

# **The Support Needs of Life Orientation Teachers in the Further Education and Training Band**

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## DECLARATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

South African youth are confronted by a range of challenges on a daily basis which can potentially evolve into serious barriers to learning and development. Life Orientation is a critical subject offered by the Further Education and Training (FET) band as it aims to prevent the development of such problems. Furthermore, the role played by the teacher in successfully and meaningfully presenting Life Orientation is a pivotal one. This study therefore aimed at understanding the support needs of Life Orientation teachers in the FET band in order to gain insight into the challenges experienced and what recommendations can be made to improve support to teachers, and consequently, learners. The theoretical framework on which this study was based was positive psychology as its emphasis on the fostering of positive individual traits, emotions and institutions is an appropriate and constructive way of understanding teachers' support needs within their school communities.

This study's research methodology can be described as basic qualitative research which is embedded within an interpretive paradigm. Purposive sampling was used to select three schools and their Life Orientation departments as research participants. Three methods of data collection were employed, namely written reflective notes and semi-structured focus group- and individual interviews. Furthermore, qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data.

The research findings indicated that Life Orientation teachers in the FET band experience a range of support needs across the various levels within the school community. Teachers experience a tension between the expectations of the Department of Education, the needs of the learners, and their own expectations with regards to the facilitation of a community of care within the Life Orientation classroom. Support therefore needs to be aimed at increasing teachers' competencies and providing opportunities to collaborate with other teachers to develop positive individual traits and foster positive emotions. Furthermore, school communities need to become aware of their attitudes and perceptions towards the subject so as to initiate processes which can lead to the promotion and development of positive, supportive institutions. A critical step in doing so is to consider policies regarding the appointment of Life Orientation teachers and ensure that qualified, specialist teachers who believe in the value of the subject are employed in these posts.

Keywords: Life Orientation, Further Education and Training band, teacher support needs, positive psychology, competency

## OPSOMMING

Die Suid-Afrikaanse jeug word daagliks gekonfronteer met 'n wye spektrum uitdagings wat potensiëel tot ernstige hindernisse vir leer en ontwikkeling kan ontwikkel. Lewensoriëntering is 'n noodsaaklike vak in die Verdere Onderwys en Opleidingsband (VOO) juis omdat dit poog om die ontwikkeling van hierdie hindernisse te verhoed. Die rol van die opvoeder in die suksesvolle en betekenisvolle aanbieding van Lewensoriëntering is deuslaggewend. Daarom poog hierdie studie om die ondersteuningsbehoefte van Lewensoriënteringopvoeders te verstaan ten einde insig te verkry in die uitdagings wat hulle ondervind. Sodoende kan aanbevelings gemaak word vir die ondersteuning van opvoeders wat dan sal deurvloei na die leerders. Die teoretiese raamwerk van hierdie studie is positiewe sielkunde, aangesien dit die ontwikkeling van positiewe individuele kenmerke, emosies en organisasies beklemtoon. Dit is dus 'n toepaslike en konstruktiewe manier om die ondersteuningsbehoefte van opvoeders binne hulle skoolgemeenskappe te verstaan.

Die navorsingsmetodologie wat in hierdie studie gebruik is, kan beskryf word as basiese kwalitatiewe navorsing binne 'n interpretivistiese paradigma. 'n Doelgerigte steekproef is gebruik om drie skole en hul Lewensoriënteringdepartemente as deelnemers te identifiseer. Drie metodes van data-insameling is gebruik, naamlik geskrewe reflektiewe notas, semigestruktureerde fokusgroeponderhoude en individuele onderhoude. Verder is kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise gebruik om die data te analiseer.

Die navorsingsbevindinge het aangedui dat Lewensoriënteringopvoeders in die VOO band 'n wye verskeidenheid ondersteuningsbehoefte binne die verskillende vlakke van die skoolgemeenskap ervaar. Opvoeders ervaar spanning tussen die verwagtinge van die Departement van Onderwys, die behoeftes van leerders en hul eie verwagtinge met betrekking tot die fassilitering van 'n omgeegemeenskap in die Lewensoriëntering-klaskamer. Ondersteuning behoort dus te poog om die bevoegdhede van die opvoeder te verbeter en geleenthede daar te stel vir die ontwikkeling van positiewe individuele kenmerke en die vestiging van positiewe emosies. Verder behoort skoolgemeenskappe meer bewus te raak van hul persepsies en houdings teenoor die vak ten einde prosesse in plek te kan stel vir die bevordering en ontwikkeling van positiewe organisasies. 'n Kritiese stap in die bereiking hiervan, is die oorweging van beleide met betrekking tot die aanstelling van Lewensoriënteringopvoeders en die versekering dat gekwalifiseerde,

gespesialiseerde opvoeders wat in die waarde van die vak glo, in hierdie poste aangestel word.

Sleutelwoorde: Lewensoriëntering, Verdere Onderwys en Opleidingsband, onderwyser-ondersteuningsbehoefte, positiewe sielkunde, bevoegdheid

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The last two decades have seen an increased focus on equality and human rights which is reflected in various spheres of South African government and legislation. As a result of the political transformations which have taken place, both the departments of health and education have undergone many changes which have altered the face of mental health in South African communities. Life Orientation, a compulsory new subject introduced as a part of Curriculum 2005, is the epitome of these changes and presents South Africa with the opportunity of providing a meaningful contribution to its youth. In the light of the subject's potential, the role of the Life Orientation teacher is critical, as is the support these teachers receive in presenting the subject. The focus of this study is therefore to investigate the support needs of Further Education and Training Life Orientation teachers as they endeavour to develop competencies which contribute to the psychological well-being and holistic development of their learners, as well as their own.

In 1998, Life Orientation (hereafter referred to as L.O.) was gradually phased into the South African education system with the implementation of Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education (O.B.E.), or as is now referred to, the National Curriculum Statement (N.C.S.) (Department of Education, 1997, p.40; Van Deventer, 2009, p.127; Prinsloo, 2007, p.156). As a result, L.O. was introduced on a grade-by-grade basis, with the first cohort of learners to take the subject to grade twelve matriculating in 2008. The underlying rationale for the introduction of the new subject focused on addressing the needs of South African youth, and was an attempt to reinforce the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (DoE, 2003, p.11). Furthermore, L.O. reflects the attempt to focus on preventative strategies for youth as a way in which to achieve these goals.

In order to better understand the rationale behind the decision to implement L.O. as a subject as a part of the new curriculum, one needs to have insight into the context in which it developed. The socio-political situation in South Africa was the primary cause for the transformations that began to take place when the new political dispensation came into power in 1994. The state of the education system in the years preceding the

“new” democratic South Africa reflected the political ideologies and practices of the apartheid era, and was characterised by the existence of nineteen education departments, each being categorised and resourced according to race and disability (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001, p.303; Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson & Pillay, 2000, p.287). As a direct result of this, education and support services were divided unequally among learners and schools, and needed to be revised to address the social injustices of the past, as well as to begin to reflect the human rights culture which was developing in the country (DoE, 1997, p.18).

The *Quality Education for All* report (DoE, 1997, pp.4,7,34) documents this shifted emphasis on human rights which was taking place in South Africa policy. Although these developments were evident before the ratification of the Constitution, human rights were formally entrenched into the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, consequently influencing all legislation written thereafter. This particular focus is highlighted in the White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995, p.5) which articulates the principle that basic education is a basic human right which needs to be protected and furthered by the government.

Aside from the effect of apartheid practices and legislation on South African education, social and economic aspects of the lives of South Africans were also influenced by political forces. As a result of this, South Africans were faced with social issues such as poverty, violence and crime, HIV/AIDS, the disintegration of family life and values and uncertain employment, to name but a few (Prinsloo, 2005, pp.27-28; Prinsloo, 2007, p.155; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006, p.164). Therefore, combined with the need for educational transformation to provide quality education for all South African learners, and the call for action to address these social issues, a focus on life skills development in education became emphasised (DoE, 1997, pp.61, 137).

In addition to educational transformation and the consequent decision to implement L.O., mental health care also underwent changes in policy and practice that supported the introduction of a programme which included life skills as a means to develop preventative strategies for issues involving youth. Prior to 1994 the state of health care - and in particular, mental health care - reflected similar inequalities to those present in the education departments. People’s access to and provision of services had been largely based on race and mental health care had been focused on hospitalisation,



institutionalisation and medication. Therefore, mental health care had been chiefly characterised by curative interventions. Community-based services which focused on primary health care, including preventative strategies, were thus neglected (Kale, 1995, p.1; Naude, 2009, p.122).

Aside from the fact that the emphasis of mental health care had been tertiary in nature (interventions which are more chronic), there was, and still is, a limited number of professionals able to offer these services. The ratio of psychiatrist to the entire South African population at the time of one study was 1:183000, and the ratio of clinical psychologist to the population 1:38000 (Kale, 1995, p.3). A more recent study suggests that the ratio is now closer to 1:1135 for health care professional to 'patient', although the term 'health care professional' is not defined (Bradshaw, Mairs & Richards, 2006, p.96). In addition, these figures are somewhat skewed in terms of the population groups served by these professionals, as the majority of these personnel work in urbanised areas, and are more available to well-resourced people as they often work in private practice. Furthermore, although policy changes are being implemented with a shift in emphasis towards primary health care, the mental health care sector is still under-resourced and has therefore experienced some difficulties in facilitating the process of a community-based approach to mental health care (*ibid.*). Apart from human resource shortages, financial resources and organisational challenges exist which impede the effective functioning of the health care system (Naude, 2009, p.123).

The move towards primary health care and the context in which this has taken place lends further support to the importance of the implementation of L.O. in schools. Adolescents and youth are generally considered to be a vulnerable population, and would therefore benefit from attempts to prevent the development of problems which would increase their vulnerability (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007, p.108; Donald et al., 2006, p.229; Vesely, Wyatt, Oman, Aspy, Kegler, Rodine et al., 2004, p.357). Because of the limited number of health care professionals available to provide adequate support to adolescents across the country, L.O. teachers and the subject's curriculum are a particularly useful way in which to address this shortfall and to further the implementation of primary mental health care.

Because L.O. is a compulsory school subject, it is in a unique position that can be used to facilitate the introduction of preventative strategies as a way to promote primary

health care in communities. The link between L.O. and primary mental health care therefore lies in prevention and capacity-building. Naude (2009, p.125) describes primary intervention as “activities [aimed] at promoting positive mental health by building people’s capacity, competencies, and life skills, as well as by lowering the incidence of emotional problems through the reduction of environmental stressors and the elimination of the causes of mental illness”. When one considers the scope and purpose of L.O., it becomes evident that the subject is well-equipped to be used as a medium through which prevention strategies can be implemented. According to the National Curriculum Statement, L.O. aims to:

“[equip] learners to engage on personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic and constitutional levels, to respond positively to the demands of the world, to assume responsibilities, and to make the most of life’s opportunities. It enables learners to know how to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to respect the rights of others, and to value diversity, health and well-being. Life Orientation promotes knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that prepare learners to respond effectively to the challenges that confront them as well as the challenges they will have to deal with as adults, and to play a meaningful role in society and the economy” (DoE, 2003, p.9).

It is thus evident from the above that L.O. has the potential to act as a vehicle that can be used to help address many of the problems experienced by South African citizens while acting as a community-based model for primary mental health care. In addition to this, the subject’s curriculum creates a space in which capacity-building can take place and where learners can learn how to exercise their rights and responsibilities by fostering a climate of responsible citizenship among youth. It is therefore important to acknowledge the role that the L.O. teacher plays in achieving the above mentioned and to understand how best to support these individuals to optimise the impact of the subject’s curriculum.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

Life Orientation offers a unique way to address many of the issues experienced by South Africans in society today and is arguably one of the most valuable subjects offered as part of the current curriculum (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002, p.224). There is strong evidence in the literature to support the claim of the importance of L.O. in education, and I, the researcher, can testify to this based on personal experience. My two years of

teaching L.O. at a high school and co-ordinating the grade eight and nine curriculum at the school gave me insight into the impact the subject can have if it is properly implemented and supported. It was my experience that the L.O. classroom is a safe space in which topics and issues relevant to the needs of that particular learner population can be discussed sensitively, but candidly, thereby helping learners to develop more holistically. The role of the teacher, in my experience, is therefore critical.

This is supported by Maree and Ebersöhn (2002, p.224) who argue that L.O. needs to be “presented [by teachers] with insight, sensitivity and understanding”. This directly implicates the active and intentional role of the L.O. teacher in fostering the development of resilience and helping to prevent the development of further problems. It is therefore important to understand L.O. teachers’ needs within this capacity, and to identify what support is required to address them in order to increase teachers’ sense of competency, and therefore the efficacy of the subject. It is by so doing that insight can be gained into the way in which L.O. teachers perceive the value of L.O. and how they interpret their role in the implementation of the subject. It is only then that support, management and curriculum planning personnel can begin to understand and support the development of an environment which promotes insightful and sensitive teaching and learning within the L.O. classroom.

There is a very real need for such insight, as although L.O. has now been a part of the curriculum for over a decade, several challenges have been experienced in its implementation, thus affecting its potential to address the issues for which it was designed. One such challenge is that school principals’ attitudes are negatively influenced by insufficient knowledge about L.O., and they often do not perceive the value of using specialist teachers to teach the subject (Christiaans, 2006, pp.130-131). Another is that many L.O. teachers are not fully qualified to present the subject matter, or are not specialist teachers nor have been adequately trained in all the curriculum outcomes (Christiaans, 2006, p.131; Prinsloo, 2007, pp.167-168; Rooth, 2005, p.236; Van Deventer, 2008, p.135). This links to the quality and nature of both pre- and in-service training of L.O. teachers which has also been identified as a challenge, as has been policy implementation (DoE, 2000a, p.13; Christiaans, 2006, pp.139-140; Prinsloo, 2007, p.169; Rooth, 2005, p.254; Van Deventer, 2009, p.128). Furthermore, the multicultural nature of South African classrooms presents its own unique challenges to be overcome by the L.O. teacher who needs to facilitate the development of a trusting,

supportive learning environment in which to stimulate critical discussion of sensitive topics with learners, as well as to foster social cohesion (Prinsloo, 2007, p.168). The effect of these challenges can be summarised as an undervaluing of L.O. within the curriculum by teachers and learners alike, as well as a perception that the subject's status is inferior to that of other subjects offered.

In addition to the challenges experienced in the implementation of L.O. in general, 2008 was the first year in which the subject was officially included as a compulsory subject to be taken in grade twelve in order to receive a Further Education and Training (FET) certificate. Considering that this is a fairly recent development, few studies have been conducted that focus on L.O. in the FET band. Therefore, there is a need to research how teachers are experiencing this at ground-level and what their support needs are in this band. Furthermore, although a somewhat similar study was conducted by Christiaans in 2005, the focus was on L.O. in the GET band, and the results from the research under discussion can be compared to her results in order to establish whether or not overall progress has taken place.

Such research is particularly relevant when considering the target population of L.O. in the FET band. These are learners who are usually in adolescence, and are therefore vulnerable to a variety of risk factors. One such factor is peer pressure - the central developmental process with which adolescents are confronted (Wait, Meyer & Loxton, 2003, p.27). As a result of their attempt to form a group identity and not be alienated from their peers, adolescents are often vulnerable to so-called risky-behaviours including sexual experimentation, which is associated with unprotected sex, teenage pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (including HIV/AIDS), as well as tobacco- and illegal drug- use. These behaviours can then potentially lead to other risk factors including health problems, poverty and obstacles to employability (Donald et al., 2006, p.176; McWhirter et al., 2007, p.108; Vesely et al., 2004, p.357).

Furthermore, learners in the FET band would benefit from opportunities to develop skills to help facilitate the successful transition to life outside the school environment. This includes life skills relating to interpersonal skills, participation in society and career-related decision-making processes (DoE, 2003, pp.12-13). In addition to this, the learning outcome *Careers and career choices* provides important opportunities for learners to discuss their career options in the current South African job market. There is

a dire need for such opportunities as the percentage of unemployed youth is staggeringly high. Figures from 2002 suggest that over five million youth are unemployed and that further education seems to increase one's chances of being employed (Du Toit, 2003, pp.6-7). There is therefore a need to prepare youth for the reality of the job market and to discuss available options or viable alternatives. Also, access to and availability of bursaries should be discussed so that those learners who wish to study further have knowledge of financial resources that can help to facilitate this. It can thus be assumed that South African youth have a need for such career-related information, and that one way of addressing this is to identify what skills and knowledge teachers have, and what they in turn need to help learners.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Life Orientation is potentially one of the most important subjects offered by our current curriculum, which, if presented with sensitivity and insight into the needs of specific learner populations, can reach this potential. In order to achieve this, support has to be made available (on behalf of schools and the Department of Education) that meets the needs of the key personnel involved in implementing the L.O. curriculum – namely teachers.

However, there have been several problems in the implementation of L.O. which have in turn influenced the way in which the subject has been received by teachers and learners alike. As a result of this, L.O. is often undervalued and therefore does not have as much impact as its potential suggests it could. There are several systemic factors which influence this problem, including the attitude and practices of the school management team and school principal, as well as learner and teacher attitudes towards the subject. Furthermore, the role of the teacher has to be examined in relation to the successful implementation of L.O., as well as their support needs in order to increase their sense of competence in presenting the curriculum. It should also be determined what resources have to be made available to schools in order for L.O. to have the maximum impact on learners' lives. If this is not achieved, the subject will continue to be seen as ineffective and the opportunity to help create supportive environments suitable for the development of resiliency and protective factors for learners in schools will slip by. In addition to this, it is important to understand how the status of L.O. is viewed and its associated

value as these not only influence the way in which learners perceive and participate in the subject, but also teachers' motivation to teach effectively.

### **1.3.1 Aim of Study**

The aim of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of FET Life Orientation teachers' support needs to assist in providing meaningful resources and support to these teachers in order to facilitate the successful presentation of the subject. This study therefore aims to answer the following question: What are the support needs of the FET Life Orientation teacher? It is thus also important to consider what challenges these teachers experience and what recommendations they have regarding the way forward for the subject.

Considering that these support needs are influenced by a range of factors which also affect the effectiveness of L.O. as a subject, the way in which FET L.O. teachers see their role in this capacity needs to be further understood, as do their perceptions of L.O. The focus will therefore be on gaining insight into the meaning-making processes which influence these teachers' realities.

The overarching goal of this study is therefore to provide meaningful knowledge which can be used in policy formulation and teacher training aimed at L.O. and its implementation. The rationale behind this is that if teachers are adequately trained, and feel competent and motivated within the L.O. classroom, that they will be able to present the subject with insight and sensitivity, thereby playing a meaningful role in adolescents' lives and building on these learners' competencies and strengths.

### **1.3.2 Research Questions**

This study therefore aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the support needs of Life Orientation teachers in the FET band?
- In their perception, what challenges do L.O. teachers in the FET band identify as influencing their practices?
- What recommendations do FET L.O. teachers have for the sustainability of the subject?

## **1.4 THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp.22-26), the researcher is a central figure in the research process. They argue that each researcher brings their own personal history and worldview into the process, thereby influencing the research. It is therefore important to attend to this before continuing in the discussion of the research process implemented during this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.21) describe the researcher in the following way:

“Behind [the terms theory, analysis, ontology, epistemology and methodology] stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)”.

In order to engage in a discussion on this study, it is first necessary to describe my worldview and the way in which I approached the research, thereby positioning myself as a central figure in the process implemented. As stated in the motivation for the study, my experience as a Life Orientation teacher convinced me of its importance to the current curriculum and the participants therein. However, I noticed that not all teachers and learners perceived L.O. in the same way I do.

More recently, while completing my theoretical training in a Masters degree in Educational Psychology, my belief in the potential of L.O. was reinforced. Life Orientation is a subject which all learners have access to, and which can help develop skills and competencies to address many of the challenges and issues that can lead to a need for psychological support and intervention. Yet why do challenges exist in achieving this? I wanted to understand how teachers made meaning of their involvement in the subject with the aim of supporting the needs or challenges they may experience. It not only became a field of interest for me in terms of a possible career in teacher-training, but also led to the realisation that each of us has our own meaning-making process, and that I would need to gain insight into the way in which teachers made meaning of their role as L.O. teachers and what influenced these perceptions.

The influence this interpretive view has had on my decisions regarding the research design and methodology will now be further discussed under the relevant sections, as will the theoretical framework on which this study is based.

#### **1.4.1 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is an important aspect within any study, including qualitative research. It is for this reason that Merriam (1998, p.45) identifies it as the foundation of a study which is then used to formulate the purpose of the research, as well as the research questions to be asked and answered. She uses the metaphor of interlocking frames to explain her argument. The outer frame is the theoretical framework which is based on existing literature and is influenced by the researcher's frame of reference and "disciplinary orientation". The second interlocking frame refers to the problem statement, while the inner- most frame is the purpose of the study which stems from the problem statement. The disciplinary orientation of educational psychology has influenced this research study and its theoretical framework, as has an interest in resiliency as a construct embedded within the subject of positive psychology. Furthermore, the significance of L.O. as a subject and the role of the teacher in its successful implementation are closely related to the above. In addition to this is the notion that L.O. not only develops learners' skills and resiliency, but also requires teachers to have certain skills and to develop their own resiliency.

There is strong support for the introduction of L.O. into school curriculums as a way to 'buffer' risk factors and develop resilience and protective factors in children, as well as to contribute towards healthy development in general (Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.301; Mangrulkar, Whitman & Posner, 2001, p.5; Richardson, 2002, p.317; Morrison & Allen, n.d., p.166; Weare & Gray, 2003, p.27; Donald et al., 2006, p.131; Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002, p.229; National Youth Policy 2009-2014, p.22). Resiliency is often referred to as a process in which there is "complex interaction between an individual's constellation of risks, assets and resources" which influences a person's response to adverse situations (Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006, p.238). In other words, there are various risk and protective factors which affect the way people respond to difficult situations, and these are in turn influenced by the context in which each person develops (Greene, Galambos & Lee, 2003, p.78; Morrison & Allen, n.d., p.163; Morrison, Brown,



D’Incau, Larson O’Farrell & Furlong, 2006, p.19; Donald et al., 2006, pp.172-175; McWhirter et al., 2007, p.109). These factors will be further discussed in chapter two.

Schools are unique communities within communities which hold the potential to create an environment where learners can experience a sense of caring and belonging (Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.305; Morrison & Allen, n.d., p.163). According to Henderson and Millstein (1992, in Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.300) a caring school environment where support is offered to its learners, along with the teaching of life skills, are two of six strategies used to develop resiliency within schools. This focus on creating opportunities for, and environments conducive to, the development of resiliency and personal resources has significant implications for education in general as it recognises that the purpose of education is more comprehensive than the development of cognitive abilities alone. Furthermore, the introduction of L.O. provides a way in which to support the different, but equally important, aspects of childhood development, such as the psycho-social and physical dimensions (Morrison et al., 2006, p.19).

Such an approach to education which attends to the various aspects of human development is not only more holistic in nature, but is also considered to be health promotive. Health promotion is a growing field of interest which recognises that health is more than “the absence of illness or disease” (De Jong, 2000, p.348). According to the World Health Organisation:

“Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities” (International Conference on Health Promotion, 1986, p.1).

The emphasis is therefore on total health, including the psycho-social aspects thereof. In addition to this, health is seen as a protective factor and a resource, one which can be developed through the L.O. curriculum. As a result of this, it is possible for schools to create supportive environments in which psychological and physical well-being can be fostered, helping to develop more resilient learners.

As has been argued within this research report thus far, there is a definite link between L.O. as a way to build capacity and as a medium to implement prevention strategies. This theme of health promotion and capacity building to prevent problems and to promote well-being connects the subject to the development of resiliency which is nested within the positive psychology movement, and is therefore also linked to primary health care in South Africa. According to Gable and Haidt (2005, p.104), positive psychology can be defined as “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions”. Other definitions include a focus on the study of human strengths, and an emphasis on using this to develop more social responsibility and acceptance of others in society (Joseph & Linley, 2006, p.4; Seligman, 2005, p.3). Resilience can therefore also be considered as a concept within positive psychology as it too refers to human strengths and assets which are used to optimise a person’s functioning and their responses to life’s challenges.

Seligman (2005, p.3), a founder of the positive psychology movement, emphasises these connections. He argues that the aim of positive psychology is to be a catalyst where the focus shifts from the broken to what can be created by bringing “the building of strength to the forefront in the treatment and prevention of mental illness”. He then identifies a further goal of positive psychology as being to build this strength among the youth. Life Orientation is therefore a way in which we can offer South African youth access to primary health care by building capacity and competency, thereby developing their resilience to cope with life’s challenges and buffering against the host of factors which increase their vulnerability. In order to achieve this, the role of the L.O. teacher must not be neglected. The L.O. teacher acts as the facilitator of these processes, and therefore their own skills, competencies and needs must be taken into consideration. The necessity and development of these competencies will be discussed in detail in chapter two. The competencies and needs of the teacher require an in-depth focus in order to gain insight into their realities, and how this in turn influences the teacher’s competency in the L.O. classroom.

