Aims addressed in the lesson with an X

	Physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development
	Creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music, drama and visual art activities
	Knowledge of personal health and safety
	Understanding of the relationship between people and the environment
	Awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science

Lesson ends: (time) _____

Appendix C

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

6 May 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Monique Sheldon. I am a student in the process of completing my Masters degree in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am doing research on Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, entitled *What teachers understand by Life Skills and how this subject is addressed and taught.* My research aims include exploring the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS document and practice.

My research involves conducting one semi-structured interview with a Grade 3 teacher who has extended experience teaching in the Foundation Phase, and to observe three to five Life Skills lessons being taught of approximately 45 minutes each. The semi-structured interview will be conducted before the observations of lessons and could take approximately an hour. This type of interview allows for additional questions to be posed based on the teacher's responses rather than needing to strictly adhere to a set of pre-planned questions, so allowing for more detail and depth in responses. Depending on the observations, there may be the need for brief informal conversations afterwards for the purposes of clarity.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because I am exploring whether or not teachers in different school environments or contexts have varied or similar perceptions of Life Skills, and how this impacts on their teaching of the subject. I was wondering whether you would mind if I conducted my research at your school? The intention of this letter is to seek your permission in this regard.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should they choose to participate or not. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All research data will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Sheldon

monique.sheldon@wits.ac.za

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix D

LETTER TO THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

6 May 2013

To whom it may concern

My name is Monique Sheldon. I am a student in the process of completing my Masters degree in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am doing research on Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, entitled *What teachers understand by Life Skills and how this subject is addressed and taught.* My research aims include exploring the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS document and practice.

My research involves conducting one semi-structured interview with a Grade 3 teacher who has extended experience teaching in the Foundation Phase, and to observe three to five Life Skills lessons being taught of approximately 45 minutes each. The semi-structured interview will be conducted before the observations of lessons and could take approximately an hour. This type of interview allows for additional questions to be posed based on the teacher's responses rather than needing to strictly adhere to a set of pre-planned questions, so allowing for more detail and depth in responses. Depending on the observations, there may be the need for brief informal conversations afterwards for the purposes of clarity.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because I am exploring whether or not teachers in different school environments or contexts have varied or similar perceptions of Life Skills, and how this impacts on their teaching of the subject. I was wondering whether you would mind if I conducted my research at your school? The intention of this letter is to seek your permission in this regard.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should they choose to participate or not. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All research data will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Sheldon

monique.sheldon@wits.ac.za

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix E

LETTER TO THE TEACHER

6 May 2013

Dear Grade 3 Teacher

My name is Monique Sheldon. I am a student in the process of completing my Masters degree in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am doing research on Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, entitled *What teachers understand by Life Skills and how this subject is addressed and taught.* My research aims include exploring the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS document and practice.

I was wondering whether you would mind if I conducted my research in your classroom? Participation would require being interviewed at a time convenient for you and having this audio recorded for transcription purposes and be observed teaching Life Skills.

More specifically, my research involves conducting one semi-structured interview with you and to observe your teaching of three to five Life Skills lessons of approximately 45 minutes each. The semi-structured interview will be conducted before the observations of lessons and could take approximately an hour. This type of interview allows for additional questions to be posed based on your responses rather than needing to strictly adhere to a set of pre-planned questions, so allowing for more detail and depth in responses. Depending on the observations, there may be the need for brief informal conversations afterwards for the purposes of clarity.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should you choose to participate or not. You can withdraw permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study, and you will not be paid for this study.

Your name will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. Data collected will be presented in a research report to the University of the Witwatersrand, and certain excerpts may be used in academic presentations. All research data will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Sheldon

monique.sheldon@wits.ac.za

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix F

Teacher's Consent Form: Observation

Please fill in and return the reply slip below and indicate your willingness for your teaching to be observed in class for my research report called:

Life Skills in the Foundation Phase: A multiple case study into how Life Skills is enacted in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

Permission to be observed

I, _____

Give/do not give* my consent to be observed in class for this project.

[ ] I know that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way.

[ ] I am aware that participation is voluntary.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing.

[ ] I know that the observations will only be used for this project.

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact person:

Monique Sheldon

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

*Please delete as appropriate

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix G

Teacher's Consent Form: Interview

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be interviewed for my research report called:

Life Skills in the Foundation Phase: A multiple case study into how Life Skills is enacted in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

Permission to be interviewed

I, _____

Give/do not give* my consent to be interviewed.

[ ] I know that I don't have to answer all the questions and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and that I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing.