#### **1.4.2 Research Paradigm**

Paradigms are complex, integrated systems which cannot be seen in isolation from their epistemology, ontology and methodology. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.22; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.6). As a result, in order to understand the research

paradigm of this study, it is first necessary to define these interrelated components. Ontology can be defined as the characteristics or nature of the reality in question, while epistemology refers to the relationship and interaction between the researcher and the knowledge which exists but needs to be ‘discovered’. Methodology, on the other hand, is the way in which the researcher approaches this unknown and attempts to bring it into the known (*ibid.*).

A paradigm is therefore “a ‘basic set of beliefs that guides action’” (Guba, 1990 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.22), with my belief being that each individual creates their own meaning of their world which needs to be understood in order to gain insight into their reality. This study can therefore be classified as using an interpretive research paradigm, and will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. This belief consequently guided my decision regarding the research methodology, design and methods in order to gain insight into L.O. teachers’ support needs.

Therefore, my basic assumptions and beliefs underpinning this research can be summarised in the following way: There are “multiple realities [which] are constructed socially by individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p.4), and that because of this, an “intersubjective or interactional epistemological stance towards that reality” can be adopted (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.6). Consequently, the actions, or methodology, of this study will be qualitative in nature and make use of methods which are characterised by their subjective nature, for example, interviews (*ibid.*).

### **1.4.3 Research Methodology**

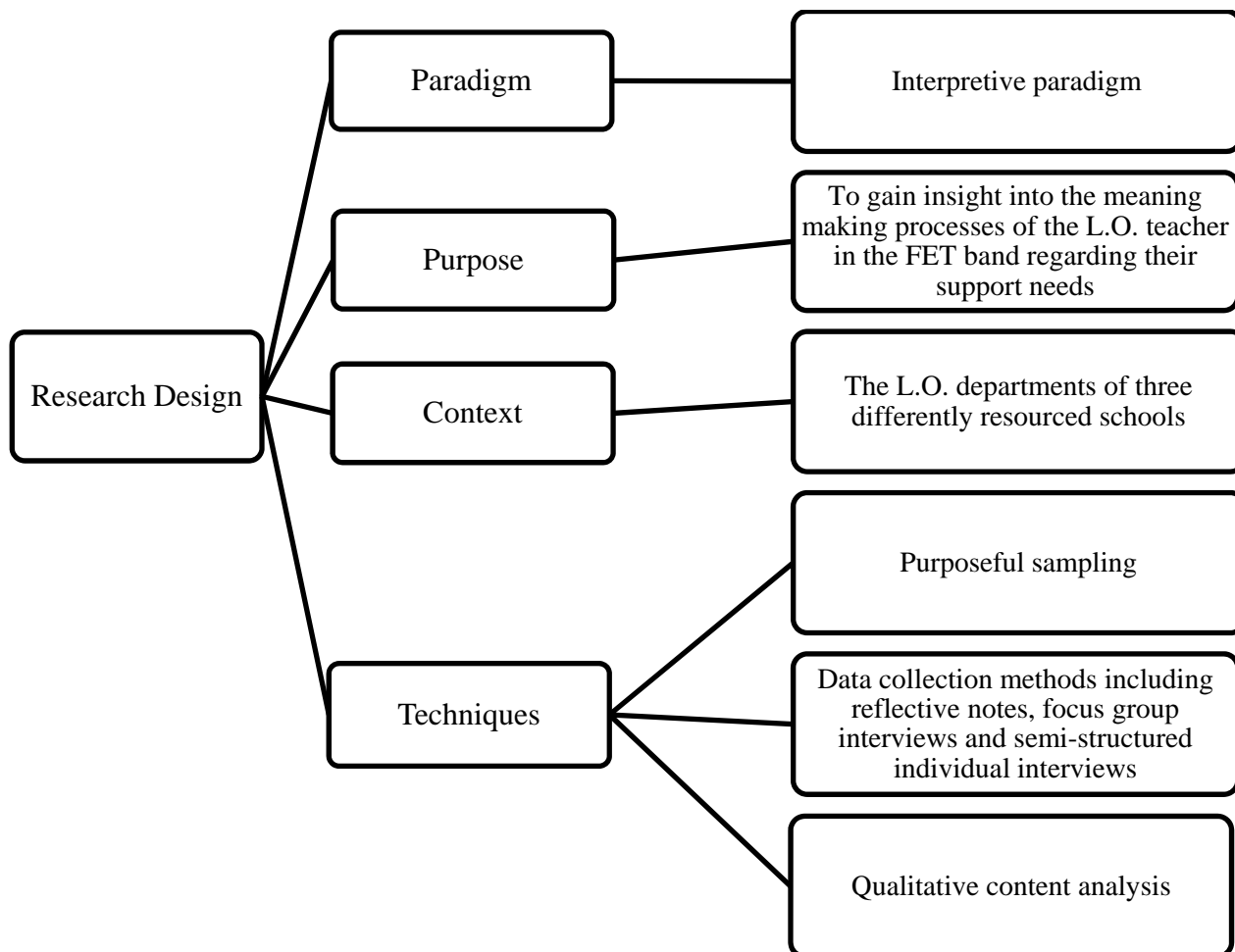
Qualitative research methodologies refer to processes whereby the researcher attempts to understand how research participants make meaning of their environment through observation and interaction with them. It is through this that the researcher tries to gain greater insight into the processes at play, and how social and cultural influences affect the patterns observed and identified by the researcher (Maree, 2007, p.51). The researcher therefore attempts to bring the unknown into the known by gaining insight into these meaning-making processes.

The strategy which was employed within this research can be classified as basic or generic qualitative research. Merriam (1998, p.11) identifies the main purpose of such studies as being to “seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the

perspectives and worldviews of the people involved”. Furthermore, the basic qualitative study demonstrates all the qualities of typical qualitative research (which will be discussed in chapter three), and is focused on understanding situations and contexts. This understanding is then viewed through the researcher’s frame of reference, yet with the aim of keeping the meaning attached to these situations true to the perceptions of the research participants. The intention of which is to make interpretations that are accurate reflections of participants’ contexts and lived experiences (*ibid.*).

#### **1.4.4 Research Design**

The research design of a study can be described as “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Durrheim, 2006, p.34). It therefore assists in finding coherence between the questions asked and how best to answer them using specific methods (Mouton, 2001, p.57). Durrheim (2006, pp.37-39) suggests four principles which can be applied in order to achieve this design coherence, namely the purpose of the research, the context in which it takes place, the research paradigm, and the techniques used. Figure 1.1 represents these design principles as applicable to this study. Where applicable, they will be discussed in further detail in chapter three.



**Figure 1.1: Schematic presentation of the research design**

### **1.4.5 Research Methods**

The research methods used were selected due to their coherence with the research design and questions. These methods include purposeful sampling techniques, three data collection methods and qualitative content analysis. These will now be briefly discussed.

#### ***1.4.5.1 Selection of Participants***

The research design not only offers guidelines in the planning and execution of the research, but also serves to connect the researcher to information sources, including people and documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.25). The way in which the researcher makes contact with these sources therefore needs to be defined and discussed. This links directly to the sample and methods of sampling implemented in research.

Sampling refers to the action undertaken by the researcher to identify a population of interest, or unit of analysis, that becomes the focus of the study. It also refers to decisions which the researcher makes about what aspect of behaviour or phenomenon needs to be observed. In the case of this study the unit of analysis is a group, namely Life Orientation teachers who work with learners in the Further Education and Training band. Furthermore, it is the meaning-making processes of these teachers regarding their support needs which is under investigation. FET Life Orientation teachers are therefore the object of this study, and their meaning-making processes are the focus from which conclusions will be drawn (Durrheim, 2006, p.41). These conclusions will thus be drawn using the target population, in other words, the general group who share a particular characteristic in which the researcher is interested. All L.O. teachers who work with learners in the FET band can therefore be described as the target population of this study (Gravetter & Foranzo, 2003, p.117).

For the purposes of this study it was decided to use purposeful sampling, a strategy that is non-probabilistic in nature. Purposeful sampling is commonly used within qualitative studies as information-rich sources can be identified and asked to participate in the research, thereby providing the opportunity to elicit a detailed, rich description and analysis of data (Durrheim, 2006, p.49). It can be described as a decision-making process which facilitates the identification and selection of information-rich sources so that relevant and valuable data can be collected to provide insight into the focus of the study and in answer to the research questions. This process is usually based on theoretical reasons and the intent that the sources identified will help the researcher to access new information and knowledge (Merriam, 1998, p.61; Merriam, 2009, p.77; Durrheim, 2006, p.50).

In an attempt to identify such cases to participate in the study, criteria can be set to assist in selecting the sample. This is referred to as criterion-based selection, and as the term suggests, is a list of criteria according to which the sample is decided upon (Merriam, 1998, p.61). A list of the criteria used to facilitate sample selection and the motivation thereof is offered in chapter three.

#### ***1.4.5.2 Methods of Collection and Analysis***

Several methods of collecting data are generally associated with qualitative research, including observation, interviewing and the review of artifacts or documents (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2005, p.25; Merriam, 1998, p.11). These methods are aimed at eliciting information that is rich and detailed. The way in which the data or information is then analysed and interpreted feeds back into the research design and theoretical framework. It is therefore an inductive process.

- **Data Collection**

The methods which were identified as being most relevant and likely to lend themselves to the accessing of information-rich data were reflective notes, focus group interviews and semi-structured individual interviews.

Reflective notes can be used to elicit a written account of someone's perceptions and meaning-making processes regarding a specific event, as well as to stimulate thought about it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The advantage of such written narratives is that it allows the research participant to reflect on certain issues and to provide a voice to their thoughts, opinions and beliefs. This is a particularly useful exercise to use at the beginning of the data collection process to help research participants put themselves in the frame of mind to answer questions regarding their thoughts and attitudes about the focus of the study. This provides them with the opportunity to explore their thoughts at their own time and pace without the interference of an outsider (Patton, 2002, p.354).

Interviewing, be it with individuals or a group, is a dynamic and active process in which both interviewer and interviewee play an important role (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.696; Patton, 2002, p.341). One of the main aims of the interview in qualitative research is to gain insight into the interviewee's world (Patton, 2002, p.341). In fact, the interview itself can be considered a narrative in which both interviewer and interviewee construct a story that is situated within a particular context (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.696).

The focus group interview presents the opportunity to collect data from a group of people who share a certain characteristic, and through the medium of the group interview, respond to questions and probes by the interviewer (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.703). The rationale behind the use of focus group interviews is based on the way in which a group can stimulate thought processes and reflections about the questions, hopefully generating new ways of thinking about these issues, thereby providing the interviewer with in-depth insight into group dynamics and its joined meaning-making

processes (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). This is facilitated by a limited number of prepared questions posed to the group in order to access the data (Patton, 2002, p.387).

The individual semi-structured interview, or general interview guide approach, refers to open-ended questions and probes prepared prior to the interview which are aimed at accessing quality data. While an interview guide provides the interviewer with guidelines of which areas of interest to focus on, it also allows the interviewer to explore other subjects as they emerge (Patton, 2002, p.343). The use of a general interview guide allows the interviewer the opportunity to ask all interviewees similar questions, while facilitating a meaningful conversation that can potentially benefit both interviewer and interviewee. It therefore provides guidelines as to what topics and issues need to be explored, while allowing the researcher to deviate if relevant information comes up during the interview, or to clarify any uncertainties (Patton, 2002, p.349; Maree, 2007, p.87). The use of a general interview guide is further useful in that it allows the researcher the opportunity to validate data collected from other sources (Maree, 2007, p.87).

The reflective notes, focus group interviews and individual semi-structured interviews were used as data collection methods which were then analysed. The aim of data analysis is to find an answer to the research question (Durrheim, 2006, p.52). The process of data analysis serves to bring order to the multitude and chaos of the data collected in order to achieve its purpose (Patton, 2002, p.432).

- **Data Analysis**

The form of data analysis that was employed in answer to the research question and was appropriate to the research-design and -paradigm of this study can be classified as qualitative content analysis. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004, pp.102-104), qualitative content analysis is a popular method used by beginner researchers as it involves a process of open coding and only works on one level of meaning. In other words, data and units of meaning identified are not deconstructed as in discourse analysis. The above authors warn of such data analysis possibly being too simplistic as it can potentially lead to 'thin descriptions' of data, as opposed to rich descriptions, with the latter being one of the chief characteristics of qualitative research (see chapter three). However, if qualitative content analysis is viewed as a process



during which data are “interrogated”, rich descriptions can be made. This process will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

## **1.5. A REVIEW OF THE KEY CONCEPTS**

Before the structure of this presentation is outlined, a review of the key concepts is necessary.

### **1.5.1 Needs**

According to the Oxford dictionary, ‘need’ refers to “circumstances requiring some course of action...[a] requirement” (Swannell, 1986, p.359). The implication is therefore that action needs to take place, or support offered, in order to assist in meeting the need or fulfilling the requirement. In the context of this study, FET L.O. teachers’ needs, or requirements, will be identified and appropriate support suggested.

### **1.5.2 Support**

If support is necessary to assist in meeting a requirement, or fulfilling a need, then support to FET L.O. teachers can be seen as the enabling mechanisms described by the Department of Education (1997, p.3). Therefore, a shifted emphasis from learner to teacher needs to take place in order to provide quality education for all, and to help prevent and minimise the development of barriers to learning and development. Education Support Services therefore play an important role in achieving this, an important aspect of which is developing teachers’ competencies.

### **1.5.3 Life Orientation**

In this research report, the term ‘Life Orientation’ (or L.O.) will be used to refer to the subject offered by South African schools. The term ‘life skills education’ or ‘life skills programme’ will be used to indicate a more general approach to this area of interest. Life Orientation will be further discussed in chapter two.

### **1.5.4 Subject**

The term subject refers to the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which form part of the subject matter which is taught as part of the National Curriculum Statement (N.C.S.), and consists of learning outcomes and assessment standards (DoE, 2003, p.6). The term subject is also used in the context of the Further Education and Training (FET) band as

opposed to the term 'learning area' which is used when referring to the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values specific to certain fields of knowledge within the General Education and Training band (GET) (DoE, 2002, p.2). Therefore, the term 'subject' will be used in this research report as the focus is on the FET band.

### **1.5.5 Further Education and Training band**

According to the *Further Education and Training Act* (Republic of South Africa, 1998, p.1), the Further Education and Training band refers to "all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications from levels two to four of the National Qualifications Framework...[the levels of which] are above general education but below higher education." Considering that the focus of this research is on schools, when the term FET band is used it refers to learners who have completed the GET Certificate in grade nine, and are currently in grades ten to twelve.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION**

This research report has been structured in the following way:

Chapter one: Chapter one focuses on introducing the study and contextualising the research. It also outlines the research process which was implemented to conduct the research.

Chapter two: This chapter provides an in-depth review of existing literature with a focus on positive psychology and the related concepts of resiliency, health promotion, primary health care and competency.

Chapter three: This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on the research process, including research methodology, -design, and -paradigm, as well as the ethical considerations taken into account.

Chapter four: Chapter four provides the presentation of the research findings which is then discussed and interpreted.

Chapter five: This chapter will focus on recommendations, as well as possible limitations to the study, and summarise the findings of this research.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter aimed at providing the reader with a background to the study so as to provide an orientation to the research conducted. Furthermore, it aimed at contextualising the research, as well as motivating its importance. Lastly, it provided an outline of the research process implemented while placing it into a theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature review is a central aspect to any study as it contextualises the research and allows the researcher the opportunity to converse with existing literature related to his or her topic of choice. Furthermore, a study of the literature enables the researcher to identify a ‘knowledge gap’ so as to provide a possible focus for the planned research, as well as providing a basis from which to discuss the research findings and position them within the existing body of knowledge (Henning et al., 2004, p. 27; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.49). This is an important part of the function of the literature review as a comprehensive review is needed in order to conduct “sophisticated” research, particularly within the field of education. Boote and Beile (2005, p.3) identify this as a prerequisite for “good research” which aims at “[advancing] our collective understanding” by using existing knowledge to further this understanding.

Hence, the literature review of the study under discussion will aim to build on the central argument set out in chapter one while positioning it within the existing body of literature. Furthermore, it will create a basis of knowledge and information from which meaning can be made during the interpretation of the data collected, thereby building on existing knowledge. Therefore, this literature review will focus on defining Life Orientation and understanding its value to the curriculum, as well as understanding it within the framework of positive psychology and resiliency. It will also concentrate on the central role that teachers play in the successful implementation of the subject, thereby building the central argument of this study. The central argument being that in order to facilitate a meaningful presentation of the L.O. curriculum, teachers’ support needs have to be understood and addressed so as to build their competency within the L.O. classroom.

#### **2.2 LIFE ORIENTATION DEFINED**

According to the Western Cape Department of Education, hereafter referred to as the WCED, (2004, p.3) Life Orientation can be defined as “the study of self in relation to others and to society”. This definition can thus be linked to the denotation of the word

‘orientation’, which according to the Oxford dictionary means to “establish oneself in relation to surroundings” (Swannell, 1986, p.376). The WCED (2004, p.3) expands on the above definitions by emphasising the subject’s holistic approach to the development of children and adolescents. This focus on development is rather described as being the integration, and interrelated nature, of a child’s “personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development”. Furthermore, it aims to address the “knowledge, values, attitudes and skills about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, and career choices”. Life Orientation is therefore a subject that aims to develop these different dimensions of being so as to promote the healthy development of South Africa’s youth.

As was discussed in chapter one, the aim of L.O. is for learners to develop an awareness of their role as citizens and the need to exercise their rights and responsibilities within society, while instilling a respect for fellow human-beings and building each youth’s competencies and their capacity to cope with life’s daily challenges (DoE, 2003, p.9). This correlates with the qualities identified as necessary within education as stated in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (James, 2001, p.6). These qualities include “equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour”. This theme of values in education is directly reflected in all National Curriculum Statement documents in the sections expressing the types of learners and teachers envisaged. Social justice and respect for others is the central theme identified with regards to learners, while teachers’ competencies and personal qualities are highlighted (DoE, 2002, p. 3; DoE, 2003, p.5).

The way in which L.O. in the Further Education and Training (FET) band attempts to achieve this is through its four learning outcomes (DoE, 2003, pp.12-13). These include Personal well-being, Citizenship education, Physical Education, and Careers and career choices. The nature and diversity of these four outcomes reflect L.O.’s holistic approach towards the individual and society, the content of which is summarised in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Learning Outcomes and topics covered**

Learning Outcome	Topics covered in Learning Outcome
<i>Personal well-being</i> (a focus on interpersonal relationships)	Peer pressure Relationship dynamics Life roles Leadership Parenting Prevention of so-called ‘risky’ behaviours (for example, substance abuse and unsafe sexual practices which may lead to teenage pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases) Health promotion (personal as well as environmental) Problem-solving.
<i>Citizenship education</i> (the self within a society where human-rights and -dignity is encouraged)	Discrimination Rights and responsibilities Social relationships Political awareness and literacy (including an understanding of democracy) Causes of social problems, as well as their prevention (such as violence) Diversity (including that of religions)
<i>Physical Education</i>	Participation in recreational and sporting activities to encourage healthy living, and consequently understanding how these influence quality of life The role of sport in nation building Possible other consequences of participating in sports, for example, career opportunities
<i>Careers and career choices</i> (decision-making in terms of further education and career choices)	Study techniques The ‘job-hunting’ process and associated skills, for example interviewing and curriculum vitas Information about higher education and universities of technology and available funding strategies The South African context with regards to labour laws, qualifications and the reality of the job market Self-knowledge as a tool to make meaningful decisions Equity

Adapted from: Department of Education (2003, pp.12-13)

The scope of the L.O. curriculum therefore attempts to provide exposure and input in these various domains of development so as to build learners’ competencies, prepare them for the challenges life may present them, and equip them to deal with these in “an informed, confident and responsible way” (Van Deventer, 2009, p.128). The curriculum is thus comprised of elements of life skills, religious education, ‘survival skills’ and socialisation programmes in order to facilitate the presentation of a variety of skills and

information that can be used to achieve this. Prinsloo (2007, p.156) therefore suggests that these elements need to be integrated in order to offer learners structured and effective support services. The implication of this is that L.O. teachers need to become service providers, and thus need to be trained in the different facets of the subject to fulfil this role effectively. This is, however, complicated by the breadth and range of the subject and its assessment standards and will therefore be discussed in more detail in a later section.

### **2.3 LIFE ORIENTATION AND TEACHER SUPPORT NEEDS: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As was discussed in chapter one, the theoretical framework from which this study will be approached, interpreted and discussed is based on positive psychology. The argument that Life Orientation is a way to focus on learners' strengths and build their competencies can be firmly placed within a framework of which positive psychology is the foundation. Joseph and Linley (2006, p.6) argue that if one practices from a positive psychological way of thinking, the emphasis is "not only about how to alleviate distress, treat illness, and repair weakness, but also how to facilitate well-being, promote health and build strengths". Hence, important concepts which contribute towards this theoretical framework include resiliency, health promotion and L.O. as a primary mental health care strategy. When considered together, these concepts will further strengthen the argument for the value of the L.O. curriculum and the role which teachers play in presenting the subject. Consequently, this will provide further motivation for this study and the need to identify and understand the needs of the FET Life Orientation teacher so as to support the implementation of the subject.

The following sections will thus be approached from the perspective that Life Orientation has value to all South African learners and therefore needs to be presented in a meaningful and effective way. Yet, in order to achieve this, the teacher's perspective has to be considered in terms of their needs, resiliency, competencies and motivations.

#### **2.3.1 Positive Psychology**

As was argued in chapter one, resiliency is often viewed as a construct within positive psychology due to their shared focus on human strengths. It can thus be stated that if resiliency refers to "patterns of positive adaptation", positive psychology is about the

focus on “positive personal traits” in order to promote well-being (Masten & Reed, 2005, p.75). As with resiliency, the meta-theory of positive psychology is not problem-orientated and focused on pathology, but rather on healing and the development of human strengths (Seligman, 2005, p.3). The field of positive psychology is therefore often referred to as psychofortology which can be defined as the source of psychological strengths, as well as the promotion of these in order to develop competencies and foster well-being (Strümpfer, 2005, pp.21-23). As will now be argued, it is necessary to consider Life Orientation teachers’ psychological strengths, and how to develop and promote these strengths and competencies, in order to foster well-being so as to facilitate a similar process among the learners with whom they are involved.

Aside from these perspectives on positive psychology, it is necessary to return to its definition as offered in chapter one before engaging in further discussion. According to Gable and Haidt (2005, p.104), positive psychology can be defined as “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions”. Definitions of positive psychology also often include a focus on developing increased social responsibility and acceptance of others in society or of civic values (Joseph & Linley, 2006, p.4; Seligman, 2005, p.3). There is thus an emphasis on positive functioning as an individual within society, or collective well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.12). These definitions can be summarised according to three focus points of the positive psychology movement, namely positive emotions, positive individual traits and positive institutions (Seligman, 2007, para.2; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.4).

If positive psychology strives to promote the optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions, it can be argued that the entire school community is the target of such interventions. Within the context of this study and its focus on Life Orientation, this argument can therefore be extended in the following way. In order to promote the optimal functioning of teachers, and more specifically L.O. teachers, the processes and conditions influencing their perceptions, competencies, motivations and values need to be understood. This understanding will then provide insight into how this group can be supported and in turn influence the conditions and processes affecting the learners whom they teach and the school community to which they belong. Furthermore, the above mentioned definitions correlate closely with the aims of L.O. and the subject’s focus on developing interpersonal skills and civic values.



Joseph and Linley (2006, p.30) identify happiness and well-being as the two desired outcomes of positive psychology. It is therefore necessary to understand each of these outcomes within the context of positive psychology. Schueller (2009, p.923) defines wellness as:

“a multi-faceted concept that integrates signs of well-being with the ability to function well. Put simply, wellness includes both living well and doing well. Wellness, furthermore, is not merely the absence of illness or distress, but instead represents the presence of positive characteristics such as positive emotions, positive social interactions, and positive functioning (i.e., strengths).”

The multi-faceted nature of well-being is similar to that of human nature and development as it has various dimensions. These dimensions include psychological, emotional, physical, social, economic, environmental and spiritual well-being (Keyes & Lopez, 2005, p.49; Lazarus, 2006, p.522; Temane & Wissing, 2006, p.566). Keyes and Lopez (2005, p.48) argue that while the terms ‘well-being’ and ‘positive mental health’ are often used interchangeably, “researchers must move toward the operationalisation of mental health as a syndrome of symptoms of well-being” (p.47). They further suggest that this operationalisation should be seen in terms of emotional well-being and positive functioning, with the former referring to affect and life satisfaction, or happiness.

Emotional well-being is not only important for the teacher as a person, but also has an impact on the classroom. Bullough (2008, p.9) succinctly summarises this as follows: “teaching flows out of the inner life of the teacher, affecting not only what is taught, but what is learned”. It is therefore necessary to understand what influences teachers’ sense of well-being in all its facets in order to develop and foster these symptoms of well-being. This will in turn affect the way in which they teach and their classroom environment. It is therefore crucial to understand and support the inner world of the teacher.

Happiness is described by Joseph and Linley (2006, p.31) in terms of an equation, namely “the sum of life satisfaction and affective balance”. Seligman (2008, p.7) further qualifies happiness in the following three ways, namely “positive emotion (the pleasant life), engagement (the engaged life), and purpose (the meaningful life)”. These three lives or domains can be linked back to the three focus points of positive psychology (positive emotions, positive individual traits and positive institutions). Duckworth,

Steen and Seligman (2005, p.635) describe positive emotions, or the pleasant life, as viewing the past, present and future in affirmative ways, and is often understood as the concept of hedonism. Engagement refers to the use of one's strengths and talents to engage in life. It is therefore the application of positive individual traits. The meaningful life seeks to allow one's positive emotions and individual traits to "flourish [in] the context of positive institutions" (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.636). Positive institutions are those qualities which encourage the building of communities and families where a sense of belonging to something greater can be fostered (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.636; Seligman, 2007, para.2). The classroom environment is one such example within the school as an institution and community. The question therefore needs to be asked: How do teachers experience these three lives, and how do the three lives influence the way in which they work, or teach? And how can we support teachers to create and flourish within positive school institutions?

Joseph and Linley (2006, p.31) use the term 'subjective well-being' to distinguish between well-being as psychological well-being, and happiness as subjective well-being. Positive functioning, on the other hand, can be understood within the six dimensions of psychological well-being (Keyes & Lopez, 2005, 48; Ryff & Singer, 2003, 276). These six dimensions can thus be seen as 'symptoms' of well-being and include having purpose in life and environmental mastery, participating in positive relationships, exercising autonomy, experiencing personal growth and self-acceptance. It is important to note that these dimensions correlate strongly with research findings of factors influencing the development of resilience as well as the six strategies of Henderson and Millstein referred to in chapter one and discussed further in the section entitled 'Resiliency', thus reinforcing the relationship between positive psychology and resiliency.

If positive mental health is not equivalent to well-being and needs to be distinguished from the term, what precisely is mental health? The World Health Organisation (2007, para.2), hereafter referred to as WHO, defines it as "a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Mental health is further conceptualised by the WHO (*ibid*) as a basic requirement for well-being and for people to function intra-personally and within society in a meaningful way. These conceptualisations need to be understood within the WHO's

definition of health, namely the “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (2001, p.1). This reinforces the idea of the different facets of human development as well as well-being and thus highlights the interdependent nature of these dimensions.

Herrman, Saxena and Moodie (2005, p.2) summarise these aspects of mental health by identifying three central themes in these definitions of health and its promotion as: recognising the integral role played by mental health in total health, the notion that health is more than the absence of disease, and the inter-relationship between physical and mental health and behaviour. Keyes and Lopez (2005, p.48) consider an additional theme in mental health as being “the presence of high-level well-being”.

The WHO definition of mental health refers to the need to function effectively within society which directly implicates the importance of social well-being when considering the ‘syndrome’ of mental health. The five dimensions of social well-being (Keyes & Lopez, 2005, p.49) include social acceptance (a positive attitude towards society), social actualisation (belief in potential of society), social contribution (giving back to society), social coherence (society makes sense, is logical) and social integration (a feeling of belonging).

It is evident that there is a strong correlation between the symptoms of social and psychological well-being and the aims of Life Orientation as a subject within the South African education system. It can therefore be argued that Life Orientation has the unique opportunity to promote psychological and social well-being in the youth of South Africa, which can in turn create citizens who are aware of their role in society, and who can function optimally in their daily living. It is, however, first necessary to promote the mental health and well-being of those individuals involved with the youth – namely teachers.

### **2.3.2 Health Promotion**

According to Joseph and Linley (2006, p.6), one of the central goals of positive psychology is to promote mental health and develop competencies and well-being. This goal correlates with the definition of health promotion offered in chapter one as both fields aim to enable the development of skills to build capacity in the general population in order to improve health and well-being.

Health promotion encourages people to make a paradigm shift from previous ways of thinking about health towards a holistic attitude of health and well-being. Previously, health had been viewed as an individual task that was managed solely by doctors. The paradigm shift has seen this focus change to health as a community task and one that is 'everyone's business'. The importance of health-related education has also increased (Gray, Young & Barnekow, 2006, p.15). The importance of making such a paradigm shift became evident in the mid-eighties, thus prompting the introduction of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. The Ottawa Charter (International Conference on Health Promotion, 1986, pp.1-3) recognised health as a basic right, as well as a resource that is needed to develop on a personal, community and global level. In order to achieve this, five strategies were formulated to facilitate health promotion action, namely to: build healthy public policy; create supportive environments; strengthen community action; develop personal skills; and to re-orientate health services.

These five strategies, though first developed for society in general, can be applied to school environments to facilitate health promotion. This was recognised by the Jakarta Declaration (WHO, 1997, p.3) which identifies schools as "settings [offering] practical opportunities for the implementation of comprehensive strategies" to facilitate health promotion. It is therefore necessary to consider how the above mentioned strategies can be understood and implemented within schools.

The over-reaching goal of health promotion in schools is to promote the well-being of all members of that school community, including both learners and teachers (De Jong, 2000, p.342). Lazarus (2006, p.523) discusses these strategies within the school context and supports De Jong's argument of health promotion as being a whole school development issue. Firstly, school policies that are supportive to the promotion of health and well-being in a holistic way need to be implemented. Secondly, the psycho-social environment of the school needs to be supportive to the needs of learners and teachers, and be a safe environment where teaching and learning can reach optimal potential. Thirdly, the school needs to be viewed as a community where there is collaboration between all involved parties in order to encourage action. Fourthly, the personal skills of all these role players need to be developed. The implication is staff development and a Life Orientation programme which can facilitate this development. Lastly, health services need to be realigned to include prevention, and ensure that these services are accessible and meaningful. These services can be referred to as 'education support

services' (Lazarus, 2006, p.523; Stewart Burgher, Barnekow Rasmussen, & Rivett, 1999, pp.4-5).

It can thus be said that if health is influenced by one's behaviour, emotions, environment and beliefs, and if the environment in question is the school community, teachers play an important role in influencing the environment. Their role is not only limited to the teaching of health-related knowledge, but also involves their attitudes and beliefs and the way in which these influence the classroom. Knowledge alone is therefore not the sole determinant affecting one's behaviour. It is rather the way in which that knowledge is presented that influences how it affects one's emotions, behaviours and beliefs that is important (Crossley, 2001, p.161; Gray et al., 2006, p.15). The role which the Life Orientation teacher plays in presenting knowledge in a relevant and meaningful way is therefore critical, not only to health promotion, but also to the success of the subject. It is thus the way in which the teachers present topics that will determine their influence on learners' lives and behaviours.

Gray et al. (2006, p.23) argue that it is crucial for the role of the teacher not to be undermined in health promotion. The way in which teachers perceive and experience health promotion will influence the way in which they influence their classes (Weare & Gray, 2003, p.74). Not only this, but teachers also need to feel as if their health and well-being is being promoted for the initiative to be successful. It is therefore essential for teachers' needs and competencies to be taken into consideration if one hopes to create a health promoting school which seeks to foster the well-being of all its community members (*ibid*).

In terms of mental health promotion, research suggests a correlation between socio-economic status and education levels with mental health (Herrman et al., 2005, p.4). It can therefore be argued that in developing countries such as South Africa where there are high levels of poverty and low education levels, there is an increased risk of mental illness. Hence, there is a great need for mental health promotion in the general population, and therefore in schools. Life Orientation therefore plays a central role in this initiative. This can be seen by drawing a comparison between the topics covered by L.O. and its aims with the three themes identified as having an influence on mental health. Herrman et al. (2005, p.9) list these as being:

“The development and maintenance of healthy communities; each person's ability to deal with the social world through skills like participating, tolerating diversity and mutual responsibility; and each person's ability to deal with thoughts and feelings, the management of life and emotional resilience”.

There is a noticeable overlap between these themes and the content of the L.O. learning outcomes. It can therefore be argued that L.O. provides schools and teachers with the opportunity to promote total health, and in particular, mental health. This is of particular importance with adolescents who often experience emotional problems, thus further advocating for the significance of L.O. and health promotion in the FET Band (Patton, Glover, Bond, Butler, Godfrey, Di Pietro, et al., 2000, p.586). It is important to recognise that a balance needs to be created between supporting both learners and teachers as such balance is necessary in order for L.O. to reach its full potential. Therefore, both learners and teachers' mental health need to be promoted.

### **2.3.3 Primary Mental Health Care**

As was discussed in chapter one, the health care system in South Africa underwent several changes with the introduction of the new political dispensation. It is important to note that together with the 'education for all' movement in South Africa, there was an international movement towards 'health for all'. The conference which was held to discuss the shift towards 'health for all' took place in 1978 in Alma Ata and firmly placed access to health care in the spotlight, thereby defining it as a basic human right. Furthermore, South Africa has not been alone in its previous focus on curative care - this has been an international trend in health care. Similarly, there has been a movement towards Primary Health Care locally and internationally, with differing degrees of success (Kautzky & Tollman, n.d., p.21; WHO, 2008a, p.1).

Primary Health Care (hereafter referred to as PHC) is based on the four principles identified in the Declaration of Alma Ata (WHO, 2008a, p.1) including establishing universal coverage, people-centred services, healthy public policies, and leadership. This has important implications for mental health care in PHC settings. Every citizen in South Africa has a right to access to mental health care which meets their needs. Policy needs to support this, and leadership needs to steer the process so that health care is efficient, effective, accessible and equitable. Bower and Gilbody (2005, p.840) identify four main goals of mental health care in primary care. These include effectiveness of

services aiming to improve overall well-being, the efficient use of limited resources to benefit the most people, access to health care which meets the identified health needs, and equitable delivery of services according to need.

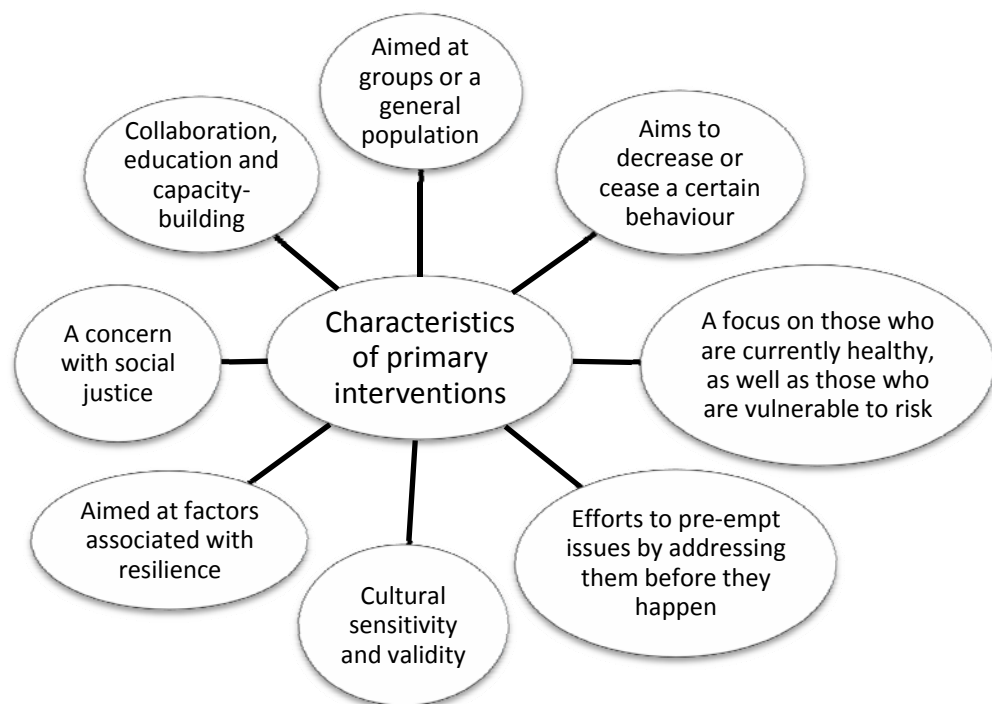
This has further implications for education. Firstly, people need to understand that they have a right to a certain standard of care, and then know how to access that which is best suited to their health needs (WHO, 2008a, p.1). Not only does L.O. present opportunities to educate learners about their health care rights within a framework of rights and responsibilities, but also with regards to health promotion in general and prevention of health-related issues. This is supported by the Declaration of Alma Ata (International Conference on Primary Health Care, 1978, p.2) which emphasises the importance of educating people about health issues and their prevention, as well as encouraging their active involvement in community health care.

This emphasis indicates a significant change which took place in terms of health care in general. As was discussed in chapter one, health care had previously been focused on offering curative care, or tertiary interventions. Currently, the *Mental Health Care Act of 2002* recommends services on primary, secondary and tertiary levels, indicating an increased focus on meeting the health care needs of those in need of health care services. This is reinforced by the *Primary Health Care Package for South Africa* (Department of Health, 2000, p. 6) which defines the government's task as one of deciding what service best meets the need of the particular 'health care user'. Aside from this, the World Health Organisation (2008b, p.43) also recommends increased patient and community involvement in health care management, which correlates with the aim of L.O. as it advocates the exercising and knowledge of rights, but also the responsibility of choices made (DoE, 2003, p.9). The aim is thus to increase capacity and knowledge with regards to health care.

Primary interventions are of particular relevance to Life Orientation and mental health care in South Africa today. There is a relationship between the underlying principles of primary interventions and positive psychology, namely the focus on prevention and capacity, or competency building (Naude, 2009, p.125). Keyes and Lopez (2005, p.52) conceptualise mental health care, and in particular, psychological treatment, as having three main objectives, namely prevention, intervention and promotion (or PIP). Life Orientation can also be seen in terms of the acronym PIP. It attempts to *prevent* the

development of further barriers to learning and health-related issues, to *intervene* by building competencies and skills with which to address challenges, and is health *promoting* in its efforts to create awareness and increase well-being.

Lewis, Lewis, Daniels and D'Andrea (1998 in Van Niekerk & Hay, 2009, p.125) identify several qualities which characterise primary interventions and which correlate strongly with areas of application of positive psychology (Joseph & Linley, 2006, p.6). These characteristics are represented in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: The characteristics of primary interventions**

Taken from: Lewis, Lewis, Daniels and D'Andrea (1998 in Van Niekerk & Hay, 2009, p.125)

These factors also correlate strongly with the aims of Life Orientation and highlight the need to equip L.O. teachers to facilitate health promotion. As can be seen from the above characteristics, there is a strong focus on community and civic values which overlaps with the Learning Outcomes of Citizenship Education and Personal Well-being.

The role of the individuals involved in offering such services is central. The Department of Health (2000, p.6) recognises the importance of human capital, and thus supports the development of staff competency. The need for Life Orientation teachers to develop



competencies to equip them with skills to offer primary interventions therefore also needs to be acknowledged in light of the above.

### **2.3.4 Resiliency**

As was discussed in chapter one, resiliency refers to a process in which there is “complex interaction between an individual’s constellation of risks, assets and resources” which influences a person’s response to adverse situations (Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006, p.238). Masten and Reed (2005, p.75) define the process of resilience as being “characterised by patterns of positive adaptation” to adversity, and thereby place the emphasis on increased functioning after difficult circumstances. Researchers have attempted to understand what makes an individual ‘resilient’, and in so doing, the phenomenon has been the subject of much attention and research (Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.300; Masten & Reed, 2005, p.75; Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006, p.238; Richardson, 2002, p.308). An operational definition of resiliency is therefore necessary - which in itself is another subject of debate (Masten & Reed, 2005, p.75). As previously mentioned, definitions of resiliency often include references to an individual’s experience of adverse circumstances and a way of coping which is considered to be positive and to have ‘good outcomes’ due to the presence of certain characteristics or environmental cues (Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.299; Greene et al., 2003, p.77; Masten, 2001, p.228; Masten & Reed, 2005, p.75; Morrison et al., 2006, p.20).

There are two streams of thought in literature concerning resiliency, including the variable-focused approach and the person-focused model of resilience. The variable-focused approach to resilience can be described as studies which attempt to identify internal and external factors that can be attributed to positive adaptation in the presence of adversity. The person-focused model of resilience, however, compares people who have already been identified as being resilient to others and attempt to isolate the characteristics that makes resilient individuals different (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006, p.6; Masten, 2001, p.229; Masten & Reed, 2005, pp.77-78).

Richardson (2002, p.307) describes the meta-theory behind resiliency as *not* being problem-orientated. He suggests that it is rather a trans-disciplinary process which focuses on strengths and “is a life-enriching model that suggests that stressors and change provide growth and increased resilient qualities or protective factors”. He

further argues that for this change to happen, energy is needed. This energy may manifest in the form of personal or “collective” strengths which may stem from external forces (2002, p.319). The role of the spiritual or faith is also considered to be a source of this energy (Greene et al., 2003, p.78; Richardson, 2002, p.319).

Thus far, reference has been made to strengths or characteristics which exist within context. Research suggests that there are several key protective and risk factors which are significant in the development of resilience. Carr (2004, p.271) summarises the main factors identified in the literature (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2: Factors associated with resilience in childhood and adolescence**

Domain	Factors
Family factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of early separation or loss</li> <li>• Secure attachment</li> <li>• Authoritative parenting</li> <li>• Father involvement</li> </ul>
Community factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive educational experience</li> <li>• Good social support network (including good peer relationships, and involvement in organised religious activity)</li> <li>• High socio-economic status</li> </ul>
Psychological traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High ability level</li> <li>• Easy temperament</li> </ul>
Self evaluative beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High self-esteem</li> <li>• Internal locus of control</li> <li>• Task-related self-efficacy</li> <li>• Optimistic attributional style</li> </ul>
Coping skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning skills</li> <li>• Sense of humour</li> <li>• Empathy skills</li> <li>• Skill in detaching from deviant attachment figures and peer groups</li> <li>• Skill in finding or creating a social support network</li> <li>• Skill in using unique talents (e.g. sport or music) to create social supportive network and avoid deviant network</li> </ul>

Taken from: Carr (2004, p.271)

In addition to the factors identified by Carr, the importance of communication and problem-solving skills, school-connectedness and positive role models have also been identified as being involved in the development of resiliency (Donald et al., 2006,

pp.172-175; Greene et al., 2003, p.78; Masten & Reed, 2005; p.83; McWhirter et al., 2007, pp.109-110; Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006, p.238).

Furthermore, Morrison and Allen (n.d., p.164) have identified autonomy, sense of purpose and academic motivation, in addition to social competence and problem-solving, as being important elements influencing the development of resilience in learners. It has therefore been suggested that if one's context has an influence on the development of resilience, the school environment is one which can be used to facilitate it. The above five factors thus have significant implications for the implementation of programmes that focus on developing resilience in a school's learner population, as well as for the role the teacher needs to play (Morrison et al., 2006, p.20; Morrison & Allen, n.d., pp.163-165). The role of the teacher and school is reinforced by Henderson and Millstein's (1992 in Bosworth & Earthman, 2002, p.300) six-stage model for developing resiliency in schools. The six stages are to:

1. "Provide opportunities for meaningful student participation,
2. set and communicate high expectations,
3. provide caring and support,
4. increase pro-social bonding,
5. set clear and consistent boundaries, and
6. teach life skills."

The emphasis within such a model is on developing learners' strengths and skills in order to build their capacity and assets which consequently promote the development of resilience. It is thus evident from research and the above mentioned strategies that the role played by the school environment - and teachers facilitation thereof - is crucial. It can therefore be argued that for the development of resilience to occur within schools and classrooms, teachers need to become aware of resilience and how they can foster its development within the classroom. Reflection on the classroom and school culture, as well as the way in which opportunities to practice new skills and competencies present themselves, is therefore necessary (Morrison & Allen, n.d., p.164). The school therefore needs to become a "supportive psychosocial learning environment" (De Jong, 2000, p.341).

However, this does not address the issue of supporting teachers to flourish in the school with regards to positive emotion, engagement and purpose, nor in developing resilience. As will become evident in the section entitled *Teacher Needs and Challenges*, teachers

are faced with a wide range of challenges in their work and school communities and are considered to be vulnerable to developing job-related stress and distress (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.399; Parker & Martin, 2009, p.68). It is therefore necessary to first attend to the development of resiliency in teachers in order to facilitate the process among their learners (Day, 2008, p.255).

Day (2008, p.255) recognises the correlation between research on resilience in children and adults and argues that resilient adults, and therefore resilient teachers, have similar characteristics. He further highlights the importance of positive relationships, autonomy, motivation and having a sense of purpose (*ibid.*). In addition to this, a sense of competence, achievement and agency are also considered to be such influences (Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.403). In contrast, several factors have been identified as negatively affecting teachers' resilience, including the socio-economic context of the school and working conditions, government policy, lack of parental support, health problems, chronic stress, work load, learner behaviour and motivation, as well as administrative duties. These factors have the potential to lead to work-related stress and burnout, thereby affecting teachers' resiliency (Day, 2008, p.253; Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.400).

Morrison and Allen (n.d., pp.167-168) suggest possible strategies to accomplish the facilitation of the development of resilience in school contexts in general. The strategies are directly based on the five factors previously mentioned as influencing the development of resiliency. This implies that not only learners will benefit from the creation of opportunities to develop resilience, but so will teachers. Two of the suggestions made by these authors can have a direct impact on the implementation of programmes focused on resilience, and include staff development as a way to facilitate reflection of teaching practices and foster social competence, as well as education regarding resiliency to encourage a sense of purpose (pp.167-168).

This aspect of reflection and self-knowledge is a theme in literature and has a clear relationship to the resilience of teachers and their teaching practices (Brody & Baum, 2007, p.26; Howard & Johnson, 2004, pp.410-415). Brody and Baum (2007, p.26) report on their participants' perceptions on the value on reflecting and its effect of increasing their sense of coherence and well-being, and consequently, their resilience in coping with long-term stress. It would therefore seem that by reflecting on

competencies and teaching- and classroom- practices, teachers are able to identify their strengths, thereby increasing their mastery over their environment and autonomy (Brody & Baum, 2007, p.26; Howard & Johnson, 2004, pp.410-415; Morrison et al., 2006, p.24). In addition to this, the Department of Education (2000b, p.18) recognises reflective practices as being a core element of the competencies needed by teachers, further highlighting the practice of reflection's importance. This will therefore be discussed in further detail in the following section.

### **2.3.5 Competency**

The term competency has been frequently used in the discussion thus far, but has not yet been conceptualised. According to Schueller (2009, p.925), competency can be defined as an individual's skills or strengths and their ability to apply them. Competency also refers to that which an individual does well. It can therefore be deduced that competencies are assets and resources that an individual uses in his or her daily life to address challenges and which attribute to his or her functioning and well-being. In other words, that person's positive individual traits. Considering that the theoretical framework of this study is based on a strengths-based perspective, it is thus important to focus on the competencies of the L.O. teacher in order to help understand and interpret their support needs.

Two types of competence need to be discussed in order to gain more insight into FET L.O. teachers' support needs. These include emotional and professional competence, with emotional competence being of particular importance when considering the nature of the subject matter and the way in which it needs to be presented. Emotional competence refers to the way in which we use our emotional skills to adapt to our social environment, or adaptive emotional functioning (Weare & Gray, 2003, p.17).

Ciarrochi, Forgas and Mayer (2006, pp.53-54) identify three categories of emotional skills which characterise emotional competence, namely "emotion expression, emotion understanding and emotion regulation". Emotion expression refers to the verbal and non-verbal (body language) communication which takes place during interactions with others. Emotion understanding is the knowledge one has about one's own emotions as well as those of others, while emotion regulation refers to the way in which one manages one's emotions and responses during difficult social interactions. These emotional skills

include the following, as offered by Weare and Gray (2003, pp.77-79) who have summarised those emotional competencies commonly found in literature as:

“having self esteem; having an accurate and positive self concept; autonomy; experiencing a full range of emotions; expressing feelings; controlling the emotions; increasing emotional intensity and frequency; being resilient; and using information about the emotions to plan and solve problems.”

The development of competence, and emotional competence in particular, is influenced by one’s environment and the people in it, as well as past experiences (Morrison et al., 2006, p.21; Schueller, 2009, p.929). The development of emotional competence can therefore be described as a developmental process through which individuals develop skills which increase their ability to adapt emotionally in different social situations, cope in such situations and learn to problem-solve (Ciarrochi et al., 2006, p.52).