[ ] I am aware that participation is voluntary.

[ ] I am aware that my interview transcript will be destroyed within 3—5 years after completion of the project.

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Contact person:

Monique Sheldon

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

*please delete as appropriate

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix H

Teacher's Consent Form: Audiotaping

Please fill and return the reply slip below and indicate your willingness to have your voluntary interview audiotaped for transcription purposes for my research report called:

Life Skills in the Foundation Phase: A multiple case study into how Life Skills is enacted in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

Permission to be audiotaped

My name: _____

I give/do not give (please delete as appropriate) my consent to have the interview recorded.

[ ] I know that I may withdraw from the study at any time and will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way.

[ ] I know that I can stop the audiotaping of the interview at any time without repercussions.

[ ] I know that the tapes will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of the project and will be kept safe until then.

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact person:

Monique Sheldon

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix I

LETTER TO THE PARENTS

6 May 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian

My name is Monique Sheldon. I am a student in the process of completing my Masters degree in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of my degree, I am doing research on Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, entitled *What teachers understand by Life Skills and how this subject is addressed and taught.* My research aims include exploring the consistencies and/or disjunctures between the Life Skills CAPS document and practice.

My research involves conducting one semi-structured interview with your child's teacher and to observe the teacher teaching three to five Life Skills lessons of approximately 45 minutes each. As my focus will be on the teacher, your child will not be a direct participant in the research. However, as your child would be present during the observation sessions, it is only ethical to seek your permission in this regard.

Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should you choose to let your child participate or not. You can withdraw permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks to your child in participating in this study, and no payments are to be awarded.

Your child's name will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Their individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. Data collected will be presented in a research report to the University of the Witwatersrand, and certain excerpts may be used in academic presentations.

All research data will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Sheldon

monique.sheldon@wits.ac.za

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix J

Parent's Consent Form: Observation

Please fill in and return the reply slip below and indicate your willingness to allow your child to be voluntarily observed in my research project called:

Life Skills in the Foundation Phase: A multiple case study into how Life Skills is enacted in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

Permission to be observed

I, _____ the parent of _____

Give/do not give* my consent for my child to be observed for this project.

[ ] I know that my child may withdraw from the study at any time and that he/she will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way.

[ ] I am aware that the researcher will keep all information confidential in all academic writing.

[ ] I know that the observations will only be used for this project.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact person:

Monique Sheldon

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

*Please delete as appropriate

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix K

LETTER TO THE CHILD

6 May 2013

Dear Grade 3 Learner

My name is Monique Sheldon. I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand doing a Masters Degree in Education.

As part of my degree, I am doing research on Life Skills in the Foundation Phase, called *What teachers understand by Life Skills and how this subject is taught.*

My research involves speaking to your teacher about Life Skills and watching your teacher teaching three to five Life Skills lessons. I would like for you to take part in this research by letting me watch you and your teacher during these lessons.

Taking part by being in the classroom while I am watching is your choice. You can agree to let me watch, then change your mind later, and decide not to take part anymore.

Whatever I learn from speaking to your teacher or from watching your teacher and being in your classroom will be kept secret. I will not tell anybody your name or the name of your school.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Sheldon

monique.sheldon@wits.ac.za

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix L

Child's Consent Form: Observation

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to let me observe you in class. I will use my notes for my study:

Life Skills in the Foundation Phase: How is Life Skills being taught in two Grade 3 classrooms in Johannesburg

Permission for observations

My name is: _____

I would like to be part of this project.	YES/NO
I agree to be observed in class.	YES/NO
I know that Monique Sheldon will keep my information confidential and destroy any notes made within 3-5 years after completion of project.	YES/NO
I know that it is my choice whether or not to take part	YES/NO
I know that my real name will not be used.	YES/NO
I know that I can ask you to leave me out of the study at any time.	YES/NO

Sign_____ Date_____

Contact person:

Monique Sheldon

(011) 717-3343

082 316 5444

Ethical Clearance Protocol Number 2012ECE007M

Appendix M

Tabulation of 'natural meaning units' and the concise statement of themes based on the semi-structured interview conducted with the private school teacher.