It can thus be argued that the L.O. teacher needs to develop personal emotional competence, in addition to helping learners develop these skills (Wood, & Olivier, n.d., p.162). Firstly, teachers need to develop competence in this area so as to equip themselves with skills to help them in dealing with difficult situations in the classroom, and possibly challenging learners. Secondly, L.O. teachers need to be able to apply their emotional competence to their presentation of the curriculum. For example, when having a class discussion with a group of adolescents about their sexual behaviour and the associated risks, the teacher needs to be able to understand the learners’ frame of reference and experiences and respond empathically, while problem-solving and presenting reasonable alternatives. The teacher therefore needs to be able to understand the learners’ perspectives, as well as regulate their own emotions (perhaps shock or surprise at a particular question) in order to facilitate a meaningful discussion. Emotional competencies and the L.O. curriculum are therefore linked by the content of the subject, as well as the way in which it is presented.

Consequently, if emotional competence is a developmental process and is influenced by the social context, teachers are important role players in the development of learners’ emotional competence. Teachers therefore need to develop an awareness of how their interactions in the school environment, as well as the way in which the school is managed, influence the development of learners’ emotional competencies (Weare & Gray, 2003, p.74). However, Weare and Gray strongly urge that teachers’ own sense of emotional competency and needs should not be ignored as “they need to have their own

emotional needs taken into account, and to be valued and respected” (*ibid.*). Hence it is important to consider the contextual influences on the development of teachers’ emotional competencies within the school community and to address and support these issues.

Furthermore, literature suggests a connection between the dimensions of psychological well-being and competency. As previously discussed, these six dimensions include purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relationships, autonomy, personal growth and self-acceptance. In particular, autonomy and relationships have been identified as affecting competency and influencing the development of resilience (Gomez, & Ang, n.d., p.100; Miller, Nickerson, Chafouleas & Osborne, 2008, p.686; Schueller, 2009, pp.929, 931; Weare & Gray, 2003, p.74). It can thus be argued that the psychological well-being of both teacher and learner are influenced by the opportunity to demonstrate autonomy and have meaningful, positive relationships, therefore providing an environment in which competencies can be fostered. Schueller (2009, p.931) argues to this effect that “individuals are best able to reach their potential when their own needs for autonomy, competence, and connectedness are met”. In addition to this, these three elements are recognised by the theory of self-determination as being three basic psychological needs (Miller et al., 2008, p.686), thus indicating their overall importance. The implication of this in terms of the support needs of L.O. teachers is the possible need for opportunities to exercise autonomy and develop competencies, as well as having meaningful and supportive relationships with fellow staff, all within the school community.

In terms of professional competencies, autonomy and a sense of control over one’s environment play an important role. According to Pillay, Goddard and Wilss (2005, p.23), this and the organisational culture affect teachers’ job satisfaction, as do teachers’ perceptions about their own competencies. These perceptions are influenced by the three dimensions of the work context, namely personal growth and opportunities to learn, relationships and system-maintenance and -change (Shechtman, Levy & Leichtentritt, 2005, p.145). The role of the school principal is also regarded as central to teachers’ sense of competency and job satisfaction, particularly with regards to positive feedback and involvement staff in decisions (Pillay et al., 2005, p.23).

Furthermore, teaching competence, or professional competence, involves the belief in one's knowledge, skills and abilities to teach a subject successfully. It also includes being able to apply various strategies in order to promote learner involvement, implement different assessment techniques and the ability to be flexible (Grant, 2008, p.127; Pillay et al., 2005, p.23). Howard and Aleman (2008, pp.163-167) further include knowing how to teach in diverse contexts and the importance of reflecting on teaching practices as important competencies. Gouda and Banks (2006, pp.104-105) suggest that these professional competencies develop over time and with practice. Furthermore, professional confidence has the potential to lead to the development of a sense of competency.

Considering that the teacher's psychological well-being is influenced by the development of emotional competencies, and that his or her professional confidence in turn affects his or her sense of professional competency, it is of critical importance to understand both when working with the FET L.O. teacher. This will be to the benefit of both learners and teachers, and help to instill a culture of learning and belonging in a school, where a sense of purpose can be fostered, thereby helping to strengthen positive individual traits.

Before moving on in this discussion, it is important to attend to the Department of Education's view on competency. According to the Department of Education (2000b, pp.9-10), teachers need to develop certain applied competencies, or norms. Three applied competencies are identified in the document, namely practical, foundational and reflexive competence. Practical competence refers the ability of the teacher to make decisions and carry out appropriate actions within the school context, while foundational competence refers to the ability of understanding why such an action and decision should be taken. Reflexive competence, however, refers to the integration of the above competencies and the ability to adapt to new situations.

In addition to these three applied competencies, there are seven roles which teachers have to fulfil (DoE, 2000b, pp.13-14). These include the teacher as: learning mediator; interpreter and designer of learning programme and materials; leader, administrator, manager; scholar, researcher and life-long learner; taking a community, citizen and pastoral role; assessor; and learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist. Within each of these roles is a discrete competence which needs to be developed, while the term



‘applied competence’ refers to the integration of these discrete competencies (DoE, 2000b, p.10). The above mentioned roles have significant implications for the FET L.O. teacher. According to the Department of Education (2000b, p.12), the role of subject specialist is central, therefore implying that all L.O. teachers need to be specialists in all of the learning outcomes. Although the document gives room for the role experience plays in the further development of competence, it recognises the key role which pre-service training plays in preparing teachers for their role as educator.

The Department of Education (2008, p.14) further recognises the importance of teachers as subject specialists and states that the “successful teaching of Life Orientation relies heavily on the teaching approach chosen by the teacher”. The implication is that teachers not only need subject-specific knowledge, but also need to be competent in using different teaching methods which suit the group of learners and the topic under discussion. The Department of Education attempts to support this by making Learning Programme Guidelines (LPGs) available to teachers. In these guidelines possible teaching methods are suggested and learning programmes are explained and demonstrated (*ibid.*). However, the importance of the content taught should not be left unexamined as domain-specific knowledge forms an essential part of professional competence.

In addition to this, the Department of Education (2000b, p.12) reinforces the significance of the teacher’s role as subject and phase specialist, and describes this role as the area where the other six are integrated, and ultimately, upon which competence will be determined. The Department of Education further discusses the role of the teacher as learning specialist and provides a description of what each teacher should be able to do after participating in pre-service training.

“The educator will be well grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures relevant to the discipline, subject, learning area, phase of study, or professional or occupational practice. The educator will know about different approaches to teaching and learning (and, where appropriate, research and management), and how these may be used in ways which are appropriate to the learners and the context. The educator will have a well-developed understanding of the knowledge appropriate to the specialism” (2000b, p.14).

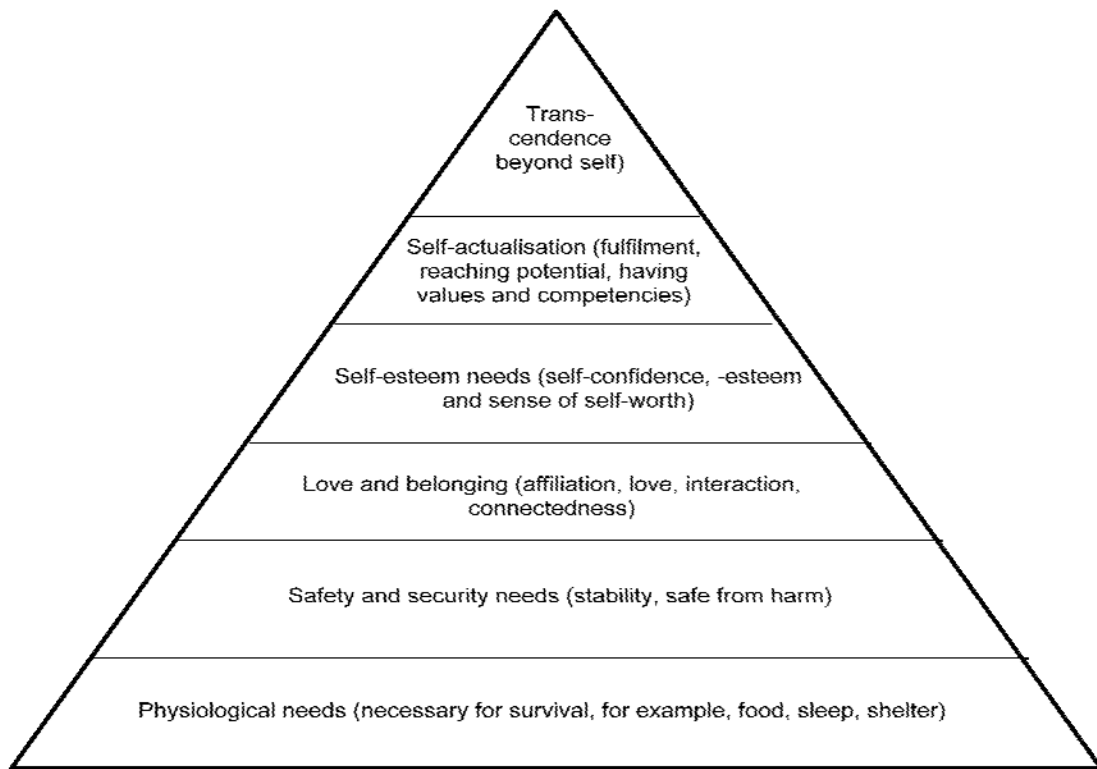
This presents a matter of difficulty as many L.O. teachers used to teach subjects such as Guidance, Physical Education and Religious Education before Life Orientation was

ushered into the curriculum, (Christiaans, 2006, pp.8-9; Rooth, 2005, p.11). As a result of this, a large number of these teachers have competences limited to the subject they originally taught and received pre-service training in, and have not since had sufficient in-service training to help them develop skills and competencies in the other facets of L.O. Furthermore, Rooth (2005, p.196) indicates that a large percentage of teachers presenting the subject are not specialist L.O. teachers, and that the term 'specialist' had various meanings, often referring to teachers who had attended a short course or workshop. It is therefore important to explore whether or not teachers have developed competencies within this last role of being a subject specialist.

### **2.3.6 Teacher Needs and Challenges**

Before focusing specifically on teachers' needs and the challenges experienced as identified in the literature, it is first necessary to consider what the term 'needs' refers to. As defined in chapter one, the Oxford English dictionary describes the term 'need' as "circumstances requiring some course of action... [a] requirement" (Swannell, 1986, p.359). Locke (2005, p.300) defines a need as "an objective requirement of a living organism's survival and well-being". It can therefore be argued that if a need requires action to achieve well-being, then the support needs of L.O. teachers have to be identified in order to determine appropriate action, or support. One possible approach to understanding teachers' support needs is Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is explained within his well-known theory on human motivation (Louw & Edwards, 1997, p.448). The hierarchy consists of six levels and proposes that basic needs first have to be met or satisfied before higher-order needs. This is, however, not necessarily a rigid process where stages are followed step-by-step (Louw & Edwards, 1997, p.448; Sharf, 2001, p.135). The hierarchy of needs is often represented in the form of a triangle with the most basic of needs forming its foundation. An example of such a triangle is provided in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs**

Adapted from: Sharf (2001, p.135) and Louw & Edwards (1997, p.448)

It can therefore be argued that within the context of this research study, Life Orientation teachers' needs can also be approached with the hierarchy of needs in mind. That is to say that these teachers will experience a range of needs in varying stages of fulfilment. Not only this, but there is a also a correlation between those factors which promote resilience and the symptoms of well-being with the needs as identified by Maslow. Thus, teachers may experience dissatisfaction, or be unable to meet certain needs (for example, connectedness and belonging within their school community) which may in turn affect their ability to meet other needs in their life (their sense of self-worth may be affected). In addition to this, it is important to note that if self-actualisation is a need, and developing competencies a way to self-actualise, then teachers may experience a need to develop skills within their working environment. Furthermore, "to achieve happiness, individuals must understand their own natures, and especially their needs" (Locke, 2005, p.299).

As was previously discussed, the three basic psychological needs identified in Self-Determination Theory are relevant to this study's theoretical foundation. These three needs include competency, relatedness and autonomy and will be reflected in the challenges as identified by the literature. As the term competency suggests, mastery is

necessary in order to adapt to one's environment, while relatedness refers to the relationships which develop within the environment. As previously mentioned, autonomy refers to the independent decision-making (Compton, 2005, p.35). Teachers therefore experience a need to fulfil these psychological needs in both their personal and work environments, therefore making this of particular relevance to the support needs of the L.O. teacher.

Research has identified several issues which influence teachers' perceptions, sense of job satisfaction and motivation with regards to their work, as well as the meeting of the three psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy. It is therefore important to discuss findings in literature concerning these issues, and to consider how they may be framed in terms of the support needs and challenges experienced by teachers in general, and Life Orientation teachers in particular.

As previously mentioned, the school principal plays a central role in all aspects of the school community, including teachers' experiences of support and their perceptions of their work. In particular, the nature of the feedback given to staff by the principal influences the way in which teachers' perceive their contribution and value to the school, thus affecting motivation (Pillay et al., 2005, p.23). Furthermore, the significant role of the principal is reinforced by research findings regarding L.O. teachers. Firstly, the principal's knowledge and understanding of L.O. is important and influences the school and teachers' attitudes towards the subject. Secondly, school management and human resource management decisions regarding the selection and allocation of staff to teach L.O. are often the responsibility of the principal. As a result of this, and a lack of understanding about L.O., leads to non-specialist teachers being appointed to teach the subject, thus influencing teachers' development of competence. Furthermore, although some teachers are trained in the subject and some of its learning outcomes, they may be expected to teach all outcomes despite insufficient training in all. This is of particular relevance to the learning outcome *Physical Education* (Christiaans, 2006, pp.130-131; Prinsloo, 2007, pp.167-168; Rooth, 2005, p.236; Van Deventer, 2008, p.135; Van Deventer, 2009, p.128).

A study on a preventative life-skills programme with a focus on HIV/AIDS identified several challenges experienced by teachers during the implementation process (Visser, 2005, p.211). These findings are important, particularly with regards to rural schools,

and include teachers' inadequate knowledge about the subject matter, which in the case of this study was HIV/AIDS. Teachers also identified the teacher-learner relationship as being a challenge as they perceived the role of teacher as one not including the discussion of sensitive or emotional issues. In addition, the culture of the school was described as not being conducive to teaching and learning, primarily because of human resource management problems and uncertain employment. As a result of these factors, motivation levels of teachers were affected, thus influencing their competency within the classroom.

In another study, Johnson (2005, pp.308-309) identified stress as being a large contributing factor which influences the well-being of teachers. Furthermore, teachers identified a need to participate in workshops which focused on the development of coping skills. In terms of challenges, the implementation of the new curriculum and the training received were identified as problematic and inadequate. In addition to these issues with the implementation of policy, teachers perceived the support offered by the Department of Education as deteriorating, and described service delivery as being fragmented.

Prinsloo's research (2007, pp.163-166) describes the influences and challenges experienced by teachers. She describes teachers as being emotionally, and generally, vulnerable due to the lack of support and involvement of parents, and the overall need for discipline in and out of the school community among the learners. In addition to this, the quality of teacher-learner relationships are affected by issues concerning language and cultural diversity. This is a very real concern considering that teachers and learners often struggle to communicate clearly due to an inability to speak the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and because of cultural barriers. These two factors in turn contribute towards the teachers' struggle to understand the learners' frames of reference and the teachers' ability to respond empathically thereon. Furthermore, teachers again identified the training received by the Department of Education as an area for development. In particular, the skill of the facilitators was identified as inadequate and it was suggested that training should be meaningful and address the teachers' specific needs for curriculum implementation. Prinsloo states that the lack of sufficient training and knowledge contributed to the participants' low motivation and confidence levels within the classroom. Lastly, the shortage of resources in rural schools was highlighted as a further barrier to the successful implementation of the L.O. curriculum.

Rooth (2005, pp.200-220) identifies several areas of concern for L.O. in the GET band. Firstly, a large proportion of her participants were of the opinion that the subject matter covered by L.O. should be taught by individuals outside of the school, with parents being identified as the ideal source of such information. The allocation and selection of L.O. teachers was again identified as an issue, with a significant percentage of teachers being unqualified for their position and selected due to the unavailability of suitable staff to fill up the required number of teaching periods by each teacher, or as a result of a human resource management decision. Other problem areas identified in the study included difficulties in assessing the learning outcomes, a shortage of learning materials and resources, concerns about time allocation and the size of the classes. Furthermore, the theme of a lack of Departmental support was again identified, as were difficulties with learners and discipline. Uncertainty about the difference between the L.O. curriculum and the previous subject Guidance was expressed. The influence of teachers' values and their decisions to teach or omit certain assessment standards was also identified as an area of development.

Research conducted by Christiaans focusing on the GET band (2006, pp.169-170) indicated that principals, learning area co-ordinators and teachers had inadequate knowledge and understanding of L.O. Curriculum advisors supported the introduction of on-going professional development, increased support and feedback to teachers. The need for pre-service training to focus more on in-depth knowledge to facilitate the successful implementation of L.O. was also suggested.

In more general terms, the importance of relationships, particularly among colleagues, has been identified as playing a significant role in teachers' experiences of their work and the school community. Furthermore, the development of interests outside of the school is important as it helps to develop coping mechanisms to handle job stress, and plays a role in the development of positive personal traits. In addition to this, the above authors suggest a correlation between job satisfaction and clearly stated goals and feedback, as well as positive perceptions regarding the value of their work, school management and organisational practices and routines (Miller et al., 2008, pp.682-686). This reinforces the notion that competence is influenced by relationships and a sense of purpose, thus affecting psychological well-being and the fulfilment of basic needs.

It is evident from the above research that many of the documented needs of teachers correlate with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. There exists a need for relationships and connectedness to colleagues, the school community and parent involvement, as well as the development of skills and competencies with regards to becoming specialist teachers. In addition to this, the leadership of principals is important and can further influence needs relating to belonging and self-actualisation. These require support and action, emphasising the importance of research into the support needs of Life Orientation teachers, and more specifically, those working with learners in the FET band.

### **2.3.7 Support**

A final construct which needs to be defined and discussed is that of support. If needs are issues which require action, then support is that which allows the action to take place. In education, the provision of such support is often referred to as Education Support Services (ESS) and plays a vital role in the provision of quality education. The Department of Education (1997, p.3) describes support as "enabling mechanisms" which help to address the needs of learners and the education system. The aim of ESS is to focus on preventing, minimising and addressing barriers to learning and development and to help create a supportive psycho-social learning environment for learners. The above mentioned document further recognises the systemic role of support services, implicating the role of communities, as well as the need to support teachers with, and as, service providers (*ibid.*).

Power (2006, p.169) emphasises the role of community and parent involvement, as well as the importance of teachers, in schools which are considered to be successful. He puts further stress on the significance of teachers in his argument for the involvement and support of all spheres from communities by stating that:

"one of every nation's most valuable assets is its teachers, for they lie at the heart of the learning process...the quality and outcomes of education are dependent on the status, training and quality of teachers, as well as the availability of appropriate materials and support services" (p.170).

Education Support Services in South Africa are based on the White Paper Six education policy (DoE, 2001, p.29) which recognises the importance of strengthening the provision of such services. The policy describes ESS according to the level at which such services are provided, namely school or institution-, district-, provincial- and national level.

Furthermore, the policy commits to developing the competencies of teachers in order to facilitate the development of skills necessary to address the diverse range of learner needs they encounter (*ibid.*). Lazarus (2006, p.523) further advocates for the collaboration of community services and organisations to promote the well-being of school communities.

The Department of Education (1997, pp.48-49) identifies strategies and implications for the provision of ESS. Here a suggestion is made to “move away from only supporting individual learners to supporting educators” in order to achieve the aims of ESS. The main focus in the above-mentioned document is on the development of a wide range of competencies among the role players involved in different levels of the education system. It can therefore be argued that professional development is necessary to help develop these competencies, as is support from the community and parents involved with each school.

One manner of doing so is to use the existing structures of the Institution-Level Support Teams (ILSTs) where teachers can meet and discuss challenges they experience in the classroom (DoE, 2001, p.29). It is thus through collaboration that teachers can make use of opportunities to develop competencies and develop within their professional capacities. This may be particularly useful when teachers are confronted by a wide range of barriers to learning, situations to which L.O. teachers are frequently exposed. The structure of the ILST can therefore be used to support L.O. teachers as they encounter barriers to learning which extend further than the boundaries of the classroom.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

It can therefore be concluded that because of the challenges and needs expressed by GET L.O. teachers several years ago, there is a need for research into the current situation of L.O., and in particular, the FET band. In order for teachers to develop competencies and to experience psychological well-being, the current support needs of the FET L.O. teacher need to be investigated. It is by understanding the complex interaction between the symptoms of these teachers’ well-being and competencies that their mental health can be promoted. This will in turn provide opportunities to assist teachers develop skills and competencies, both emotional and professional, that can be used to promote well-being and resilience among their learners, thereby achieving the aims of Life Orientation.



Chapter three will now focus on the research process and discuss its various components in detail.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

As was discussed in chapter one, this study aimed at investigating the support needs of Further Education and Training Life Orientation teachers. This chapter will focus on the research process as it was presented in chapter one and describe how the researcher structured the research design in order to answer the research questions of this study. Furthermore, ethical considerations and issues of data verification pertaining to this study will be examined.

Before engaging in further discussion on the research process and design implemented, it is necessary to revisit the research questions which were formulated in chapter one. The research questions were as follows:

- What are the support needs of the FET Life Orientation teacher?
- In their perception, what challenges do L.O. teachers in the FET band identify as influencing their practices?
- What recommendations do FET L.O. teachers have for the sustainability of the subject?

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

As was discussed in chapter one, a paradigm is “a ‘basic set of beliefs that guides action’” (Guba, 1990 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.22) that is embedded within its philosophical orientation. A detailed discussion of the research paradigm of this study, namely the interpretive paradigm, requires that attention be paid to its philosophical positioning. It is therefore necessary to return to the discussion regarding the epistemology, ontology and methodology of the interpretive paradigm.

The question of ontology refers to “the nature and form of reality (that which is or can be known)” (Maree, 2007, p.53). The researcher must therefore ask herself what she believes about the nature of reality, as it is by answering this question that it is possible to determine the epistemology, or how this reality can become known through knowledge. Epistemology thus refers to the process in which reality and knowledge

become known to the researcher (Maree, 2007, p.55; Merriam, 2009, p.8). As explained in chapter one, this can be seen as the interaction between the researcher and knowledge which exists but needs to be 'discovered'. In contrast, the methodology of a study is the way in which the researcher approaches the question of epistemology and attempts to bring the unknown of reality into the known (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.22; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.6).

This can be seen in terms of the interpretive paradigm in the following ways: Ontology, or the nature of reality, can be seen as the belief that every individual has a socially constructed view of reality, and that "there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event" (Merriam, 2009, p.8). There can therefore, be no one objective reality. The implications of this for the epistemological dimension of the interpretive paradigm are that a process needs to take place where these multiple realities can become accessible. Maree (2007, p.55) highlights the importance of the subjective nature of reality within the interpretive paradigm, therefore implying that it can only become known by asking questions about reality and the meanings people attribute to events in their lives. Consequently, the process whereby knowledge can become known is interactive, particularly between researcher and research participant, and the contexts in which these participants exist play an important role as they influence the way in which the participants construct reality (Henning et al., 2004, p.20; Maree, 2007, 55). Therefore, if reality is subjective and can become known through the interaction between researcher and research participant, the methodology of the interpretive paradigm relies on specific methods that can facilitate this. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p.6) describe the features of the methodology within interpretive paradigms as being "interactional, interpretive and qualitative" in nature. Methods such as interviewing and observation therefore lend themselves well to the methodology of interpretive paradigms.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Considering that the research paradigm of this study has been placed within the interpretive framework, the research methodology of this study is qualitative in nature. The implication of this is that this study, and qualitative research overall, focuses on gaining increased insight and understanding into the processes and contexts which influence the teachers as research participants and how they make meaning of their

realities, and in particular, of their support needs in their role as FET L.O. teachers (Maree, 2007, p.51).

But what is qualitative research? According to Merriam (2009, pp.14-17), qualitative research can best be defined by its four main characteristics, as well as several other qualities distinct to this type of methodology. The four main characteristics include a focus on meaning and understanding on the way in which people make sense of their world; the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument of data collection and its analysis; the qualitative research process as inductive in nature; and it aims to provide a rich description of the research findings. In addition to this, the researcher needs to be flexible as circumstances concerning the research may change. Also, the sampling techniques used are usually more non-random in nature than in quantitative research, and the researcher is expected to spend more time in contact with the research participants or conducting fieldwork.

The importance of language in this process cannot be ignored. Language is often the medium used to communicate meaning and to facilitate the research process, be it in written or spoken language. It is also the medium through which a rich description of data can be given (Merriam, 2009, p.16).