Natural Meaning Units (ie. teacher's actual words)	Theme (italicised) and Concise Statement of Themes
Interviewer: Is Life Skills an important subject? Teacher: I do feel it's important because it teaches them about the world around them and how they fit into that world. And it's not only your themes, like your 'Little Creatures' or whatever, it falls into like your Bible and manners and I think Life Skills is a skill. You've got to teach them about life and the world around them.	*Content* Life Skills is a very broad subject with regard to content and skills, encompassing personal and social development, and therefore an essential component of the curriculum.
Interviewer: 'Bible' meaning morals and values? Teacher: They want us here to do Bible stories. Um, they are busy writing the Bible lessons at the moment – (*name of school stated here*) – because they are a Christian based school.	*Context* Christianity is an important aspect of the school curriculum including prescriptive lessons.
Interviewer: How do you feel Life Skills compares in importance to the other subjects in the Foundation Phase? Teacher: Within Maths you're teaching them about Fractions, then a life skill would be about sharing. Um, so I think Life Skills comes into every subject even in Language – if you are reading a story, there's a life skill in a story often. So you ... well, I try to overlap all the time – the Life Skills with the other subjects.	*Integration* Implicit values can be addressed in every subject and explicit values in Life Skills.
Interviewer: So do you agree with it then, that Maths and	*Integration*

Languages are prioritised and Life Skills is the less important subject? Teacher: Definitely. Definitely. However, it's so integrated, that is it really? You can't separate it.	The links between Life Skills, Literacy and Mathematics are strong, resulting in weak classification (Bernstein, 1990).
Interviewer: What do you think Life Skills should entail? Teacher: Well, it should entail anything that has to do with the child and their world, the world around them and what they ... what will have an effect on their life.	*Content* Content is very broad but must be relevant to learners in order to create understanding of the world around them and their place in it.
Interviewer: How would you justify [the Space theme] in terms of Life Skills? Teacher: Well, their bigger world is space, and if it wasn't for space being there, we wouldn't be here, and how it effects the moon, and the stars, and then the day and the night, and you know, all over, like the tsunami's, and earthquakes and ... you can bring all of that in, but to have an understanding of that, you have to have an understanding of the bigger picture – earth, the universe, space.	*Content* Links should be made between lessons within a topic in order for learners to understand the interconnectedness of the content and the relevance of the content to their lives.
Interviewer: Is Life Skills or aspects of it a challenge to address or implement? Teacher: You're not given specific things to teach. Yes, the CAPS document gives you a guideline, but if you had to stick to just that, you wouldn't be extending the children.	*Content* Content should be based on the needs of the learners therefore ensuring content is appropriate, challenging and extending learners beyond everyday knowledge.

(Following on from above question) Teacher: Depending on where you're teaching, if you're teaching in a government school then maybe they're not exposed to as much as children in a private school. But if you're in a private school like this, you actually have to keep that subject interesting and sometimes the children do know more than we do. So, I think that's the biggest challenge, what do you actually teach them in a theme.	*Context* Learners' contexts result in different experiences and knowledge being brought into the classroom, which should influence the selection of content made by the teacher.
Interviewer: How do you think you could or how have you addressed that particular challenge? Teacher: We actually highlight areas of interest. Areas that the children will have knowledge about but not ... so we'll go into areas that they do have knowledge about, but also that they don't ... that we can extend them a little.	*Content* Content should cover prior knowledge and new knowledge and learning that is of interest to the learners.
Interviewer: How do children respond to your Life Skills lessons? Teacher: They enjoy them. I think you've got to be very careful though, to sit and read to them and tell them information about 'Little Creatures'. I think that – I'm using 'Little Creatures' as an example – I think with Life Skills you've got to do a lot more self-study. Luckily in Grade 3 they are at the level of ability that they can do it, or put them with children who are able to assist. But I think with that you've got to ... you have to make it more about hands-on experience than just sitting and teaching them information.	*Lesson implementation* Being reliant on discussion only is not an adequate approach to teaching and learning – practical work is also essential. Responsibility for learning needs to be placed on the learners in order to develop autonomous learners (Briggs & Hansen, 2012).
Interviewer: So your lessons are a combination of whole-class, paired work and group work? Teacher: A big mixture. I'll have a class discussion, then we'll	*Lesson implementation* A variety of methods must be used, such as