Merriam (2009, p.21) further describes qualitative research as an umbrella term under which the different types of research fall. These include basic and applied research, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative analysis, action research and life history, with each type having a specific focus and aim (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.23; Merriam, 2009, p.22). The term 'strategy of inquiry' can also be used to refer to the type of research as both involve a set of practices which put the research paradigm into action.

The strategy of inquiry which was employed in this study can be classified as basic qualitative research. The central aim of basic interpretive research is to add to existing knowledge about a certain phenomenon, thereby increasing our understanding of it (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006, p. 44). This aim is achieved by attempting to understand the way in which the research participants construct meaning in their lives and how it influences their interpretations of their world. Merriam (2009, p.23) identifies three concerns of the basic qualitative study, namely "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they

attribute to their experiences”. The focus is therefore on understanding this process of meaning-making.

In order to address these concerns, the basic qualitative study commonly makes use of methods such as interviews, observation and the examination and analysis of documents during the data collection phase of research. The data are then used and analysed to identify recurring themes which become the research findings (*ibid*).

Durrheim (2006, p.44) argues that research can be further distinguished as being exploratory, descriptive or explanatory according to the goal of the study. The names of these types, or goals, of research imply their purpose. Exploratory research aims to explore areas about which little is known, while explanatory research aims to determine cause-and-effect relationships. Descriptive research, however, aims to “describe phenomena” accurately (*ibid.*). This study can therefore be classified as descriptive research as it aims to identify, describe and thereby understand the support needs of FET Life Orientation teachers.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

As discussed in chapter one, the research design of a study can be described as “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Durrheim, 2006, p.34). The research design is therefore a critical element of any study as it provides the outline of the planned research process in order to ensure that the methods employed will lead to the answering of the research questions. Furthermore, as was discussed in chapter one, Durrheim (2006, pp.37-39) identifies four principles which contribute towards design coherence and assist in answering the research questions. These include the purpose of the research, the context in which it takes place, the research paradigm, and the techniques used. Considering that the purpose, or aim, of the research, the research paradigm and the techniques, or research methods, of this study are elsewhere discussed, the context of the research will now be focused on.

#### **3.4.1 Context of the Research**

Durrheim (2006, pp.56-57) recognises the role that the context, or situation, of the research plays in decisions surrounding the research design. He argues that these decisions are influenced by the purpose and paradigm of the research as these affect the

degree of control that the researcher has over the context. Considering that this study can be classified as interpretive research, it can be said that “meanings can only emerge in social interaction”, the type of which is decided by the researcher (Durrheim, 2006, p.56). In the case of this study, this takes the form of focus group and individual interviews conducted in three different contexts. The control of the researcher is therefore limited to the structure of the interview guides and the questioning used to elicit meaning during the interactions.

Due to the fact that the research took place at three different sites, it is necessary to describe each site as a unique context within which meaning emerged. This has been described using Table 3.1. to represent the information accessed on the WCED’s *Find A School* website (<http://wcedemis.wcape.gov.za/wced/findaschool.html>), as well as that provided by the participating schools. It should, however, be noted that there are certain similarities between these sites, for example, all are high schools which fall within the boundaries of Metropole North of the Western Cape Education Department. Furthermore, information in Table 3.1 has been described in ratios and estimates in order to protect the identity of the schools involved, thus maintaining confidentiality.

**Table 3.1 Contextual data describing the three schools**

School	Language of teaching	Annual school Fees	Number of FET LO Teachers
S1	English and Afrikaans	R5000-R6000	4
S2	English	+R10 000	6
S3	English and Afrikaans	-R1000	7

### 3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods used were selected due to their coherence with the research design and questions. These methods include purposeful sampling techniques, three data collection methods and qualitative content analysis.

#### 3.5.1 Selection of Participants

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.25), the research design also serves to connect the researcher to information sources, including people and documents. The way in which the researcher makes contact with these sources therefore needs to be defined and discussed and links directly to the sample and methods of sampling

implemented during the research process, which is in turn determined by the research problem of the study in question (Merriam, 2009, p.83). Sampling is therefore the decision-making process that the researcher uses to choose and select the research participants for the study from the population at large (Durrheim, 2006, p.49).

This refers to the unit of analysis of the study which can be defined as the population that is focused on in the study and from whom data is collected. It is therefore the object of the study, and can be a group, individuals, organisations or artifacts (Bless et al., 2006, pp.72-73; Durrheim, 2006, p.41). As was discussed in chapter one, the unit of analysis of this study is a group, namely Life Orientation teachers, who work with learners in the Further Education and Training band.

As previously discussed, one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that forms of non-random or non-probability sampling are often implemented with small sample sizes (Merriam, 2009, p.16). There are various types of non-random sampling which can be used in qualitative research. These include purposive sampling; snowball sampling; accidental, availability or convenience sampling; and quota sampling (Bless et al., 2006, p.101; Durrheim, 2006, p.50; Maree, 2007, pp.79-80). Purposive sampling is one of the most common forms used when conducting qualitative research and is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p.77). It can be described as a process which facilitates this search for understanding through the identification and selection of information-rich sources so that relevant and valuable data can be collected to provide insight into the focus of the study and in answer to the research questions. The rationale behind which is that if the research participants are selected with a clear purpose in mind, a small sample can lead to data and findings which provide such insight more efficiently than a large, randomised sample (Patton, 2002, p.230).

In order to achieve this, criterion-based selection – often used as a synonym for purposive sampling – can be implemented. According to Merriam (2009, pp.77-78), formulating these selection criteria is the first step in purposive sampling. This involves stating the qualities or characteristics the researcher wants the study to investigate and then finding units of analysis which match those qualities and the purpose of the study. It is important to motivate the selection of the criteria.

The following criteria were formulated in order to facilitate the selection of the sample of this study:

- The sample was drawn from high schools and their Life Orientation departments within the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). This decision was reached as Life Orientation is a compulsory subject in all high schools. As a result of this, theoretically any high school within South Africa could be sampled, but due to reasons of convenience and the researcher's familiarity with the Western Cape, this province was chosen.
- The schools, and therefore L.O. departments, were to fall within the boundaries of the Metropole North Education District in the WCED. This decision was reached as this Metropole has a diverse range of schools within its boundaries, and was also easily accessible to the researcher.
- A sample of three schools and their Life Orientation departments was decided upon. The selection of the three schools was based on their differing access to resources and funding, their demographics and geographical location in order to increase the diversity of the sample. This information was accessed on the WCED website and is represented in Table 3.1.
- The L.O. department was selected as opposed to individually selected teachers from each school in order to gain increased insight into that particular school's context. By involving all the FET L.O. teachers at the school it is hoped that a realistic reflection of each L.O. department's support needs can be identified and understood. Therefore, three L.O. departments were selected, and a total of fourteen FET L.O. teachers participated in the study.
- The teachers who participated in the study had to teach L.O. in the FET band at their particular school on a full- or part-time basis. Because the focus of this study is on the FET band, the teachers who only taught in the GET band at the schools were not part of the sample.
- Following the focus group interviews, two teachers were sampled to participate in semi-structured individual interviews. These teachers were sampled as they represented salient cases, or as topics had not been adequately explored during the focus group interviews.

Table 3.2 presents the biographical information of the research participants.



**Table 3.2: Biographical data of research participants**

<b>Metropole Education District</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Grades Taught</b>	<b>Capacity/ Role at School</b>	<b>Years teaching Experience</b>	<b>Training in L.O.</b>
North	S-1	P-1	40	Female	Matric, Personal Trainer	Gr. 8-12	Responsible for Learning Outcome (L.o.) 3, sport organiser	8 years	Movement studies, sport coaching
		P-2	60	Female	BA (HDE)	Gr. 10-12	Responsible for L.o. 1,2 and 4, administrative duties, career and other counselling	33 years	Undergrad. training in counselling psychology and counselling practice
		P-3	27	Female	BSc	Gr. 10-12	Teaches L.O., Consumer Studies and Life Sciences.	5 years	None
		P-4	59	Female	BA (HDE)	Gr. 8, 10	Teaches L.O. and Afrikaans. Supervision of IT lab	33 years	Undergrad. training in counselling psychology and attended PACE workshop
North	S-2	P-5	29	Male	BA (Sports Science), PGCE	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and EMS, head of cricket, rugby coach and deputy head of athletics	4 years	PGCE with L.O. didactics and Sports Science undergrad training
		P-6	45	Female	HDE	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O., school counsellor, hockey manager and head of swimming	21 years	Worked at pilot school when L.O. was introduced, professional development and workshops
		P-7	55	Female	BA (Social Work)	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and school counsellor	2 years	Undergrad training in psychology, sociology and social work
		P-8	25	Female	BA Human Sciences, PGCE	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and Afrikaans, hockey coach, function organiser.	4 years	Undergrad training in psychology, PGCE with L.O. didactics
		P-9	39	Female	BA (HDE)	Gr. 8-12	Deputy principal, teaches L.O., Subject Head for L.O.	17 years	In-service training on O.B.E., ACE in L.O. and professional development

Education District	School	Participant	Age	Gender	Qualification	Grades Taught	Capacity/ Role at School	Years teaching Experience	Training in L.O.
North	S3	P-10	34	Female	BSc (HDE)	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O., Afrikaans and English	8 years	*
		P-11	46	Female	BA (HDE), BEd	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and English	24 years	*
		P-12	40	Female	HDE (Human Ecology)	Gr. 8-12	Acting Deputy Principal, HoD for LO, teaches consumer studies and LO	18 years	In-service training from WCED
		P-13	*	Male	BA (Sports Science)	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and a second, unspecified subject	*	*
		P-14	36	Male	BA (Social Sciences), HDE	Gr. 8-12	Teaches L.O. and a second, unspecified subject	8 years	*

\* Information not provided by participant in the biographical information section of the reflective notes

### **3.5.2 Methods of Collection and Analysis**

The methods used to collect data during the research process need to be congruent with the research paradigm and methodology of that study. Due to this study being classified as basic, interpretive research, interviews, observations and the analysis of documents lend themselves well to the nature of such qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). As was outlined in chapter one, the following data collection methods were used during the research process: reflective notes, focus group interviews with the three L.O. departments and semi-structured individual interviews with two teachers. The remainder of this section will discuss the procedures implemented in accessing the research participants and offer an audit trail of this process, as well as discuss the specific methods of data collection and analysis.

#### ***3.5.2.1 Procedures***

Permission to conduct research in the three schools sampled was requested from the Western Cape Education Department. Permission was granted by the Director of Research Services at the WCED, Dr Cornelissen (see Addendum A). The schools were then contacted telephonically by the researcher and faxed a letter describing the research envisioned (see Addendum B for an example of such correspondence). After the school principal had been consulted and had consented to the research, the staff were approached to gain their verbal consent to participate in the research. Application was also made to the Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University and permission was granted to conduct the study (reference number 363/2010).

Thereafter, appointments were made with each school's L.O. department where the consent forms and reflective notes were discussed. Follow-up appointments were then arranged and held for the focus group interviews, after which the two individual interviews were scheduled and conducted.

#### ***3.5.2.2 Data Collection***

As was stated in chapter one, the researcher and research participants co-construct a narrative together, be it in the form of the individual, semi-structured interview, or the focus group interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.696). It is also important to remember that one of the characteristics of the interpretive research paradigm is its interactional

nature, therefore implying this co-constructive nature of data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.6).

- **Reflective notes**

Reflective notes were used as a tool for data collection as a way to ask the research participants open-ended questions in order to gain insight into their way of seeing their world (Patton, 2002, p.21). Furthermore, open-ended questions allow the research participants to contemplate a question and respond to it from their own world-view, experience and beliefs, thereby granting the researcher access to that which was most salient to the participant at that time (Patton, 2002, p.354). Considering that open-ended questions allow such contemplation and insight into the reality of the participant, this tool was included as a research method in the form of written reflective notes.

The inclusion of reflective notes using open-ended questions was decided upon as a way to stimulate thought and reflection of the participants regarding their roles as FET L.O. teachers (see Addendum E). This data was then used to help formulate the interview guide which was used during the focus group and semi-structured individual interviews. This provided the researcher insight into the way in which the research participants made meaning of their roles as L.O. teachers and possible focus areas.

- **Focus group interviews with the L.O. departments**

It is not possible to observe the research participant's values, attitudes and perceptions, or their past behaviours and meaning-making processes. These are unseen aspects, and can only be accessed by asking questions. The aim of interviewing is thus to gain insight into these aspects and the research participant's perceptions. This can be done in various ways, including individual and group formats (Merriam, 2009, p.88; Patton, 2002, p.341). It is important to remember that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research, an aspect which is particularly noticeable when using interviews as a data collection method. This is because the skill of the interviewer largely determines the quality of the data collected through the use of interviews (Patton, 2002, p.341).

Focus group interviews can be described as a small group of people who come together to talk about a specific issue and are usually sized between six to ten participants. The

aim of focus groups can be summarised as being to elicit good quality data within a particular context (Patton, 2002, pp.385-386). It allows the research participants the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas about issues they have in common, but do not necessarily communicate or talk about to each other (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004 in Merriam, 2009, p.94). This is of particular relevance to the focus of this study of teachers' support needs. It may be taken for granted that all schools have regular subject-related meetings and strategic planning during which their support needs are discussed, yet it is not necessarily standard practice. The focus group interviews therefore gave research participants an opportunity to hear one another's perceptions and needs. This in itself helped to facilitate an environment where colleagues could voice their concerns and be heard in a safe environment.

Focus group interviews are further characterised by the systematic way in which the researcher asks pre-determined questions in a formal setting. Focus group interviews are therefore usually structured and directed by the researcher. In addition to this, these types of interviews are flexible and allow the researcher to follow thoughts or ideas despite their structured nature. The researcher therefore plays an important role as it is in the way that he or she facilitates the group processes and dynamics, as well as his or her ability to be flexible and listen, that affects the quality of data (Fontana & Frey, 2005, pp.703-705).

Focus group interviews were included as a research method for various reasons. These include their flexibility to follow through on thoughts voiced during the process, as well as to stimulate such thought processes (Fontana & Frey, 2005, pp.704-705). In addition to this, these types of interviews often highlight certain themes which are of particular value to the aim of this study (Patton, 2002, p.387). Furthermore, focus group interviews are described as being valuable in triangulation (see data verification on page 66) and as being compatible with other research methods. Their inclusion therefore allowed the researcher to triangulate data gathered using the individual interviews and the written reflective notes (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.704).

This process was facilitated by a limited number of questions and probes which were posed to the group during the interview (see Addendum F). The interviews were all tape recorded, enabling the researcher to observe group dynamics and non-verbal communication, thereby increasing data through the availability of field notes.

- **Semi-structured individual interviews with selected teachers**

Semi-structured individual interviews are conducted with the help of a general interview guide in order to facilitate a conversation that is purposeful and aimed at asking questions related to the focus of that particular study (Merriam, 2009, pp.87-88). Merriam (2009, p.89) describes the nature of semi-structured interviews, highlighting the use of previously prepared questions and areas to be explored during the interview which are flexible so as to allow the researcher to clarify uncertainties and enable a less rigid and formal interview situation. This assists the researcher in maintaining consistency between interviews of research participants, while allowing a measure of freedom to probe and clarify for more information-rich data.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with two teachers selected from the sampled L.O. departments, thus allowing the researcher to explore any salient ideas identified during the focus group interviews. This also allowed the researcher to explore any other topics which were omitted during the first two phases of research. Furthermore, it provided the researcher with increased insight into the focus of the research – namely the teachers’ support needs. Addendum G provides a copy of the general interview guide which was formulated to facilitate the individual interviews.

### ***3.5.2.3 Data Analysis***

As was stated in chapter one, this study made use of qualitative content analysis in order to make sense of the data collected. The way in which qualitative content analysis was applied in this study will now be discussed.

Open coding refers to the first step in an inductive process used when the researcher initially reads through the available data and then begins to locate units of meaning and attempts to name them. The aim of this is to identify any patterns or themes within the data. The coding, or labelling, of themes needs to be flexible as meaning is not fixed in a small segment of words, but needs to be seen in light of the overall meaning of the particular data at hand (Henning et al., 2004, p.104; Neuman, 2000, pp.421-422). The process generally moves from more concrete themes to increasingly abstract ones due to the influence of theoretical concepts and the availability of more data (Neuman, 2000, p.422).

Neuman (2000, p.422) suggests that after the process of open-coding has been completed that a list of themes from the data should be compiled. This aids the researcher in creating a 'database' of themes which can be added to or consulted during further analyses and may contribute to the recognition of themes as they begin to emerge.

The next step in the data analysis process is to categorise the codes identified during the open coding phase. Categorisation refers to the grouping of codes that seem to be connected, the naming of which is often influenced by theory (Henning et al., 2004, p.105). Categorisation then helps to inform a more holistic view of the data which can then be used during interpretation and discussion of data. Henning et al. (2004, p.106) suggest a list of questions to ask oneself at this stage in the process, including:

- “What are the relationships in meaning between all these categories?
- What do they say together?
- What do they say about each other?
- What is missing?
- How do they address the research question?
- How do these categories (together) link with what I already know about this topic?
- What has been foregrounded in the analysis?
- What has moved to the background?
- What additional data gathering and/or analysis have to be completed?”

This process is similar to that of axial coding where questions are asked which aim at checking the depth of the descriptions and making connections between themes (Neuman, 2000, p.423).

Finally, the themes that were identified during the analysis process are discussed systematically and become an argument that is given in answer to the research questions (Henning et al., 2004, p.107).

The *Miles and Huberman Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis* follows a similar process to the above. There are three elements to the process, namely “data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions”. Data reduction correlates with open coding, while data display assists in managing and organising the volumes of data in a systematic manner (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp.10-11). An example of a table used to display the data in codes and themes have been included as Addendum J to assist

the discussion of the research findings. This facilitated the third element of the above approach, and correlates with the final stage of the qualitative content analysis process as previously described.

The data analysis which was implemented in this study followed a similar process to that discussed above.

- The first step in the data analysis process was to transcribe all the interviews verbatim. The transcribed interviews were then made into hard copies and stored safely at the researcher's home. Three of the interviews were conducted in English, while two were transcribed in Afrikaans. It should be noted that where relevant, any Afrikaans quotations used to present the data were translated into English by the researcher and then checked for accuracy by a language teacher. For an example of a transcribed and coded interview, please refer to Addendum I.
- The interviews were then read through several times, after which a process of open coding was implemented where units of meaning were identified and coded using one to three word phrases. A database was created where these codes were tracked. Codes were adjusted when necessary due to increased insight and information. An example of a data display table which was used to manage some of the data is presented in Addendum J.
- The reflective notes first completed by the teachers were also added to the data, as were the reflections and field notes of the researcher. A process of open-coding was also implemented here.
- This was followed by categorisation where relationships and themes were identified. These themes and categories were revised as the process of data analysis progressed, leading to a final list of themes and categories. These were then used as the basis of the argument for the findings of these studies from which conclusions were drawn.

### **3.6 DATA VERIFICATION**

Merriam (2009, p.209) advocates the importance of “producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” when conducting qualitative research. The ethical considerations made in the research process will be discussed in a subsequent section,



while this section will focus on data verification issues as relevant to this qualitative study.

The terms reliability and validity are familiar and relevant to quantitative research, but less so to qualitative research due to its subjective nature. Instead, terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are often used in reference to increasing a qualitative research study's trustworthiness and rigor (Golafshani, 2003, p.601; Merriam, 2009, p.211; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p.2). Merriam (2009, p.229) identifies several strategies which can be used to do so, including triangulation, peer examination, an audit trail, as well as engaging with the data, reflexivity and the use of rich descriptions. It is, however, first necessary to describe the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability before engaging in a discussion on how the above mentioned strategies were applied in this study.

### **3.6.1 Credibility**

Credibility is qualitative research's equivalent to quantitative research's term of internal validity. While internal validity refers to the congruence between research findings and reality, credibility acknowledges that reality is subjective and that there are many perspectives which influence it. Credibility is therefore the correspondence between the way in which the researcher interprets and presents the research findings and the meanings and perspectives of the research participant (Merriam, 2009, pp.213-215). Strategies which can be implemented to promote credibility include triangulation, the use of member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, discrepant case analysis, reflexivity and peer review (Merriam, 2009, pp.216-220; Shenton, 2004, pp.64-69).

### **3.6.2 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency, or reliability, of research (Golafshani, 2003, p.601; Shenton, 2004, p.71). Because of the basic assumptions of qualitative research, reliability is an inappropriate term to apply due to its focus on being able to repeat a study's findings in later research (Merriam, 2009, p.220). Dependability in qualitative research therefore aims to see whether a study's research design can be used in other studies and what procedures have been followed. This allows one to assess if a study has made use of best practices and if its findings can be considered to be 'reliable' within this context (Shenton, 2004, p.71). Strategies which can be implemented to foster

dependability are triangulation, peer review, reflexivity and the use of an audit trail (Merriam, 2009, p.222; Shenton, 2004, pp.71-72). The focus is therefore on auditing both the research process and the final product in order to determine if there is consistency (Golafshani, 2003, p.601).

### **3.6.3 Transferability**

While credibility is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research, transferability is equivalent to external validity. Considering the nature of qualitative research and the sample sizes involved, the issue of generalising research findings becomes difficult (Merriam, 2009, p.224). Merriam (*ibid.*) suggests that “we need to think of generalisability in ways appropriate to the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research”, namely that findings of research can be transferred to certain other contexts if the contextual influences are documented in the research in question and are applicable to other situations (Shenton, 2004, p.70). Merriam (2009, pp.227-228) identifies strategies which can be implemented to promote the transferability of research findings, including using thick, or rich, descriptions of data and the use of maximum variation in the sample.

### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the issue of neutrality, or objectivity (Seale, 1999, p.468; Shenton, 2004, p.72). Considering the subjective nature of qualitative research, efforts need to be made to encourage the researcher to take his or her own predispositions into account and consider how this may influence the research process (Patton, 2002, p.569; Shenton, 2004, p.72). Shenton (2004, p.72) emphasises the importance of ensuring that research findings reflect the meaning intended by the participants, rather than the preconceptions of the researcher. Strategies which can promote the confirmability of research therefore include triangulation, an audit trail and reflexivity.

### **3.6.5 Data Verification Strategies**

As is evident from the above, data verification strategies play a significant role in the research process. The strategies which were applied and taken into consideration in this study will now be discussed.

### ***3.6.5.1 Triangulation***

Triangulation is a commonly used strategy to increase the credibility of a study in both qualitative and quantitative research (Merriam, 2009, p.215). Patton (2002, p.247) describes triangulation as a manner of increasing a study's credibility by using "multiple methods, measures, researchers, and perspectives". This correlates with the four types of triangulation suggested by Denzin (1978 in Merriam, 2009, p.215) which highlights the use of different sources of information, or data. Triangulation can therefore be used to promote the credibility of research as it increases the congruence of the researcher's findings with reality as the correlation between the findings from different methods, sources and perspectives can increase 'internal validity' (Merriam, 2009, p.215; Shenton, 2004, p.64).

Triangulation was applied in this research study in two ways, namely methods triangulation and triangulation of sources (Patton, 2002, p.556). Three different methods were used during the data collection process, including reflective notes, focus group and individual interviews. Data from these different methods was then triangulated in order to identify and validate themes. Also, different members of the Life Orientation departments were given opportunities to share their perceptions on their support needs, thus allowing the researcher to triangulate data from different sources.

### ***3.6.5.2 Audit Trail***

The audit trail is an account of decisions and descriptions of the research process, with a particular focus on data -collection and -analysis (Merriam, 2009, pp.222-223). Merriam (2009, p.223) describes the audit trail as a "running record of your interactions with the data as you engage in analysis and interpretation". Chapters three and four of this research report act as an audit trail for this research study as the research process and data analysis are described in detail. Furthermore, data is presented in the forms of tables and quotations and is complemented by the addenda attached to demonstrate the processes implemented. An audit trail therefore seeks to explain how the research findings were arrived at and promotes confidence in the findings (Richards, 2005 in Merriam, 2009, p.223).

### ***3.6.5.3 Peer Examination***

Considering that this study was conducted to complete the thesis component of a Masters' degree, supervision and review is an inherent part of research and data verification processes. Furthermore, the final product will be reviewed by an external examiner. Peer review and examination is seen as a data verification strategy as it provides the researcher with the opportunity to receive feedback from others in the form of different perspectives, as well as suggestions on areas of concern or strengths (Merriam, 2009, p.220; Shenton, 2004, p.67).

### ***3.6.5.4 Reflexivity***

As was discussed in chapter one, the researcher is a central figure in the research process. The implication of this is that the researcher needs to reflect on his or her own beliefs and assumptions, and consider how these may influence the research process and his or her interpretation of the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp.22-26; Merriam, 2009, p.219). In order to demonstrate reflexivity, my position and beliefs are discussed where relevant throughout this research report.