go into group work, and then also individual work coming from the group work, or from the paired work as well. They have to then go and complete a task on their own. So, it's very varied.	discussion, individual, paired and group work, in order to maintain the learners interest.
Interviewer: If I could go back to the challenge aspect. You've been speaking about the themes that are addressed. What about more controversial aspects that come up? Like CAPS lists aspects like HIV/Aids, abuse, those kinds of things. Do you touch on those at all? Teacher: You know, I think being in the private school we've been very lucky. We can deviate from those topics, so no, unfortunately we don't, we haven't touched on it. Should they come up, it becomes a discussion, then you have to address it, but we haven't actually gone into that.	*Context and content* More controversial aspects of the curriculum are not deemed as being relevant in a private school context.
Interviewer: Is there anything else that you consider as part of planning other than the children's interests? Teacher: We're very lucky we've got the projectors, they're not yet able to get onto internet but they do have computer lessons as well, so we're able to go onto the internet in the computer lessons. So, we also use that technology I suppose, as part of it.	*Context and lesson implementation* Technology is incorporated wherever possible to supplement the teaching and learning process.
Interviewer: How is each aspect [of Beginning Knowledge] addressed? Teacher: For Technology we do what they call robotics, like with 'Little Creatures', you can do ... not that it's a little creature, but like a little crocodile, or a spider and then see if they can programme it to walk and things like that. So, it's the Technology with the IT. It all fits in there.	*Integration and context* Technology is integrated with Beginning Knowledge topics where possible.
Interviewer: In CAPS they talk about exploring 'festivals and	*Content*

special days'. Do you do this? Teacher: We do Easter, and then we touch on the public holidays in our theme 'South Africa'. We went into the different public holidays, and some other holidays that are celebrated by different people in South Africa.	Festivals and special days are briefly addressed as part of a topic rather than on an ongoing basis as proposed in the Life Skills CAPS.
Interviewer: How do you accommodate for cultural and religious diversity? Teacher: There was a child who was a total non-believer in anything, and with the fact that they come to a Christian school and they sign the Christian school contract, they do participate in the lessons. I had a Jehovah's Witness child, who would then sit out during Bible lessons. Not necessarily outside the classroom, but at the back of the class reading a book, drawing a picture, doing whatever they wanted to do at that time. But you still carry on with your Bible lesson.	*Context and Content* Christianity is prioritised as this private school align themselves with the Christian faith, which parents are made aware of. However, other religions, such as Jehovah's Witness and Islam, are acknowledged when the need arises - not necessarily in content but rather in giving learners the option to not participate in Christian based lessons as the context of the school dictates the content to be addressed.
(Response related to balancing policy requirements and school requirements) Teacher: So, it's the CAPS document with more added to it. Basically, that's what it is. It's like a sandwich. CAPS has got a piece of ham, and we've got the lettuce, tomato and all of that. Using the themes and adding more content.	*Content* Life Skills CAPS is viewed as inadequate on its own for this school context but does form the basis of future planning

	where content is added that will engage and extend learners.
Interviewer: As you are tackling the Creative Arts, are you able to integrate there as well? Teacher: Yes. If you have a look at our art we did the other day (*points to drawn spider webs displayed in the classroom*), with that I must be honest we haven't followed CAPS at all – not at all, because we've looked for activities that are appropriate to the theme we're doing. Also there we're quite flexible. If a child brings an idea, we'll go forward with the child's idea.	*Content and context* Content is not only CAPS based, but also what is deemed appropriate by teachers and suggested by the learners. Links are made between the study areas of Life Skills where appropriate and possible.
Interviewer: Do you find [Life Skills CAPS] to be a useful document? Teacher: I just find it's very ... airy-fairy? It gives you a basic outline but it's very basic – very, very basic. It may be appropriate for your government schools, but in our school, where the children are exposed to so many laptops, iPads, things like that ... they're exposed to it, so I find it's not giving them enough. We have to add to it. I wouldn't say completely irrelevant, because some themes or topics are relevant. I just find that they're very repetitive as well – very repetitive, and you don't want your children ... once you start doing that you lose them.	*Context* CAPS provides a starting point but depending on context, additional content must be added to extend children and hold their interest. This teacher believes that a great contextual divide exists between public and private schools.
Interviewer: What does [the Life Skills CAPS] definition mean to you? Teacher: I think Life Skills must cover everything, how they deal socially and topics that will bring them together to deal socially and then with their personal ... I think ... I agree with what they're saying, but it's how they do it. It's how you	*Integration and context* Integration is essential in developing the various aspects making up each learner, but this also needs to be contextually

integrate it, or what you use to integrate it as well. Because everyone uses different things, and different examples, probably even different themes.	appropriate.
Interviewer: Has [the Life Skills CAPS] made you think differently about Life Skills? Teacher: I think that the document before CAPS and what I've used previously in teaching has definitely been a lot more comprehensive, a lot more informative than the CAPS. I think more based on what I learnt at college. I think that that was more informative than any of the documents. I find it horrible. It's awful - that's why it sits there most of the time.	*Content* Life Skills CAPS does not adequately capture the value and purpose of the subject Life Skills.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: I mean that is for Term 4 (*points in CAPS*), and there's not much to do, and our children go through things so quickly that we need more than what's in here. We're drawing on all of our knowledge basically. It's too basic for a Grade 3 level. Maybe that's because of the school environment that I'm in.	*Context* Life Skills CAPS is viewed as too basic for certain contexts, rather than outlining the minimum requirements/content to be addressed.
Interviewer: How are you working with the planning now? Teacher: We did bring in rights and responsibilities into our theme. So, I'll have a look at this and then I see where we can bring it into our different themes that we're doing.	*Integration* Points of integration between topics are actively sought.
Interviewer: Do you start with CAPS and then plan, or plan and then refer back to CAPS? Teacher: Plan and refer back. We did our 'Little Creatures' theme. We've got our themes, and so characteristics we did, different insects, observing and drawing. We did do some drawing of the insects as well - that was the art.	*Integration* Integrating the study areas of Life Skills where possible is a consideration when planning.

(Following on from above question) Mrs (*name of a fellow teacher*) has come from a government school where they worked specifically with this. So, they've got lessons based only on this. But like she said, we've done a lot more here than she did there with that.	*Context* Based on the experience of a teacher who has taught at both a private and a public school, the amount of content is increased to extend and challenge learners. Whereas the public school follows the curriculum more closely.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: We extended it as well, so not just talking about the life cycle, we took it and let them write it as a story as if they were the butterfly, so integrating back into Literacy.	*Integration* Integrating across subjects where possible is key.
Interviewer: So these points in CAPS become like a checklist? Teacher: Almost. Ya – it's definitely not our actual guideline. We did 'Healthy Eating' last year. We removed it this year because we found that the Grade 2's did 'Food', and the children were actually quite ... 'oh, we've done this', 'we know this' ... so we took that out. We brought in into our 'About Me' theme. We did the timeline, we did the feelings, and we brought that into our 'Me' theme. So, we're integrating the topics they give us.	*Context and integration* Content is adapted, left out or integrated depending on the needs of the learners, and varied across the grades to avoid repetition.
Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to add about Life Skills generally? Teacher: I try to make it fun for the children, and learning ... it must be interesting. It must actually teach them things that they know, but also that they don't know.	*Lesson implementation* Consideration must be given to the revision of learners' existing knowledge and building on this, as well as the learning of new,

	unfamiliar content, which should be addressed in an appealing way.
(Response to considering suitability of content included in Life Skills CAPS) Teacher: I suppose in other schools, this could be quite appropriate and something that they've never heard about. Here, we're giving them the basics. They're getting what all government schools do, but more, which is what you want in a private school, or what the parents want. That's what they feel they're paying for ... that extra.	*Context* In a private school context, parents' expectations are greater, therefore content needs to be increased to appropriately extend and challenge learners. Again, the difference between a public and a private school context are reiterated with regard to what learners know or are capable of learning.
Interviewer: How was the content decided? Teacher: It was part of our prep meetings. Again, we looked at the CAPS and made sure that we'd covered what they wanted us to do and then added a lot more info and juicy stuff to it.	*Content* Life Skills CAPS is a starting point for planning where additional content is included based on what the teachers believe their learners need.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: We always prep together, we always come together and we say 'OK what about this, what about this' ... we go through resource material, books that we've been given from the government, books, internet, all of that. It will be done in different ways. Some of it will be done using the projector, with inserts off the internet saved onto a memory stick, some of it will	*Lesson implementation* Planning is done as a team, is based on research, and incorporates books and technology. A variety of methods is used to address the topic

be done by books, some of it will be done in group work, children themselves have to bring their own material in. So it will be done, via books, via internet, via projector, showing the different things ... I'll try to incorporate a group task, some group activities, some individual activities, some again where they work in pairs, some class discussion, self-study as well where they also learn about the different things on their own. Written activities, and also even a follow-up activity where they will come forward and they actually do a speech at the end about everything that they've learnt about space. So, they put together a little speech and they'll come and tell what they've learnt.	content, which includes contributions by learners, and consideration given to appropriate ways in which each topic can be ended and content tied together.

Appendix N

Tabulation of 'natural meaning units' and the concise statement of themes based on the semi-structured interview conducted with the public school teacher.