## **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics are an important part of the research process, particularly when the research involves human beings. As a result of the nature of such studies, the ethical considerations made are strongly associated with the ethics guiding the practices of health care professionals with a focus on human rights. Considering that the researcher's training has been within the field of Educational Psychology, it is important to engage in a discussion on research ethics and the ethical considerations taken into account in this study from this exit point. The main ethical considerations which were made in this study included obtaining approval from the organisations involved, gaining informed consent from the research participants, and ensuring the confidentiality of these participants' privacy.

One of the first guidelines offered to psychologists when conducting research is that of institutional approval. This entails gaining the consent of the organisations involved (DoH, 2006, pp.41-42). Obtaining institutional approval was one of the first steps taken in this study's research process. The researcher applied for permission to conduct

research in schools with the WCED, after which the individual schools were contacted and their permission obtained. Furthermore, this study went through a process ethical clearance with the Ethical Clearance Committee at Stellenbosch University after which permission was granted to conduct the study (see Addendum C).

The second issue taken into consideration was that of informed consent (DoH, 2006, p.42). Informed consent is based on one of the four basic principles of ethical decision-making, namely autonomy which is closely related to respect for human dignity (Wassenaar, 2006, p.67). Autonomy refers to people's ability to make their own decisions provided that they do not harm others (Allan, 2008, p.112). The implications of this principle for research ethics are that the research participant has the right to any information which is needed to make a decision about their involvement in the research. Participants therefore need to have access to information explaining the extent and nature of their involvement and have this information explained to them in a clear and understandable manner. The Department of Health (2006, p.42) offers a list of eight guidelines for informed consent and these can be summarised by the four components of informed consent as compiled by Wassenaar (2006, p.72). These include the "(a) provision of appropriate information, (b) participants' competence and understanding, (c) voluntariness in participating and freedom to decline or withdraw after the study has started, and (d) formalisation of consent, usually in writing". These components were present in the informed consent form used for participants, as were the guidelines offered by the Department of Health (see Addendum D).

A third ethical consideration based on the principle of autonomy is that of confidentiality (Wassenaar, 2006, p.67). Confidentiality rests on the participants' right to privacy, meaning that efforts need to be made which protect that person or organisation's identity. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to explain to the participants if disclosure of information will take place and how this will happen. It is therefore important that the participants have all the relevant information explained to them so that they can exercise their autonomy and make a decision regarding their involvement in the study (Allan, 2008, pp.292-293). Efforts were made to protect the identities of the individual teachers and organisations involved by allocating codes to each. Schools were coded S1, S2 or S3, while participants were coded numerically, for example, P1. Confidentiality and disclosure were explained to the participants verbally and in the

informed consent form. Furthermore, raw data were only handled by the researcher and were checked by her supervisor, further safe-guarding the identity of those involved in the research.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on discussing the research paradigm and -methodology, as well as the research design and how it attempted to answer the research questions of this study. In addition to this, the ethical considerations made in the study and issues of data verification were discussed. The findings of the research will now be presented and discussed in chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

As was discussed in chapters one and three, this research study aimed at answering the following primary research question:

- What are the support needs of the FET Life Orientation teacher?

In addition to this, the following secondary questions were posed:

- In their perception, what challenges do L.O. teachers in the FET band identify as influencing their practices?
- What recommendations do FET L.O. teachers have for the sustainability of the subject?

This chapter will present the data according to the themes and categories identified during the process of qualitative content analysis and discuss the findings. These findings will then be interpreted in terms of existing literature in answer to the research questions. A summary of the themes and categories which emerged during data analysis is presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Themes and Categories**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
1. Lenses through which FET LO teachers view their practices	Roles and responsibilities of the teacher Learners' needs Emotional and professional competencies Processes to equip teachers
2. The challenges experienced in the practice of teaching L.O.	Contextual and in-school factors Perceptions of and attitudes towards L.O. Resource needs Lack of core competencies Broad curriculum Departmental decisions
3. Perceived support	Current support Recommendations for the way forward

## **4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The research findings will now be discussed according to the themes which emerged during data analysis. These four themes reflect the subjective realities of the FET L.O. teachers involved in the study and their perception of their support needs. The data presented in the subsequent sections is taken from the three sources of data generated during the data collection process, namely the teachers' written reflective notes, the three focus group interviews, and the two individual interviews conducted with Schools 1 and 2.

### **4.2.1 The Lenses through which FET Life Orientation Teachers View their Practices**

The Life Orientation teachers who participated in this research study had definite views about the subject as well as about important teacher characteristics which influenced their frames of reference regarding L.O. in the Further Education and Training band. These views ranged from what qualities and skills L.O. teachers need to meet the responsibilities of their many roles to the importance of professional development. These will now be discussed under the appropriate categories.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the Teacher***

A perception expressed during interviews at all three participating schools was one of the wide range of roles played by the FET L.O. teacher. This can best be described in the words of Participant 8 (P-8): "We are so much more than teachers."

This perception was reinforced by several teachers who identified specific roles they perceive L.O. teachers as fulfilling which exceed that of being teacher or mediator of the curriculum. The roles identified by the participants range from offering support and guidance, to promoting healthy life-styles and building capacity among learners.

"I see myself as more of a facilitator, a counsellor maybe. More than anything else – not a teacher." (P-11)

"I don't actually see my role here as teacher. I actually see my role as offering guidance and support." (P-2)

[Ek sien my rol hier nie eintlik as onderwyseres nie. Ek sien my rol as rigtingwyser en ondersteuner.]



The L.O. teacher as facilitator is one role which recurred consistently between the three schools, as was that of offering advice or perspective on learners' problems. Furthermore, School 1 emphasised the influence that a school's community and context has on the role played by the L.O. teacher. According to this school, the responsibilities and roles of the teacher increase when learners are not supported by their parents or community. It would therefore seem that L.O. teachers carry a weight of roles and responsibilities which exceed their capacity of being teachers, resting the responsibility of supporting learners on teachers' shoulders.

“In our environment, being a L.O. teacher is not about being a teacher. You're the mother, you're a shoulder to cry on, you're 'Teacher, what do I do in this situation?'" (P-3)

[In die omgewing waar ons is, is om 'n L.O. onderwyseres te wees is nie om 'n onderwyseres te wees nie. Jy is die ma, jy's die skouer om op te huil, jy's 'Juffrou, wat maak ek in die situasie?']

The influence of these contextual factors on L.O. teachers' support needs will be further discussed under a later theme.

Not only are L.O. teachers in the FET band more than teachers, but not all teachers can be Life Orientation teachers. This perception was expressed by all three schools, indicating that these teachers are of the opinion that L.O. teachers seem to require certain traits in order to be effective. Several traits were identified as being important to these L.O. teachers, including empathy and compassion. Participant 9 summarised this trait in the following way:

“The heart is at the centre of all of this... If you don't have the heart, then you're just teaching another academic subject.”

In addition to empathy and compassion, L.O. teachers need to be open and approachable to promote an environment where learners feel it is safe to share their problems. The relationship between teacher and learner is therefore an essential foundation, as is the teacher's ability to be in touch with the learner's frame of reference and their world. It is thus the responsibility of the teacher to cultivate a safe classroom environment where learners can reach out and share their fears, dreams thoughts and values while feeling understood and heard. It is the teacher's responsibility to create a space in which learners can give a voice to their concerns.

“If you’re a L.O. teacher, you can’t be the type of person that’s not open. The kids must be able to feel comfortable to come to you after the lesson and to tell you about the problem. I mean, I think that’s one of the most important things I think about L.O. teachers.” (P-8)

“I think it’s important not to forget that we were also young, and what seems to us to be small, is their whole world.” (P-3)

[Ek dink dis baie belangrik om nie te vergeet dat ons ook jonk was nie, en wat vir ons klein (onbelangrik) lyk, is hulle hele wêreld.]

Furthermore, according to the three schools, a L.O. teacher needs to be authentic and non-judgemental. Being non-judgemental is a way in which the teacher can further promote a safe classroom environment which makes being open-minded and unbiased important. In addition to this, being honest and authentic with the learners is important in building a trusting relationship which in turn facilitates sharing. Trust is therefore a crucial part of the Life Orientation classroom and is a responsibility which lies in the hands of the teacher.

“You can have all the information in the world, but if you don’t have the heart, and you don’t have the trust of the kids...” (P-9)

The L.O. teacher’s personal belief in the subject and its importance is a pattern which emerged across all three schools. School 2 likens this belief to being passionate about L.O. and how this can influence the way in which others view and value the subject. The views of the participating teachers can therefore be summarised by the following participant’s statement:

“You must actually also want to teach and you must love the subject.” (P-12)

It is therefore evident that the L.O. teacher needs to believe in the value of the subject. The implication of this is the idea that L.O. plays a significant role in a learner’s education, and that the teacher is responsible for the success of the subject. A further implication is that the teacher needs to develop an awareness of how their attitude and interest in the subject can influence others’ perceptions of it.

School 2 takes this idea to another level, as in their perception, L.O. teachers are

“the most important teachers in the school.” (P-9)

This attitude centrally places FET L.O. teachers in the school indicating their perception of the importance of the subject, the influence they have in the school community and

the responsibility associated with such a position. This responsibility can be linked with one of the objectives for L.O. as identified by all three schools, namely to help equip learners for adult life and the decision-making and responsibilities connected to this. This further reinforces the importance of L.O. as a subject in the current curriculum, particularly in the FET band where learners are but a few years away from entering the adult world and society as citizens with personal and civic responsibilities.

A further aspect identified by the three schools as important to being a L.O. teacher was that of life experience. When asked what qualities were needed by L.O. teachers, the need for teachers to have life experience recurred consistently. School 2 reported that L.O. is a difficult subject to teach if the teacher lacks some life experience, while School 3 indicated that life experience is needed to help relate to learners' varied frames of reference. School 1 identified life experience as an important source for skills development which in turn influences one's teaching practices. The benefit of having some life experience can therefore be summarised by saying that this has the potential to equip teachers with more 'life skills' and empathy with which to support and understand the learners they teach.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Learners' Needs***

Learners' needs were centrally placed in all the interviews conducted across the three schools. The data therefore suggests that teachers emphasise the importance of L.O. in meeting learners' current and future needs, and the teacher's role in facilitating this.

The teachers identified several objectives they aim to reach in their presentation of the curriculum. These include the teaching of life skills, the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, health promotion and self-awareness. The over-arching aim expressed by the teachers was future-orientated, with teachers being concerned about assisting the development of responsible young adults who are able to function in society and make informed decisions. The data indicated that teachers feel responsible for the development of these skills and attitudes, and measure their success in achieving these objectives.

“To answer that question about our aim: they [need to be] well-rounded, functioning young people that must walk out of that front gate. Otherwise, we haven't done our job.” (P-6)

This is, however, complicated by the learners' attitudes. School 3 highlighted the difficulties they have with some groups of learners who do not want to learn. Furthermore, many learners reportedly have a negative attitude towards L.O., making the work of the teacher more challenging. The attitudes and perceptions of learners regarding the subject will be discussed further under a later theme (Perceptions of and attitudes towards L.O.).

Combined with the teacher's sense of responsibility for developing skills needed for life outside of the school community, is the need for learners to leave school having developed such skills. The teachers identified the importance of having to equip learners for the decisions associated with entering into adult life, for example, career choices and being prepared for the job market, the implications of which are that learners need to be equipped for their futures, and the school is often the only place where they are supported in this way. The FET L.O. teacher therefore shoulders the responsibility of satisfying the needs of a vulnerable adolescent population who are constantly confronted with a range of possibly life-changing decisions.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Emotional and Professional Competencies***

The three participating schools identified several professional and emotional competencies which FET L.O. teachers need to develop. There was consensus between School 1 and 2 who both suggested that the best place to learn these skills was at schools and by doing "hands-on training" (P-4).

In terms of professional competencies, there is a wide range of skills which need to be developed. These competencies include subject knowledge, teaching methodologies and classroom management skills. A recurring pattern was the idea that L.O. teachers need to be flexible and able to adapt the content of lessons to the particular group of learners being taught. The implication of this is that the teacher needs to have sound subject knowledge and sufficient knowledge of different teaching methods which can then be applied to individual class groups to have the maximum impact.

"When you're dealing with a variety of learners, and the subject is very topical and very life relevant, often enough the context changes from class to class. And if you aren't able to read the class, and strategically adjust your teaching method, you actually may not engage that group of learners." (P-5)

The teacher therefore also needs to be able to have sound knowledge of the assessment standards involved in each learning outcome in order to be able to appropriately select relevant topics to a particular school's context. And once this selection has been made, relevant examples need to be used in class so that learners are able to engage. This links to the importance of L.O. teachers being in touch with learners and their frames of reference so that the subject becomes real to them.

“You need to know the curriculum very well, because like I said, you need to make it applicable and relevant to the learners that you teach.” (P-14)

In addition to this, classroom management is important. In order for L.O. to be meaningfully presented, there needs to be interaction between the learners themselves, and between the teacher and learners. The relationship between teacher and learner is therefore of the utmost importance.

“You can't be a teacher that wants the kids to just sit quietly... Just sit there and not move, just listen and not say anything. It mustn't be chaos in your class, but I mean, you can't have that very formal, strict lesson with them in L.O.” (P-8)

As has been previously mentioned, subject knowledge is an important professional competence. Although the teachers recognise the importance of being able to teach all four learning outcomes, suggestions and practices imply that each teacher has individual competencies and may find it easier to teach certain aspects of the L.O. curriculum. The way in which teachers are managed as human resources is therefore of significance. One participant suggested that:

“I'd like to see us reach the point where, like other schools, you use the expertise of each and every individual teacher.” (P-11)

School 2 has already implemented such practices in terms of planning as different teachers' competencies have been identified and their expertise is used in developing lessons and assessment tasks for the learning outcomes. This was described in the following way:

“I think we have a lot of strengths, and we have our weaknesses. But we've organised or designed our work and our schedule, the way we manage things, to complement each other.” (P-9)

It is, however, important to acknowledge that although the different teachers have individual competencies, there is a need to develop into specialist L.O. teachers. As will

be discussed under the theme of challenges, there are certain aspects of the curriculum which are currently not fully developed in that not all teachers feel equipped to teach each learning outcome.

The FET L.O. teacher needs to develop certain emotional competencies in order to function effectively. Basic counselling skills were identified as important skills across the three schools and include empathy, listening and communication skills as well as other traits previously discussed. These traits include being non-judgemental, open and creating a safe and trusting classroom environment. These skills and traits are all qualities of therapeutic relationships and were identified as important as they create an environment where learners feel safe to share. In addition to this, the use of self-disclosure can also be beneficial when earning learners' trust and facilitating class discussions.

In addition to these skills, School 1 discussed the importance of being able to maintain objectivity and to stay emotionally uninvolved. This plays an important role in helping teachers cope with the range of problems brought to them by learners as this helps to maintain healthy boundaries within the relationship.

“This may sound strange, but I think that the one important quality we need to have is the ability to keep a distance.” (P-3)

[Dit mag dalk snaaks klink, maar ek dink die een belangrike kwaliteit wat ons moet beskik, is die vermoë om afstand te behou.]

Furthermore, School 2 identified reflection and personal growth as important emotional competencies to be developed. Reflection was described as both a personal and a group activity. Individual reflection can serve as a means for personal growth and development, while reflection as a department or group creates opportunities to work more efficiently.

#### ***4.2.1.4 Processes to Equip Teachers***

A pattern that emerged across all three schools was the need for processes to keep L.O. teachers in the FET band up-to-date with developments in research, the labour market and tertiary education options. Several processes were identified as being important to equip teachers for the changes taking place in society and to help meet the challenges of

teaching as broad a subject as L.O. According to one participant, the need exists for teacher development as:

“There’s no way that university prepares you for what waits for you at a school, especially if you’re a L.O. teacher (laughter). There’s no way.” (P-8)

The first process identified by the three schools as implicit in the development of teachers as professional and personal beings is that of life-long learning. According to another participant at School 2:

“I believe that you’ve got to learn from the cradle to the grave. And whether it is to learn how to cook, or how to be a good married partner, or to learn how to become an accountant, or how to prepare for your catechism. I promote life-long learning that doesn’t stop when you leave school. You need to learn different things in the different phases of your life.” (P-9)

The implication of the above statement is that there are many facets to learning and to being a person. The teacher therefore needs to develop the different facets of his or her life, and not only the professional role of teacher where the emphasis falls on facilitating learning in other people. This is necessary as being a teacher involves being a person first, particularly because of the nature of the topics covered by the Life Orientation curriculum. It is therefore important for the L.O. teacher not to stagnate in the various areas of his or her life.

As was previously discussed, life experience is viewed as being important. A word of warning was, however, expressed by Participant 9:

“As you get older, you can go one of two ways. You can either stagnate and become a terrible L.O. teacher, or you can continue to grow.”

Various ways were identified in which L.O. teachers can continue to grow, and the value of informal learning opportunities is not to be underestimated. School 1 acknowledged these informal opportunities and emphasised the role which being open to learn from one’s colleagues and learners can play. Furthermore, the process of preparing for lessons and engaging with the available learning material may present opportunities for incidental learning.

“I don’t think that there’s anything that can prepare you for this. There’s nothing. What I know, I learnt from them (gestures to colleagues). And from the learners – I learn an incredible amount from the children.” (P-3)

[Ek dink nie daar is enige iets wat jou hiervoor kan voorberei nie. Daar is niks. Wat ek weet, het ek by hulle geleer (wys na kollegas). En by die kinders - ek leer ongelooflik baie by die kinders.]

This links to the concept of collaboration which was a recurring pattern between the three schools. What became evident was that although not all the schools experienced opportunities to collaborate with other schools or L.O. teachers, there seemed to be a need to increase such opportunities.

“Greater collaboration between L.O. educators would definitely help in skilling us in how to deal with the children. And also strengthen ourselves in terms of our subject knowledge and our grasp of the curriculum.” (P-14)

“I also think that sharing with schools makes a really big difference... I mean, people come up with brilliant ideas and we’re all in the education department – we don’t have to re-invent the wheel. You don’t have to work as an island.” (P-6)

There was not only an expressed need to collaborate and interact with other schools, but the importance of collaboration within a school’s L.O. department was also identified. School 2 seems to have processes in place where their L.O. department can reflect and brainstorm together, while School 3 identified this as a need in their school. Collaboration can therefore be seen as a type of informal life-long learning where opportunities are created for teachers to learn from one another in a non-threatening, meaningful way. This will be discussed further under the theme relating to the challenges experienced by the schools.

All three schools recognised the importance of keeping up-to-date in a subject which has many components and where there is a constant influx of new developments and information which needs to be carried over to the learners. Two areas which were identified as being particularly important to keep current with were issues relating to health promotion, for example, new research into HIV/AIDS, as well as careers and the changing tertiary education entrance requirements. In addition to this, opportunities for in-service training or professional development were identified as important in equipping the teacher in presenting L.O. effectively.

“I need to know what this new drug’s about, what does it look like? How am I going to learn that? I mean the new developments in HIV. Keep us up to date, keep us up-skilled all the time. And that’s what’s lacking.” (P-9)



School 2 argues that participation in such training opportunities is important for personal and professional development. All three schools agree that workshops and courses can be helpful in developing subject knowledge and assisting teachers in dealing with the diversity of problems brought to them by learners. In addition to this, the teachers identified several core areas where they feel they lack training and competence. These will be discussed under the theme of challenges.

#### **4.2.2 The Challenges Experienced Along the Journey**

The three schools identified several challenges which act as barriers to FET L.O. teachers. It is important to understand these challenges and to view them as opportunities for the development of support aimed at meeting teachers' needs.

##### ***4.2.2.1 Contextual and In-School Factors***

Several in-school and contextual factors were identified as being challenges by the three schools. These factors influence teachers' experience of L.O. and therefore need to be addressed as support needs. A range of in-school challenges exist, with a primary challenge being human resource management and staff allocation.

All three schools stated the importance of having L.O. departments comprised of specialist L.O. teachers. Several motivations were offered for this, including the manner in which a specialist department contributes to the value attributed to the subject. Although this will be discussed further under a subsequent category, the lack of dedicated L.O. departments with specialist teachers is a definite challenge to the effective and meaningful addition of L.O. to the curriculum. In addition to this, the lack of specialist L.O. teachers influences the quality of the subject and its presentation.

“So [Life Orientation's] seen more as a whole, not just a subject where 20 teachers have one period each. It's a full department with full-time teachers. That goes a long way towards the perception of how important the subject is.” (P-6)

A further challenge experienced by departments who do not have specific staff allocated are administration difficulties. Meetings are difficult to plan and are often not well attended. Planning and the implementation of work schedules is also complicated and not effective. As a result, the subject may be perceived as being disorganised and badly

co-ordinated, thereby adding to existing negative perceptions surrounding the subject in schools where this is a problem.

“How do you co-ordinate 13 peoples’ marks for assignments, for practicals? How do you co-ordinate it? Because every person writes their marks on a small piece of paper, and that all needs to be put together at the end of a term.” (P-2)

[Hoe koördineer jy 13 mense se punte vir take, vir prakties? Hoe koördineer jy dit? Want elke persoon skryf sy punte op ‘n klein stukkie papier en dit alles moet saamgevoeg word aan die einde van die kwartaal.]

The challenges surrounding human resource management and staff allocation reach further than this. As previously discussed, these teachers were of the opinion that one needs to believe in the value of the subject and have certain traits in order to be good a L.O. teacher. However, staff allocation is often based on the number of periods a teacher has available as opposed to their expertise. School 3 identified this as being a real concern, particularly as L.O. is the first subject affected if a post is lost due to a reduction in government subsidy.

“L.O. is just given to people to just fill that little gap on the timetable – which is not fair.” (P-12)

“So that there are more lady teachers teaching L.O., and most of them were thrown there – not because they wanted to be there, but they didn’t have the choice.” (P-13)

A further effect of human resource decisions is the influence this has on the development of a team culture within the L.O. department. It is difficult to create a team culture which can offer emotional support to its members if there is no stability within the team and if trust is not present. This has implications for teachers’ job satisfaction and sense of belonging in the school community.

“Or you lend something, and you never get it back. So then you don’t want to do it again.” (P-10)

Aside from the human resource decisions, other contextual factors can also influence the experience of L.O. teachers and their support needs. All three schools identified the influence of their school’s context and community on the role the L.O. teacher needs to fulfil in each school. School 1 identified the lack of support in their learners’ support systems as being a definite influence on the support they offer. They identified the lack of parental support, issues such as teenage pregnancy, and the diversity of their

community as some of the challenges they deal with most often. The result of these contextual factors is a department consisting of teachers who identify their role as that of being parents and having increasingly active participation in the meeting of learners' needs by accompanying them to the doctor or providing food and clothes. Life Orientation teachers therefore perceive themselves to be responsible for a variety of elements of learner development and well-being, with the support offered to learners exceeding the capacity of teacher. This in itself can be emotionally taxing as learner support, in the perception of these L.O. teachers, falls solely on their shoulders.

In addition to these in-school and contextual factors, macro-level decisions as well as personal attitudes also contribute to the challenges identified by the three schools. The relevant data will be discussed shortly.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Perceptions of and Attitudes towards L.O.***

The three schools identified similar perceptions and attitudes towards L.O. that present challenges to the subject and which they feel need to be addressed in order to support not only the needs of the FET L.O. teacher, but the subject itself as well. Various perceptions and attitudes were identified including those of the Department of Education, teachers in general, and learners.

According to all three schools, the Department of Education plays a vital role in the way the subject is perceived. School 1 and 3 identify perceptions which they feel negatively affect L.O. and the work L.O. teachers do. School 1 was of the opinion that the Department of Education is not recognising the value that L.O. has to learners and society. A particular concern of this school was the fact that the subject does not count towards university entrance or contribute towards a learner's final mark in matric, and that the implication of this is that L.O. is denied the full status of a subject. Furthermore, because of these dynamics, the teachers feel that the effort and preparation they put into their classes is not recognised. This negatively influences the way in which they perceive the Department as valuing L.O. teachers. This will be discussed further under a later section.

“I think it's not just the school, it's the whole Department who thinks that L.O. is just there, it's just a subject. I mean, just the fact that it doesn't count as a matric subject, and that if a child excels in it, that it doesn't count towards university or technikon entrance, tells me that they don't

realise how important it is. They don't realise how hard those teachers work." (P-1)

[Ek dink dis nie net die skool nie, dis die hele Departement wat dink L.O. is maar net daar, dis net 'n vak. Ek bedoel, die blote feit dat dit nie as 'n matriekvak tel nie...en dat as 'n kind daarin goed doen, dit nie vir hom tel as 'n vak om universiteit- of tegnikonkeuring te kry nie, sê vir my dat hulle nie beseft hoe belangrik dit is nie. Hulle beseft nie hoe hard daardie onderwysers werk nie.]

School 3 was of the opinion that L.O. is not taken seriously as a subject and that this affects its status. The effect of this is that schools are not motivated to appoint L.O. specialists and that learners perceive the subject as inferior.