Natural Meaning Units (ie. teacher's actual words)	Themes (italicised) and Concise Statement of Themes
Interviewer: Do you think [Life Skills] is an important subject? Teacher: It is important ... I think that, to be honest, Maths and English are more important, but within your teaching of Maths and English, teaching values education is very important, so that should be an automatic ... something that you are doing throughout the day. I don't see that Life Skills necessarily needs to be a separate subject, but you should always incorporate Life Skills into your daily teaching.	*Integration* Life Skills, in particular values, permeates all subjects, and should not be limited to specific lessons, therefore negating the need for Life Skills as a separate subject.
(Response to time constraints) Teacher: The topic was 'Insects', now I'm thinking how unimportant is this? Get some insect books and let's do it in our English, you know if you want to, but I don't think it's so important that they need to know a spider – a locust has a head, thorax and abdomen – who cares? I'd rather let them spell abdomen and thorax and write a sentence, you know. It's just ... it's an unimportant subject depending on the topic.	*Integration and content* The teacher believes that a Literacy focus is more important than the Life Skills study area of Beginning Knowledge. Hence Life Skills topics should form the basis of Literacy lessons, where aspects of Literacy are foregrounded rather than Life Skills content.
Interviewer: What for you would be an important topic? Teacher: Like responsibilities, rules – why rules are important. The history of the school is interesting, but I don't want to spend	*Content* In the teachers' opinion, teaching values and

two weeks on the history of the school. Why must they know that the school was founded in ... whenever it was, and so many years later Mr (*name of principal*) arrived. It's not important. Um, I understand that disease ... the thing of disease control is important but what do they understand about it? They don't know enough. They can't understand really what germs are. I think what they need to know is wash your hands after eating, wash your hands before and after lunch when you come into the class, blow your nose, turn away when you cough, all those hygienic things. They need to know hands-on stuff. Not historical stuff, and not stuff they can go and research on the internet – they don't need to know that.	practical issues that learners can use in their everyday lives is more important than content, some of which is considered be too advanced for Foundation Phase learners, and that can be researched by the learners themselves.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: If we do the history of the school, they know it, who cares if they remember it, but something like rights and responsibilities, and friendships, and how to deal with ... that's another one, bullying ... those are very real, daily skills that are necessary. It's a lifelong skill. It's not something that they learn in the classroom and then they can forget about it.	*Context and Content* Learning appropriate skills to be able to better cope with daily life is a necessity, rather than an understanding of the world of the learner and how it came to be.
Interviewer: So, it's not a case of needing to have particular lessons, but rather to integrate it throughout the day in everything you do? Teacher: We had like a theme for the month, or the week, fortnight, like kindness. And then the class would talk about it. If you were the English teacher, you would talk about kindness, talk about patience, talk about all these things. It should be an everyday part of every teaching no matter what your subject is. You should be teaching it all the time. Incidentally, and not incidentally.	*Integration and lesson implementation* Values can be integrated implicitly into other subjects by way of discussion only, whether planned or not.

(Following on from above question) Teacher: You might come to a point where you see in your class there is a lot of bullying going on. That day maybe you're not going to teach Maths, you're going to discuss bullying, and sort out issues, or friendship issues or conflict issues or jealousy ... fighting or anger – anger management is such an important thing.	*Context and Content* A teacher needs to be aware of what is happening with the learners in her class and address and relate the importance of values and moral reasoning to incidences as they arise.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: Life Skills is important but I wouldn't say it's necessary to be done in the way we do it. I would say depending on how ... you see, the government, the GDE is telling us how to do it, and so we do it like that. If this was my own little private school, I wouldn't necessarily have a Life Skills subject. It would be part of the timetable for every teacher.	*Lesson implementation* Teachers are expected to teach Life Skills lessons as outlined in the national curriculum but the need for Life Skills as a separate subject is not seen as necessary.
(Teacher's comment as she is paging through the government workbook) Teacher: 'Religious and other special days' – I don't think it's important. I don't want to discuss other religions, or religions other than my own with children. It's a sensitive issue and I don't enjoy it.	*Content* As the teacher is reluctant to address religious issues due to her personal view of religion, she believes that there is no place for religious education in the curriculum.
(Teacher's comment as she is paging through the government workbook) Teacher: 'Insects' – urggh! – Terrible! Terrible! 'Insect homes' – Terrible! 'Make your own butterfly' – not interested. 'Life cycles' – don't care. 'Looking after the environment' – that's	*Content* The teacher views some topics as important, but views other topics with disinterest and/or

very nice and we're going onto that as well, which is so critical, obviously. So, when I see that it's got value, I absolutely agree with it, it's worthwhile. It's really about the topic for me.	reluctance. She values more topical issues, such as the environment.
(Response to importance of Life Skills having its own time allocation) Teacher: I would say in the Foundation Phase your Life Skills must just be something that's part of your everyday teaching.	*Integration* Aspects of Life Skills should come into every lesson every day, so that specific Life Skills lessons and the subject are not necessary.
Interviewer: So when you get to that particular section [on religion], how are you going to work with it? Teacher: Perhaps what I would do is let the children, who wish to, find out a little bit about their religion, and then come to class the next day, in your Muslim outfit, explain why you wear this, what your religious book is, when you go to which services, what your church is called, and I wouldn't make any comment on it.	*Context* Religious discussions should be learner-centred and learner-initiated, without any teacher input so as to place the responsibility for the content and learning on the learners themselves.
Interviewer: What is challenging about Life Skills for you? Teacher: How do you change their way of eating? Because that comes from home. A lot of what you teach, you can't change, because it comes from home.	*Context* Although there are some tensions between class and home with regard to some content, this is a specific and random challenge when compared with other Life Skills content and issues.
(Following on from above question)	*Context*

Teacher: It's awful to have to talk about something like [abuse] in front of innocent children. That's very hard for me. You just ... I don't want to break that innocence ... I get it has to break ... you know, you get these kids, they're so beautiful and they come from protected homes, and now I've got to speak in front of (*child's name*) about families where moms and dads are touching their children where they shouldn't. That is very hard.	More controversial topics are difficult to address, but discussed when required.
(Teacher's comment related to Beginning Knowledge) Teacher: I'm not saying they mustn't learn about it, but I would include it as part of my English, and I would say, 'right, let's find out about space', and then include it in my English lessons. I wouldn't do it as a separate topic in Life Skills.	*Integration* Life Skills topics should be used as a basis for Literacy teaching.
Interviewer: How would you include [Beginning Knowledge] in English? Teacher: I would maybe make it our theme, and then they would do a little project maybe, I would give information ... so, with this information, then they must answer questions, like a comprehension. So, do a comprehension on ... you've put them into groups and each group does a planet and then they find some information out on the planet ... or spelling, I would try to cover it in spelling ... or finding common words and use it as a reading exercise. So, finding out about planets would be incidental, but really I'm teaching English.	*Lesson implementation and integration* Life Skills topics and content should be used as a basis for Literacy teaching, where Literacy skills can be addressed such as comprehension and spelling.
Interviewer: How do children respond to the Life Skills lessons? Teacher: Life Skills tends to lend itself to a lot of talking. They love to talk! They always want to give their opinion, so they love it, they love it ... because it's not hard work for them, and also it's generally quite easy. It's not like you're teaching Maths or something difficult or they can't construct a sentence in English. They're always finding things that they can't do. Here, they're	*Lesson implementation* Teachers' perceive learners' enjoyment of Life Skills lessons to be based on the fact that the majority of these are discussion based. Other

just learning about new things, which they enjoy, and the written work is very little. Often it's the drawing of a picture or drawing lines or talking, lots of talking, and giving their own opinions about stuff, which they love... their own experiences, they love to talk about their own experiences.	lessons include activities that are regarded as more enjoyable, interesting and undemanding. Hence the new learning aspect is downplayed.
Interviewer: How often do you pose questions that require children to integrate or apply what was addressed in class? Teacher: So, say my topic was 'Being Safe', then I would say to them, 'Who walks home? Are you walking home alone? Make sure you walk in twos. Who's buying ice-cream at the gate? Don't do that'. So, I always apply it and refer to their ... I try to make everything as real as possible, and as relevant as possible.	*Context* It is important to relate Life Skills content to what learners are familiar with in order for them to see the relevance. However, it is important that this be extended to include school knowledge.
Interviewer: What do you take into consideration when planning and teaching Life Skills lessons? Teacher: When we're talking about families, I'm aware that a child's lost his mom ... so family backgrounds, if I knew a child was abused, I would be very careful about that ... where children live, very wary of a child who lives in a squatter camp most weekends.	*Context* It is important for teachers to be aware of and be sensitive to the home situations of the learners in their classes.
Interviewer: When it comes to you presenting the Life Skills lessons, is there a particular way that you do it? Teacher: What I might do and I'll say with 'Pollution' ... I'll say 'look around the classroom. What do you notice? Gosh, there's so much paper lying around'. Or 'Recycling' – 'Why's there so much paper lying around? Pick up that paper. So, when I know it's the end of the month and I haven't yet touched on the	*Lesson implementation* In the teacher's opinion, the majority of Life Skills lessons are discussion based, initiated by teacher's questions related to learners