"The children, for some reason, don't take it seriously as a subject. But when you look at it, it does seem to come from above as well. It seems as though the Department also doesn't take it too seriously as a subject." (P-14)

"The children don't see it as important. And according to me, it's one of the most important subjects on their timetable. They don't see it as important. And they come to you with that attitude." (P-11)

Another teacher at School 3 reinforced the notion of learners' negative perception towards the subject. She further emphasised the importance of staff allocation and appointing teachers who want to teach L.O. as the teacher's attitude plays a significant role in the way it is perceived by learners. This idea was supported by School 1 who also highlighted the effect the teacher's attitude can have on L.O.

"You tend to have people in L.O. that don't really care about the subject, or they just see it as 'Ag, just another subject'. So you have meetings, you call meetings, and the people just don't come because it's not important to them – it's just the subject that I need on my timetable." (P-12)

"Like what P11 said, you must actually also want to teach and you must love the subject. You must make it exciting, the kids must be able to relate to you also. Are you with me? Because some kids, they see L.O. as just 'Ag, it's just another subject'." (P-12)

School 2, however, reports positively about the perception of L.O. in their school, emphasising the role that the L.O. teacher plays in achieving this. It can therefore be summarised that L.O. teachers are one of the most essential change agents who can work towards improving the perceptions regarding the subject – with the support of the Department of Education.

“I think that because we’re such a strong team and we work very well together, we’ve raised the level of L.O. (group assents). How it’s perceived by others... So the value of the subject is being seen by the other subjects in the school.” (P-9)

It is not, however, solely the attitudes and perceptions of L.O. teachers that are significant.

“Do you know what the other challenge is? Some of the teachers.” (P-11)

All three schools recognised the role the whole staff plays regarding the perceptions of the subject. Misconceptions about L.O. seem to exist in terms of what is supposed to happen in L.O. classes and what is taught. Furthermore, these misconceptions further influence the status of the subject within a school, and may lead to it not being recognised as a full subject and the notion that any teacher can present it.

“What I’ve experienced so far on this staff is that they really think that we do nothing. They think that we walk into class and that it’s an off period for the kids, or that they play in the hall. And anyone can do it, because L.O.’s just sex education. Anyone can talk about that.” (P-3)

[Wat ek nou al ervaar het van die personeel, is dat hulle dink regtig ons doen niks. Hulle dink dat wanneer ons in die klas instap dit ‘n afperiode vir die kinders is, of hulle speel in die saal. En enigiemand kan dit doen, want dis sommer net seksvoorligting. Enigiemand kan daarvoor praat.]

#### **4.2.2.3 Resource Needs**

Although each of the three schools experiences different degrees of resource needs, all were able to identify several resources as being critical to the support of FET L.O. teachers. The first of these resource needs is that of human resources. As previously discussed, there is a need for specialist L.O. teachers to be employed by high schools as opposed to teachers being allocated a handful of L.O. periods or classes to ‘fill’ their teaching load.

“They can’t make the L.O. staff allocation after they’ve filled all the other subjects perfectly. And then those teachers who have some periods left are the ones who must teach L.O.. Because then you get people who have a completely different subject area. You get a Maths guy who now needs to teach a grade twelve class, and I mean, he just lets them do whatever because he has no interest in the subject. It’s not his priority.” (P-2)

[Hulle kan nie die L.O. aanwysings maak nadat al die ander vakke mooi gevul is nie. Dan is die onderwysers wat periodes oor het dié wat L.O. moet gee. Want nou kry jy mense uit totaal ander vakgebiede. Jy kry die

Wiskunde-ou wat nou 'n Graad twaalf-klas moet onderrig, en ek bedoel, hy laat hulle aangaan, want hy het geen belang by die vak nie. Dis nie sy prioriteit nie.]

Staff allocations therefore need to be made according to teacher expertise as well as their interest and regard for the subject. Such human resource decisions would further benefit the L.O. department as a whole as stability will be increased and relationships can develop between colleagues.

A second human resource need was identified by all three schools – the employment of a school counsellor or social worker. All three schools acknowledged that learners often approach the L.O. teachers who are seen as counsellors and a source of help. The schools reported that there are many problems they do not feel equipped to deal with and need to refer. This indicates to a further skills gap in counselling skills and will be discussed further in the subsequent section.

“The learners bring serious problems to you, and I think to myself: I’m not a social worker. But, as P2 said, we help where we can, and if we can’t, then we refer.” (P-4)

[Die leerders kom met ernstige probleme na 'n mens toe, dan dink ek: Ek’s nie 'n maatskaplike werkster nie. Maar, soos P2 gesê het, ons help maar, en as ons nie kan nie, dan verwys ons.]

Aside from these human resource related needs, the teachers in these schools identified several tangible resource needs. Schools 2 and 3 identified the need for spaces in which to have L.O. School 2 expressed a specific need for the availability of specific L.O. classrooms where resources and visual media could be stored and displayed. School 3, on the other hand, has a need for space in which to conduct Physical Education. In addition to the need for the space in which to conduct it, School 3 requires more equipment that can be used during Physical Education. It is difficult to offer this particular learning outcome without the appropriate space or equipment and is further complicated by the fact that tasks for it count 25 percent towards learners’ term marks.

Access to, and availability of, technology and computer labs was another pattern in the data. In terms of challenges and technology, School 3 discussed their difficulties in accessing the school’s existing computer labs to run programmes such as PACE or Teen Active, or to do administration. The teachers were frustrated by the availability of these

potentially helpful programmes, but the lack of access to the computers required to use them.

There is a range of challenges regarding learning material for L.O. All three schools made several suggestions for the improvement of learning material which will be discussed under a later theme. Although a multitude of textbooks are on offer and sample copies are regularly provided to schools, masses of material often arrive at schools which can overwhelm teachers. Selecting appropriate material is therefore sometimes difficult.

“I don’t want more material because it’ll just confuse me. The publishers regularly supply us with masses of books that can be used to help with assignments and tests and stuff. I feel that I have too much, I forget about half of it anyway. You mustn’t have too much.” (P-2)

[Ek wil nie meer inligting hê nie, want dit sal my net deurmekaar maak. Die uitgewers voorsien ons gereeld van massas boeke wat jy as ondersteuning kan gebruik vir take en vir vraelyste en goed. Ek voel ek het te veel, ek vergeet van die helfte. Jy moenie te baie hê nie.]

In addition to this, the material provided is sometimes out-of-date and not relevant to the school’s context. This links to the previously discussed issue of teachers wanting to keep up-to-date on developments and research linked to the multitude of topics covered by the L.O. curriculum. The learning material on offer therefore needs to be updated frequently to avoid becoming irrelevant.

“Some of the current resources they have on the market are good, but they are out-dated.” (P-9)

Furthermore, all three schools identified the need to have information suited to the developmental phase of their learners, with a balance of visual supplements, text and exercises and activities.

Although challenges exist regarding current learning material, a further challenge involves selecting one book to use per grade in a school. School 3 reported that they work in isolation, with each teacher making notes and photocopies of different books for their individual classes. There are therefore inconsistencies in the content provided to learners which complicates the matter of the assessment of tasks.

“We also need paper because there is no specific book. Everybody is using their own little books, you use this book, I use that one.” (P-12)

Not only do challenges exist in the quality and relevance of current learning materials and the use thereof, but access to other resources and media (and the time to do so) is limited. School 2 identified the importance of having access to a resource centre such as EDULIS. Unfortunately, for this to be an effective option, EDULIS needs to keep its stock up-dated to ensure that the L.O. information is current and useful.

#### ***4.2.2.4 Lack of Core Competencies***

Several skills gaps, or lack of competencies, were identified by the three participating schools. These can be divided into two types, namely professional and emotional competencies.

The first competency gap involved the need for the development of basic counselling skills or some training in psychology. Teachers report that learners often approach them with problems that the teachers feel unequipped to deal with. The expressed need for training in counselling therefore indicates two important aspects. Firstly, the learner often has no outside access to a mental health provider who can be approached if problems are experienced and advice is sought. The L.O. teacher therefore acts as a trusted and accessible source of help. School 3 emphasises their need for:

“some counselling background, or some up-skilling in terms of counselling or how to help out, how to be there for them when they need that.” (P-14)

Secondly, the teachers reported that they need to develop certain competencies involving basic counselling skills in order to facilitate class discussions and create a safe environment in which to do so. As previously discussed, these skills include listening and communication skills, a non-judgemental attitude, empathy and so forth.

The second professional competency gap was identified as being the lack of training in Physical Education. All three schools recognised learning outcome three as being an important area for development, particularly as this component of the curriculum is weighted for 25 percent of a learner’s term mark.

“I don’t think that everybody has the background of sport – the knowledge of it. There is some stuff in the books, but that is not enough because we need more than that.” (P-13)



Aside from the effect that the lack of the technical knowledge has on effectiveness of that learning outcome, there are implications for the self-efficacy of the teacher who feels unable to offer this outcome.

“My shortcomings, for example, are all about sport. I see myself as an effective teacher. I can facilitate, I can do group work in the classroom – but don’t take me onto the sports’ field. To me, that’s so draining. I try to avoid the practical part as far as possible.” (P-11)

“I am completely unsure of myself when I have to teach this part of L.O. because I don’t like it, I can’t teach it, and I don’t have the training to do it. I will never feel comfortable with learning outcome three.” (P-2)

[Ek is totaal onseker van myself as ek hierdie gedeelte van L.O. moet gee, want ek hou nie daarvan nie en ek kan nie dit gee nie en ek het nie die opleiding nie. Ek gaan nooit gemaklik voel met leeruitkomste drie nie.]

The following exchange with this participant during School 3’s focus group interview emphasises the effect that a lack of competency can have on teachers:

P11: But when it comes to sport, that’s my, that’s my, what’s the word?

P14: Achilles’ heel?

Researcher: Area for development?

P11: My area for development.

Researcher: You described it as being very draining. How do you cope with it?

P11: How do (emphasis) I cope? (seems to question self) Well, you come to school (laughs) feeling uptight, and you leave angry (laughs again).

The lack of professional competencies can therefore have an effect on teachers’ coping strategies, and consequently, their emotional competencies. This was again emphasised by participant 11 who asked:

“I would like to hear from my colleagues how they cope. Because I’m not - I’m honestly not coping. I feel like a failure as teacher, and as the year progresses, I just feel less and less in control.” (P-11)

Although School 3 was the only school in the sample who reported a challenge regarding the lack of emotional competencies, possible reasons why the other two schools did not perceive this as a challenge will be presented under the theme of support.

#### **4.2.2.5 Broad Curriculum**

The first demand that L.O. puts on teachers is related to the depth and breadth of the subject. The four learning outcomes are perceived by all three schools as being very broad, the implication being that the subject's curriculum and content require teachers to have a wide subject knowledge. In addition to this, teachers need to be able to provide depth of knowledge in differing degrees to the different grades they teach.

“And you sometimes struggle through all these things, because it's such a broad syllabus. You have to deal with so many different things. I really see it, to be an L.O. teacher, is one big challenge.” (P-11)

School 1 recognised the breadth of the subject and linked this to a challenge previously discussed, namely the perception that the Department of Education does not give the subject full status.

“We were speaking about L.O., it's an incredibly big subject, it's so wide. But the Department doesn't actually recognise it as a subject...It's just a subject that's pushed to the side.” (P-3)

[Ons het gepraat oor L.O., dis 'n ongelooflike groot vak, dis baie wyd. Maar die Departement erken dit nie werklik as 'n vak nie...Dis net 'n vak wat na die kant geskuif word.]

The breadth of the subject is closely linked to the difficulties experienced in standardising L.O. A key concern and challenge perceived by the participating schools was the of the lack of standardisation in the L.O. assessment tasks and curriculum. School 1 and 3 in particular stated a clear need for the subject to be standardised in order to have more clarity on the Department of Education's expectations.

“All of us must do the same thing at the same time, working from the same resources, the same textbooks... It must be standardised. That's the big thing. As it is now, each of us does our own little thing, and they use that as an excuse not to have an external examiner at the end of matric. Which to me is nonsense.” (P-11)

“We do need a greater sense of direction, and we do need direction from those who make decisions about the curriculum and its content.” (P-14)

Both School 1 and 3 further identified this absence of standardisation as being a challenge to the subject as a whole. The inconsistency and open interpretation of the assessment standards and practices of different schools was emphasised as being detrimental to L.O. rather than beneficial. School 2, however, recognised the difficulty

of standardising a subject which is so broad and where assessment standards can be adapted to a school's unique context.

“You have to adapt the topic to the class. And I think that's what I like about L.O., the topics are not specific: the outcomes are, and the assessment standards are, but the topics you chose to use as a vehicle to meet the outcomes is very broad. However, there is no consistency from school to school...There's no standardisation. And because it's so wide, it doesn't allow for standardisation.” (P-9)

#### ***4.2.2.6 Departmental Decisions***

As has been previously discussed, the participating FET L.O. teachers perceive their practices to be influenced by macro-level decisions, as well as perceptions and attitudes regarding the subject. Furthermore, all three schools recognised the critical role played by the Department of Education, both nationally and provincially, in supporting the development of L.O. and in addressing their support needs.

As previously stated, Schools 1 and 3 experience the Department's attitude towards L.O. as being misconstrued and that the Department's perceptions negatively affect the status of the subject in the eyes of schools, teachers and learners. In the participants' perception, this is reflected by indecisive policies regarding pass requirements for the subject and a lack of clear direction. The following decisions, or courses of action, were identified as being significant to these teachers and their support needs.

School 1 was explicit in their desire to have consistent decisions made with regards to pass requirements and to have policy thoroughly thought through before being implemented. School 1 was also of the opinion that steps need to be taken by the Department to recognise L.O. as a full subject by taking it into consideration for final matric marks and university entrance criteria. These teachers felt that the route to achieving this lies in the standardisation of the subject and its assessment tasks to promote consistency country-wide.

School 2 lamented the lack of cluster meetings and moderation opportunities. This school viewed such meetings as opportunities to collaborate and increase their subject knowledge and expressed a need to fulfil this.

“And it's actually sad for us that the department, and this is the way I feel, that there's no more clusters. Because we've learnt enormous things from clusters.” (P-9)

The data therefore seems to indicate a need for Departmental decisions to advocate the importance of the subject and for support to be put in place to increase the status of the subject.

### **4.2.3 Perceived Support Along the Journey**

The three schools identified various aspects of their current school dynamics which, in their perception, provide support for their needs. In addition to this, all the schools made suggestions and recommendations for the way ahead for FET L.O. teachers. This data will be presented according to their perceived current support and then their recommendations.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Current Support***

All three schools were able to identify support which they currently experience. It should, however, be noted that School 1 and 2 perceive themselves to be well supported and as having few school-related needs unmet, while School 3 perceives their situation to be relatively unsupported.

The first and most apparent need identified by all three schools was that of having specialised L.O. teachers being allocated to teach the subject, with the knock-on effect of then developing a specific L.O. department. School 1 and 2 are in the process of achieving this, while School 3 has a fragmented L.O. department with approximately 13 staff who teach the subject. Both Schools 1 and 2 identified having a stable and consistent L.O. department, or team, as being a large source of support. This support has both administrative and emotional implications.

In terms of administrative support, both schools reported that different team members are responsible for a certain grade's planning and work schedules. Both schools have a team leader or head of department who oversees this and ensures that the work is carried out. Because the workload is shared, each teacher knows what his or her responsibilities are and what to expect.

“And the team is very important for support, to work together, make sure that the things get done, pull in the tough times, celebrate in the good times. Pat each other on the back.” (P-9)

The benefits of the team became clear when the two departments spoke of the emotional support experienced by being a member. According to both schools, the team functions as an emotional support network.

“We’re each others’ support network. If I get stuck, I go to them.” (P-3)

[Ons is mekaar se ondersteuningsnetwerk. As ek vasdraai, sal ek na hulle toe gaan.]

Furthermore, a department can promote job satisfaction by valuing team members’ contributions and recognising that person as a person.

“If the team feels valued, we all, we’re happy in our job. And I think you need to pick up when a team member is not 100 percent or if something’s happened. And support. And it’s amazing how it makes that team member a happy team member – the support.” (P-9)

“Once the team has established their goals and are aware of who our leader is, and we’re all supporting each other, it makes your teaching experience far more fulfilling. Your job satisfaction is way up there.” (P-5)

School 1, however, emphasised that support outside of the school is also important as one needs a place to go where one can off-load. This is not only good for oneself, but the learners as well.

“We need to try to put distance between home and school. You need to have good emotional support at home, but if you don’t get it, then you need to be able to leave it at home and support the kids when you’re at school.” (P-3)

[Ons moet probeer afstand plaas tussen die huis en die skool. Jy moet goeie emosionele ondersteuning tuis hê, maar as jy dit nie kry nie, behoort jy die vermoë te hê om dit tuis te los en die kinders te ondersteun as jy by die skool is.]

School 2 took the concept of a team a step further. This school emphasised the importance of having good team structures in place and having a strong leader. Furthermore, the importance of having a team vision was highlighted. They reported that their team culture has promoted the status of L.O. within their school and has had a ripple-effect throughout their school community. In their perception, L.O. is being increasingly valued by both staff and learners in their school.

“When the team, with the right leadership, and when the team shares a goal, the total impact that L.O. has is quite phenomenal” (P-5)

One of the ways that School 2 feels they have achieved this is in the way they utilise each team member's competencies and support their areas for development. Each team member is therefore valued and treated as an individual.

“What is nice about the core of the L.O. department is we have different competencies. Some are stronger or weaker in certain things, and what we're not doing is shutting somebody down because they have a weaker area. What we're doing is: okay fine, he has, or she has, a different skill that we are going to work on. So we complement each other's shortcomings, skills. So that's why it's nice that we work as a team.” (P-9)

Aside from the existence of a team or L.O. department, both Schools 1 and 2 reported that they have good relationships with the school principal and School Management Team (SMT). The implication of these relationships is that the department has a platform to voice their needs to the decision-makers in their school. In this way, the department's needs can be met and the subject can be recognised as having value to its school community. This in turn helps L.O. teachers to feel acknowledged.

“I really have excellent co-operation, and you know, maybe that's why I feel so at home here. I got what I asked for, and they listened to what I said.” (P-2)

[Ek het werklik uitstekende samewerking, en weet jy, dis miskien hoekom ek so tuis voel hier. Wat ek gevra het het ek gekry, en hulle het geluister na dit wat ek gesê het.]

“Management must give the team space to grow and offer the support. If you have ideas, come and share it... It helps to have someone on management to push your vision.” (P-9)

School 2 further feels that they have the added advantage of their team leader being a member of the SMT, giving direct voice to their needs. They therefore further emphasise the role and stance that the team leader needs to take:

“One thing: a leader who doesn't take no for an answer. When we asked for a budget, when we asked for help with certain things, that was taken to management level, it was taken to governing body level.” (P-6)

School 1 identified a further level of support to their L.O. department – namely that provided by the staff of their school. In School 1's perception, this source of support is of particular significance in light of their school's context. School 1 experiences their school's community as being very diverse and affected by many societal problems. The

L.O. department is therefore acknowledged by the school for the role they play in supporting the learners, and the staff has empathy for the work they do.

“We’re a well bonded staff. And everyone who substitutes here, the first thing they comment on is the immediate acceptance and the overwhelming support. Through thick and thin.” (P-2)

[Ons is ‘n hegte personeel. En almal wat hier afgelos het, het eerstens ‘n aanmerking gemaak van die onmiddellike aanvaarding en oorweldigende ondersteuning. Deur dik en dun.]

School 1 identified a further source of support in their department as the employment of a staff member who specialises in learning outcome three. The department acknowledged their personal difficulties in presenting this outcome, and used their channel to the SMT to request the appointment of a specialist teacher. This support was provided and has had a positive effect on the rest of the department’s experience of teaching L.O.

“I fought to get someone to teach the physical part, and I got it. And it works fantastically.” (P-2)

[Ek het geveg vir iemand om die fisiese deel te gee, en ek het dit gekry. Dit werk uitstekend.]

In addition to this, all three schools are supported by having sufficient time being allocated to the subject on their timetables. School 1 further described the support offered by their exam timetable and how this is structured to allow the L.O. department enough time to mark all their exam papers.

Sources of support were also identified outside of the direct school community. School 1 and 2 identified their relationship with the curriculum adviser as being a generally positive one which serves as a link between their schools and the Western Cape Education Department. Both schools stated that their curriculum adviser was available when necessary. Further support could, however, be offered by increased communication and contact from the Department of Education’s side.

An overall support which was identified by Schools 1 and 2 was the availability of professional development activities. In particular, they reported that there are frequent opportunities for teachers to attend workshops based on learning outcomes three and four which help teachers to develop professional competencies. This is perceived positively as it is focused on the “training of the untrained” (Participant 9).

#### **4.2.3.2 Recommendations**

The three schools identified a range of support needs which they felt need to be addressed to the benefit of both teachers and learners. As a result of this, the following recommendations were made based on their support needs:

As was discussed under the previous section, staff allocation and the development of a stable L.O. department is of utmost importance in terms of support needs. School 2 recommended that the Department of Education put policy in place that emphasises the importance of appointing qualified, specialist L.O. teachers at schools. Participant 9's concern is that if such policy is not established that appointments will continue to be made which put L.O. at a disadvantage. The Department of Education therefore needs to support the subject by advocating for the employment of L.O. teachers and encouraging specialisation.

“I think that they need to put policy in place that forces schools to choose the right people, that L.O. is not just taught as a filler. That L.O. is taught by people who are passionate about it.” (P-9)

Once staff members have been allocated to teach L.O., the next step in the process is to encourage a cohesive department. When asked how she would go about creating a L.O. team or department at a school, Participant 9 responded in the following way:

“I think that you need to start with someone that has the passion. The passion and the love first. And once you have a key person and you can share ideas and inspire other people, and like-minded people will then be drawn together. And eventually you will have a team of like-minded people and then it's about how we can learn together and it's fine. It doesn't matter if you don't know everything. We'll learn together.” (P-9)

The role a team leader or Head of Department plays is therefore of great significance as a fledgling department requires some guidance and vision. School 3 wholeheartedly supports the initiative of developing a stable, consistent L.O. department as they have a need to create cohesion and team work among their L.O. teachers to provide emotional and practical support.

School 2 has further recommendations regarding staff allocation. One participant suggested the use of mentors and mentees to help orientate new staff to a school's way of working, and to support newly qualified teachers in the challenges of being an L.O. teacher. Not only would this help in addressing the support needs of new staff, but it



would also assist in the further development of a team culture where co-operation is valued.

Recommendations were also made concerning the training of new L.O. teachers. The general opinion of Schools 1 and 2 was that due to the broad nature of the subject's curriculum, teachers-in-training would benefit from increased exposure to L.O. in the classroom. This suggestion was made as these teachers felt that it is impossible to adequately prepare students for the realities of L.O. without practical experience.

All three schools further emphasised the importance of the allocation of support staff to high schools by the Department of Education. Such staff include social workers and school counsellors. Presently there seems to be an emphasis on providing school counsellors to primary schools, but School 2 highlighted the importance of offering this support to the vulnerable adolescent population.

Several recommendations were made to increase opportunities for collaboration and interaction with other L.O. teachers, as well as to create more occasions for professional development. School 2 had an interesting suggestion concerning the introduction of an annual 'open day' or conference aimed at L.O. teachers. The idea behind the suggestion was that this would provide teachers with the opportunity to be exposed to the latest research and media and resources available for the teaching of L.O., while at the same time presenting an opportunity for professional developments. This suggestion was compared to the similar conference offered to English teachers by the WCED.

“And it could be a full day conference. It could be a one day thing where you pack everything in, and then feedback and questions and address the information and the resources that we need all the time. But also address their professional growth. Make it certified, a certificate attached for your attendance.” (P-9)

A second recommendation was made by School 2 to further opportunities for collaboration and interaction between L.O. teachers, namely the creation of a forum or a discussion group to establish a community of teachers. This could be achieved by creating an online forum or blog where teachers can share resources or experiences, thereby facilitating collaboration.

“Support from the Department would be having a community of educators who have a forum to share on a regular basis where we get together, we make the work available maybe on a site so we've constantly got

availability of drawing resources from one another. And posting and sharing. And even a discussion group so that it forces people to look at what level the other schools are at.” (P-5)

Moderation and cluster meetings were also described as valuable by School 2 for the same purpose. All three schools advocated increased communication between schools and the Department of Education, and cluster meetings provide such opportunities. There was also an all-round need and recommendation for increased opportunities for professional development. This recommendation stemmed from the frequent statements regarding the changing nature of the subject, making it a necessity that L.O. teachers stay up-to-date with the latest research.