topic, then I might say literally, 'Open your Life Skills books, let's talk'. So, it might be more formally, or less formally, depending on what the topic is.	everyday knowledge. However, lessons may not be implemented on a regular basis or formally planned.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: Maybe give them this topic before they go on holiday, and then they're going to visit family, give them a little questionnaire and ask them to find out about the way of life of the oldest people in their family, and then they come and do a little speech, which should be very interesting.	*Lesson implementation and context* Learners should be encouraged to research historical topics drawing on the knowledge of family members and then report their findings.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: 'Storms and strong winds'. Bring articles about storms, or anything in the newspaper about disasters, or talk about something that's happened on the news. Maybe a diary of the weather or something – relating it to real life I think is the important thing.	*Lesson implementation* Learners should be encouraged to find current information on topics being addressed to link topics to the real world.
Interviewer: Are those [special days] ones you will focus on or will you add others to those? Teacher: Yes – what you have to do is, say it's getting towards a particular holiday, public holiday, like Worker's Day, then you must mention it and chat to them about it. It's required that ... you don't have to do a lesson on it, you do it just incidentally.	*Content* According to the teacher public holidays should be discussed informally as these approach.
Interviewer: Aside from the religious aspect, how do you accommodate for lessons related to cultural diversity? Teacher: Apart from religion ... I think it's very much the same, and of course it very much depends on the environment. If I was teaching in a different school, it would probably be different.	*Context* Addressing diversity should be context dependent, so is not always necessary. In this

We're teaching in a very monocultural system, I would say. Because if I look at my kiddies, the majority are black, Christian ... there're a couple of white kids ... so the cultural differences are not extreme. The majority are ... ya, I'd say because we don't have such a variety, there isn't an issue with catering for differences. I think it depends on the school.	context, no distinction is made between the black learners and their cultural differences.
Interviewer: What does the definition of Life Skills included in Life Skills CAPS mean to you? Teacher: We must develop their strengths and their weaknesses ... encourage them to get to know who they are, and you do that by letting them discuss what they like and what they don't like.	*Lesson implementation and content* An emphasis in Life Skills should be on personal development through discussion.
Interviewer: What was the purpose of the lesson [observed]? Teacher: Rights and responsibilities. Well, it was supposed to be but then I realised no we've just got to ... they're opening up, so let them just talk about their home problems ... it's so sad.	*Context and content* Teachers need to be flexible and allow lessons to take a different direction when necessary. Conflict in the home was viewed as more important than rights and responsibilities at that moment in time.
Interviewer: Why did you choose to start the lesson with role-play? Teacher: The idea was for them to now look at the rights and responsibilities, and try and identify the responsibilities that the children have, that came out in the play, and any rights that were infringed on.	*Lesson implementation* Role-play is a useful tool to focus learners on the topic being addressed and allow them to begin the discussion based on their everyday knowledge.
Interviewer: CAPS has been used as part of your planning?	*Content*

Teacher: You know, it's a question of there isn't a choice in any case, you actually have to. Even if we don't follow that strictly, somewhere along the line we will cover it all, but we're supposed to follow it ... in term 1 and 2 that must be covered, 3 and 4 that must be covered.	In the teacher's opinion, content and sequence of topics is dictated by CAPS and must be strictly adhered to.
Interviewer: Have you ever added to the content or gone beyond what CAPS suggests or is in the workbooks? Teacher: I suppose, no, I would say pretty much you're going by this. You know, I would imagine when we get to this historical stuff, you may well go beyond, and you would include something like space travel, or current events, things that are happening. So, yes, you could include more current general knowledge that won't be in the books.	*Content* The content included in the Life Skills work books is sufficient, and only sometimes could be added to by the teacher.
(Following on from above question) Teacher: The past of course, they're talking about very general stuff, but you would talk about the specific pasts of the children that you're dealing with.	*Context* Content should be tailored to the learners in the class to make it personally relevant (Dewey, 1916).
Interviewer: How would you reinforce the [Rights and Responsibilities] lesson? Teacher: Well, what I would do is I'll put a transparency on and... well, let's talk about the rights we'll get through discussion. We'll come up with the rights that the child has and the responsibilities. So, we'll do a matching table of the rights and responsibilities ... and then maybe a little self reflection ...	*Lesson implementation* Activities are discussion-based and completed by the teacher and the learners together where a topic is viewed as separate to rather than as possibly linked to other topics.