In terms of learning material, all three schools recommended that learning materials and textbooks be supported by visual resources and supplementary information on CD format. It was reasoned that this would help reinforce learning by appealing to a different learning style and help make the topics more real to learners. School 3 had further recommendations for learning material:

“It shouldn’t be just text-based, there should be resources that come with whatever book, and it should also outline activities. That would help with approaching certain topics and help reading into the other resources, supplementary resources surrounding that topic. So, a book has got to be comprehensive. But it’s also got to be very practical and useful, and should come with other supporting materials.” (P-14)

In addition to this, School 2 suggested that the use of workbooks, supplemented by textbooks, is the way forward. Such workbooks allow learners time to reflect in class on their thoughts, attitudes and values, and allow the teacher the flexibility to create such opportunities.

In addition to this, Schools 2 and 3 recommended the establishment of a resource centre to which L.O. teachers have access. Such a resource centre could possibly be created online so that teachers can access the information during school hours. Alternatively, EDULIS can be up-dated so that its stock is appropriate and up-to-date. School 2 also suggested that a centralised electronic mailing list be created where publishers and other suppliers of educational media can inform teachers of new material and information which can be purchased.

Based on the above mentioned recommendations, and a previously discussed challenge regarding the lack of access to technology, it was suggested that L.O. teachers need access to computers and the internet.

Recommendations were also made directly concerning the Department of Education and the Western Cape Education Department. All three schools suggested that they would appreciate increased communication between the Department and schools. School 1 emphasised the importance of feedback regarding evaluations and acknowledged the availability of their District Office in times of need. School 2 valued the contact and visits conducted by the Department and seeks more opportunities to do so as this keeps the school in touch with changes concerning the subject.

There was also consensus around the value of a degree of standardisation of the subject. School 2 acknowledged the difficulties of achieving this, but Schools 1 and 3 strongly recommended standardisation. Suggestions were made regarding the selection of one or two textbooks by the Department of Education which could then be used by schools. The benefits of this, from these two schools' perspectives, are that tests and examinations could then be standardised and consistency between schools across the country increased. This could then possibly lead to the recognition of a learner's achievement in the subject with regards to university entrance.

“I think that there needs to be one or two prescribed textbooks, because then they can start to have external exams or tests.” (P-2)

[Ek dink daar moet een of twee voorgeskrewe handboeke wees, want dan kan hulle begin om eksterne eksamens of toetse te hê.]

There was also a strong recommendation by Schools 1 and 3 to increase the consistency of the Department's expectation and policy regarding the requirements of the subject. School 1 identified the changing pass requirements as a frustration and would like to see a decision being reached on what percentage learners need to pass the subject, and for this decision to be final.

“About the subject in general, and I know other schools struggle, is that the Department mustn't initially say that the subject is so important and make it compulsory, and then after short while change the requirements. That's what makes it inferior.” (P-2)

[Wat die vak in die algemeen betref, en ek weet ander skole sukkel, is dat die Departement moenie oorspronklik sê dat die vak so belangrik is nie,

en dat dit 'n verpligte vak is, en dan verander hulle kort-kort die vereistes nie. Dit maak dit minderwaardig.]

School 3 reinforced this need for clarity and direction from the Department. Clarity and leadership therefore need to be provided by the Department of Education concerning pass requirements, assessment tasks, the possibility of standardisation and the focus of the subject. Teachers also need to be well-prepared regarding any possible changes of the subject in the near future.

“We wouldn't be in the situation where we often we feel as if we're floundering in terms of what we should be focusing on or how we should be focusing our attentions if they had a clearer idea of what they wanted us to do and achieve. So, ja, without pointing fingers, that is one possible reason why we sometimes sit with our head in our hands.” (P-14)

### **4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Considering that this research study has been founded within a framework of positive psychology, the interpretation and discussion of the research findings will be structured within this perspective. This section of chapter four therefore focuses on placing the research findings into the context of literature and the theoretical framework. The recommendations of this study and those of the participants have consequently been presented in chapter five in reflection on the study and with thoughts as to the way forward. *In other words, data will be referred to in both chapters four and five.*

Before commencing the discussion of the research findings, it is first necessary to revisit the study's problem statement within the context of its theoretical framework. This research study aimed to investigate and understand the support needs of Life Orientation teachers in the Further Education and Training band in order to improve support offered to these individuals with the ultimate objective of optimising the impact of the subject. These teachers were identified as key role players in the success of the subject as it is the way in which L.O. is presented and perceived that influences the subject's ability to reach its potential.

Literature, however, identifies several challenges to the successful implementation of the subject with an emphasis on the role played by teachers in achieving this. Not only this,

but contextual factors also play a role, namely the school community and macro-level processes. Life Orientation therefore exists within a context and is therefore influenced by the dynamics between these role players. It is thus important to consider the influences on the FET L.O. teacher's experience in terms of these dynamics and factors and to understand that the teacher, the school (its leaders, other teachers and learners), the community in which the school exists and the Department of Education are all involved. It can therefore be summarised as follows: there are in-person, in-school community and wider contextual factors at play when investigating the support needs of FET L.O. teachers. These influences therefore need to be understood in order to provide meaningful support to these teachers and to address their needs.

As was discussed in chapter two, this study can be placed within a positive psychology framework as L.O. can be seen as an approach which focuses on developing learners' strengths and competencies. Furthermore, in order to achieve this, teachers' competencies and strengths also need to be supported. Life Orientation within a framework of positive psychology therefore emphasises that it is "not only about how to alleviate distress, treat illness, and repair weakness, but also how to facilitate well-being, promote health, and build strengths" (Joseph and Linley, 2006, p.6). This correlates with the subject's objectives and the literature's concern regarding the need to develop certain teacher competencies in the L.O. classroom. Therefore, both teachers and learners need to develop positive strengths.

This, however, happens within the context of positive institutions, one of the three focus points of positive psychology. In other words, those qualities which encourage the building of communities where a sense of belonging to something greater can be fostered (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.636; Seligman, 2007, para.2).

Findings from the interviews conducted and reflective notes completed by the participants indicated that although they perceive certain support to be offered by their school communities, there are a range of challenges which hinder their teaching practices. It is also evident that there seems to be a need to foster a sense of belonging for FET L.O. teachers within their school community, and to promote advocacy for the subject.

### **4.3.2 The Support Needs and Challenges Experienced by FET L.O. Teachers**

Life Orientation can be described as an integral part of the current curriculum. The subject aims to facilitate learners' holistic development within supportive classroom environments where important issues to the well-being and optimal functioning of the child can be addressed. As a result, the subject attempts to incorporate prevention and intervention strategies into the curriculum to attend to the diverse range of challenges faced by South African youth. However, the focus of L.O. is not only on the learner as an individual, but also as a responsible and active member of society (DoE, 2003, p.9).

It is therefore necessary to consider what demands the subject exacts from FET L.O. teachers, particularly in light of the subject's aims and broad curriculum. In addition to these demands, the nature and extent of learners' needs and requirements for support add further responsibilities to teachers' 'job descriptions'. Furthermore, government policies and acts prescribe certain expectations and qualities which are expected of teachers (DoE, 2000b; DoE, 2003, p.5). These external demands from the Department of Education, learners and the subject need to be seen in relation to the demands and needs of the internal world of the teacher. These internal demands include perceptions regarding the characteristics and competencies of the teacher within the context of the L.O. classroom. A classroom which needs to be a caring and safe environment where learners and teachers can share and learn. These demands are dynamic and interact within school communities, creating specific support needs for FET L.O. teachers.

The data from this research study seems to suggest that teachers experience challenges which require support on a variety of levels within the school community. Support needs were identified on a teacher level (for example, the development of competencies), a school community level (support from management and the community itself), as well as on a wider, macro level platform (the Department of Education). This discussion will therefore be crafted around these three levels as this correlates with this study's foundation in positive psychology, or "the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits, and the institutions that facilitate their development" (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.630).

#### ***4.3.2.1 Teacher-Level Support Needs and Challenges***

As became evident in the presentation of the research findings, the participants are of the opinion that FET Life Orientation teachers need to develop certain competencies and have specific traits and attitudes to be effective. This opinion is reinforced by the Department of Education (2000b, pp.10-23; 2003, p.9) which clearly states the qualities, roles and competencies which need to be demonstrated by teachers. In addition to being subject specialists, teachers are expected to be competent assessors and learning mediators. This requires in-depth skill and knowledge of the curriculum to ensure that content is meaningfully presented and adapted to learners in a way which is appropriate to their life experiences, context, developmental stage and prior knowledge. Furthermore, teachers are required to be scholars and life-long learners, implying the importance of continuous professional development. Also, the role of teacher as pastoral counsellor is of particular relevance to L.O. teachers who are expected to be able to create caring classroom environments with a focus on learners' roles in society.

The development of competencies is not only expected by the Department of Education, but it is also an important facet of positive psychology as it involves strength- and capacity-building so as to help people achieve optimal functioning in their lives. Furthermore, competencies, autonomy, and connectedness or relatedness are considered to be basic psychological needs which need to be satisfied for people to experience success (Compton, 2005, p.35; Gagné, 2003, p.202; Schueller, 2009, p.931).

The research findings indicate that there are several key areas in which FET L.O. teachers need to develop professional and emotional competencies, the first of which are emotional competencies and skills which are founded in basic counselling skills and theory. School 1 and 3, however, indicated that not all teachers have these competencies which are fundamental to the practice of teaching L.O. The lack of emotional competencies emphasises the importance of adequate pre-service training and the allocation of teachers to positions for which they are qualified. The second competency which needs to be addressed is that of the presentation of learning outcome three, or Physical Education. All three schools identified this as being an area of development where further training is required. Teachers need these competencies as without them, efforts to promote learners' health will come be frustrated, as will the teachers themselves.

In addition to this, teachers need to develop further competencies regarding the content of the curriculum and appropriate teaching strategies. All three schools indicated that the L.O. teacher has to be able to decide what is relevant to their school community and how to address it meaningfully in class. This requires skill on the part of the teacher as extensive knowledge is necessary regarding the topic under discussion, as is the application of a teaching method which is suited to the topic and learners. Furthermore, topics need to be presented with age-appropriate information and become progressively more challenging over the FET band. The above skills need to be complemented by the teachers' emotional competencies as all three schools emphasised the importance of the relationship between teacher and learner. The classroom therefore needs to be a community of caring in which learners and teachers can interact positively while developing skills, knowledge, attitudes and values.

Teachers therefore have a need to develop competencies in order to function most effectively and develop mastery. Learners will in turn also benefit from teachers' mastery of the subject. Aside from the importance of developing competencies for the purposes of one's job description, mastery is important as it is a symptom of positive functioning. When the above statement is taken into consideration, coupled with the nature of L.O. and its emphasis on promoting the well-being of learners, it becomes evident that teachers' well-being plays a significant role in achieving this. Schueller (2009, p.925) describes this in the following way:

“In addition to markers of doing well, individual wellness also needs to include indicators of positive functioning. This is akin to competency. Competency refers to individuals or communities that have a repertoire of resources and the knowledge and desire to use these resources effectively.”

All three schools seem to have a need to experience positive functioning, particularly within their work environment. This need was clearly expressed by the teachers involved and was reinforced by their wish to participate in continuous professional development. This, however, links to an attitude of being open to learning and living the concept of life-long learning, as well as the Department's expectation to this regard. Such an attitude seems to be not only important for continuous professional development where competencies can be acquired and improved upon, but also in gaining personal resources (Compton, 2005, p.27; Schueller, 2009, p.925).



Furthermore, the needs and recommended support expressed by the participants correlate with the three lives recognised by positive psychology, namely the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2008, p.7). The pleasant life, or positive emotion, relates to the participants need to view their future opportunities in a positive way, while the engaged life, or positive individual traits, refers to their use of strengths and competencies in the various aspects of their lives. Lastly, the teachers seem to seek a meaningful life within the school and education community where their value is recognised and they are supported and allowed to flourish (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.635). The significance of these three lives and the three focus points of positive psychology will now be directly linked to the research findings.

As previously discussed, positive emotions are considered to be a facet of positive functioning and play a significant role in the acquisition of personal resources and competencies. Positive emotions are important as they assist people in exploring opportunities and making optimal use of resources, not only in the here and now, but also in the future. Positive emotions therefore create awareness and opportunities to learn, opportunities through which personal resources can be gained (Compton, 2005, pp.26-27; Fredrickson, 2001, p.219). This correlates with an attitude of being open to learning which the participants seem to have. However, each of the three schools experiences this need in a different way. School 1 recognises the need for the development of competencies, particularly within the school environment, while School 2 actively seeks such opportunities and seems to create them. School 3, on the other hand, recognises the need for professional development, but sees the lack of resources provided by the school and Department of Education as being a challenge to this. It can therefore be argued that although each of the schools are open to learning and developing competencies, they experience differing levels of personal and physical resources to actually do so.

Furthermore, as will be seen under the discussion of contextual support needs and challenges, there seem to be frustrations within institutions, namely school communities, which influence individual teachers' functioning. Although this will be discussed in detail under the next section, it is important to understand how emotions and individual traits (teacher-level) can have an influence on institutions or schools (contextual), which in turn have a reciprocal effect on the teacher. According to Compton (2005, p.27),

positive emotions help create opportunities for people to engage in supportive relationships and experience further positive emotions such as compassion in their interactions with others. These relationships and bonds also act as a source of positive emotions, thereby creating a positive feedback cycle which strengthens the support offered by these relationships and positive emotions experienced. It is therefore important to experience positive emotions so as to help facilitate the development of supportive relationships.

In terms of the research findings, it is evident that the participants perceive positive emotions such as compassion as being important to the practice of the FET L.O. teacher. Furthermore, a need seems to exist for supportive relationships, both within the L.O. departments, as well as between the L.O. departments and their school communities. In particular, Schools 1 and 2 seemed to experience positive emotions in their work, helping to facilitate and build such relationships and support networks. This in turn creates opportunities for mutually beneficial relationships and rewarding interactions between teachers and learners, as well as between the staff. School 3, however, recognises the need for positive emotions and the acquisition of resources, but seems to lack the energy to actively seek such opportunities. The result of this is that School 3's FET L.O. teachers are tired and struggle to identify supportive relationships and support networks, thereby limiting further opportunities to experience further positive emotions and interactions with others. This implies that although School 3 can intellectually relate to positive emotions, it is not their reality.

The experience and presence of supportive relationships, as well as autonomy and a sense of purpose and competence are considered to be factors which influence the development of resiliency (Day, 2008, p.255; Howard & Johnson, 2004, p.403). In addition to this, reflecting on one's practice and increasing mastery, or competence, as well as being able to identify personal resources and strengths are recognised as tools which help teachers to cope with stress (Brody & Baum, 2007, p.27). These are significant facets of the practice of teaching Life Orientation which need to be attended to when considering how to support these teachers' needs. It is also of particular relevance as teachers are considered to be vulnerable to stress and burnout. This not only has implications for teachers' mental and physical health, but also for their experience of job satisfaction.

From the above discussion it can be argued that teachers would benefit from supportive relationships and having their basic psychological needs met in more ways than one. Not only would the teachers experience increased positive functioning and happiness, and therefore positive emotions, from having these needs met, but also develop increasing resilience and job satisfaction. The research findings support this, particularly in the case of School 3. Some of the teachers in this L.O. department describe themselves as being exhausted and drained, and as beginning to doubt their competency as teachers. In contrast, the teachers at School 2 describe themselves as positively experiencing the variety offered by the L.O. curriculum as it presents opportunities to be autonomous. Furthermore, teachers at School 2 describe themselves as being resilient and the department, or team, as being supportive (in terms of emotional and work-related support). Several teachers at School 2 commented on their level of job satisfaction, with the team culture and perceived support being a significant factor in achieving this.

Furthermore, the schools identified the teacher's attitude towards the subject and their belief in its value as important. Not only this, but the teachers strongly suggested that FET L.O. teachers must love to teach. The importance of such perceptions is that a positive attitude towards, and enjoyment of, the subject can be one stress management technique (Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh & DiGiuseppe, 2004, p.169). This is, however, countered by the availability of resources and the demands exacted by the teacher's professional responsibilities. According to Jackson, Rothmann and van de Vijver (2006, p.272) these are two factors which may lead to burnout. Job demands include work load (emotional and mental), while resources are categorised according to organisational support, growth and development opportunities, and advancement.

The research findings indicate that the first two of these resources are of particular significance to the practice of FET L.O. teachers. Jackson, Rothmann and van de Vijver (2006, p.272) recognise organisational support as including relationships with colleagues and management, clear direction as to what needs to be achieved, as well as opportunities for collaboration. Growth and professional development are further important as this provides opportunities for competency building and increasing autonomy. This in turn all contributes towards the experience of "work wellness" and job satisfaction. All three schools recognised the importance of organisational support

and professional development and had several recommendations in this regard. This suggests that there is a need for support within school communities across a diverse spectrum of schools, particularly in terms of interaction with other staff in their school communities, as well as other L.O. teachers. In addition to this, there is a need for clear direction from the Department of Education with regards to policy and subject requirements.

#### ***4.3.2.2 Contextual Support Needs and Challenges***

As is evident from the above discussion, there is a dynamic relationship between positive emotions, positive individual traits and positive institutions, or as in the case of this research study, the school community. These dynamics are important to understand if one is to gain insight into the support needs of FET L.O. teachers with the aim of increasing their positive functioning while satisfying their basic psychological needs. According to Akin-Little, Little and Delligatti (2004, p.160), “positive environments that evoke and reinforce positive behaviours are necessary in order to shape and maintain the optimal human experiences”. The contexts and environments which influence the behaviours, perceptions and experiences of the participants will now be attended to.

It stands to reason that the institution, or school community, within which teachers work will have an effect on their job satisfaction and perception of their value within that context. In addition to the influences already discussed, recognition for one’s work and the sense that one’s contributions are valued are important factors to take into consideration. Furthermore, a team culture and transformative leadership (establishing a team vision, a shift away from the top-down approach) have been identified as factors which play a significant role in positive and rewarding work environments (Miller et al., 2008, p.687). This correlates strongly with the psychological need of relatedness and Maslow’s concept of belonging, as well as with the notion of living a meaningful life. This relates to the idea that people seek to lead a purposeful life that can be achieved by belonging to a positive institution (Duckworth et al., 2005, p.636).

The research findings indicate that the participants actively seek the connectedness and belonging offered by subject departments and the associated possibility of the team and cohesion which can develop from such involvement. This suggests that FET L.O. teachers have a need to belong to a department which provides a greater sense of

purpose and direction. In addition to this, the participants indicated that they are of the opinion that L.O. teachers need certain qualities and values in order to teach the subject. This suggests that a L.O. department needs to be staffed by like-minded teachers who recognise and believe in the value of the subject. Furthermore, collaboration between colleagues and other L.O. departments is needed to enhance departments' and teachers' functioning and to stimulate a team culture.

School 2 seems to have created a supportive and effective team culture within which all members feel valued and appreciated. The team appears to have good communication and administration structures in place which assist teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities. In addition to this, the team and team leader acknowledge the role that trust plays in achieving this, as well as the importance of having a vision for the team and objectives for the professional development of the team and individual teachers. These characteristics correlate with those identified in the literature by Miller et al. (2008, p.687) as features of "quality teams". In addition to the above mentioned features, the team members identified the importance of a team leader in facilitating the development of a quality team. They further described the team culture as being supportive in emotional and professional aspects. The team leader also seems to make use of a transformative leadership style which promotes collaboration, a sense of competence and of value.

It should be noted that although School 2 clearly demonstrated these team qualities and advocated for their importance, School 3 identified a need to develop such cohesion. It can therefore be argued that L.O. departments of different levels of functioning recognise this as being a support need and would possibly benefit from team-building exercises and staff development.

A further implication of the psychological need of relatedness is that an L.O. department needs to be accepted and experience belonging within the school community. In addition to this, the participants indicated that they need to feel as if their contributions and the subject are valued. This notion of belonging can be extended further than a school's staff and learners to the National and Provincial Departments of Education as members of the school community. The subject and its teachers need to be acknowledged and valued: teachers and learners need to perceive that the Department recognises the importance of L.O. and allocates it the necessary status of a subject.

There is therefore a need for the members of the school community to advocate for the subject and its teachers and for the community to be supportive.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

It would therefore seem that Life Orientation teachers involved with learners in the Further Education and Training band experience a variety of support needs. These needs exist on different levels within the school community and suggest that the demands on the teacher come from teachers themselves, learners and the Department of Education. These needs indicate important areas of development to encourage the positive functioning of teachers and learners alike.

Chapter five will offer concluding remarks and recommendations with regards to the support needs of FET L.O. teachers. The strengths and limitations of the research study will also be discussed.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research study aimed to gain insight into the support needs of Life Orientation teachers who work with learners in the Further Education and Training band. A basic qualitative study founded in the interpretive research paradigm was used to approach the research questions. This research process provided the researcher with insight into the meaning-making processes of the participants, thereby allowing her to gain understanding regarding their support needs. The research findings indicated that FET L.O. teachers experience a diverse range of support needs which exist on the different levels of school communities.

This chapter will offer concluding remarks on the main research findings as well as present recommendations for support. The limitations and strengths of the study will also be discussed and possible future research will be suggested.

#### **5.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Life Orientation teachers in the FET band experience several demands which influence their perceptions and practices. These demands include those made by the subject, its curriculum and its aims, as well as the Department of Education's policies which endeavour to implement L.O. as it was envisioned. Aside from the demands made by the subject and the Department of Education, teachers themselves place emphasis on who they need to be as L.O. teachers and what practices are important. These demands exist in the individual context of the school community, thus creating specific demands and support needs. It can therefore be argued that teachers carry certain responsibilities which are placed upon their shoulders by different role players in the school community. In order for FET L.O. teachers to successfully present the subject, these responsibilities and needs have to be supported. This involves promoting the positive functioning and health of both teachers and learners.

As was argued in previous chapters, Life Orientation can be seen as a health promoting strategy in which the school community can be targeted for prevention and intervention. Health promotion in schools overlaps with the five strategies provided by the Ottawa Charter (International Conference on Health Promotion, 1986, pp.1-3) and correlates with the aims of L.O. In order to foster health promotion and achieve the subject's aims, teachers need to be supported as part of the school community and as change agents within that community. It is therefore necessary to develop FET L.O. teachers' personal skills and to collaborate with other role players in the school community to achieve this.

Furthermore, a focus on health promotion (including mental, psycho-social and physical health) can be linked to positive psychology. As is evident, in order to increase FET L.O. teachers' positive functioning, attention needs to be paid to the fostering of positive individual traits and emotions within a positive institution – namely the school community. The research findings therefore support the development of teachers' skills and competencies within a safe psycho-social environment in which their own health, and consequently that of their learners, can be promoted. This is also in line with the Department of Education's (2000b) policy regarding the Norms and Standards for Educators.

The research findings indicate that in order to achieve safe and caring classroom and school environments, support has to be offered to schools on a variety of levels. Firstly, L.O. teachers have to develop a range of competencies to equip them for the diverse needs experienced by learners, as well as for presenting a broad curriculum. The participants emphasised the importance of developing competencies within Learning Outcome three (Physical Education) and of keeping up-to-date with advances in research. There is therefore a definite need for on-going professional development.

Secondly, L.O. teachers suggested that they, and the subject, would benefit from the creation of stable L.O. departments and appropriate staff allocations. Human resource management is therefore of the utmost importance. This need is three-pronged: a L.O. department is necessary to build relationships between colleagues, thereby creating a support network to help cope with the emotional and professional demands of the subject. Furthermore, collaboration between teachers presents significant opportunities for informal learning and positive interaction with other colleagues – in and out of that particular school community. In other words, teachers can share best practices as well as



learning materials which they have found to be useful, thereby sharing knowledge and skills. The result of this is an increase in professional competencies, a greater sense of team work, and hopefully a team culture. In addition to the above, qualified teachers who are specialists in the field of Life Orientation need to be appointed to these teaching posts. The appointment of a specialist teacher will assist in improving the status of the subject as well as attitudes towards it.

Thirdly, attitudes and perceptions of the subject need to be critically evaluated to determine their impact on teachers and the subject, and consequently, learners. This needs to happen in both schools and the Department of Education. Policies and practices of schools and the Department of Education need to reflect the subject's importance and value to society. This will, in turn, help to create more supportive environments in which the subject and its teachers can flourish, thereby fostering increasingly positive institutions.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The participants made several suggestions which can be linked to the above-mentioned support needs. These include the following:

It is important to consider the impact of staff allocation policies on school- and departmental level as this influences the way in which the subject is perceived. Staff allocation policies and guidelines therefore need to be put in place so that only teachers who are qualified to teach the subject are employed. Furthermore, teachers allocated to Life Orientation classes need to believe in the value of the subject and make use of reflective practices to ensure that they teach the subject most effectively. Reflection will in turn help teachers to identify their own strengths and competencies, as well as areas for development which can then be focused on during professional development.

Appropriate and mindful staff allocation is a necessary practice which can be used to facilitate L.O. departments which consist of competent, specialist teachers. Not only will this help to foster more positive perceptions regarding the status of the subject, but it will also help promote a team culture. Life Orientation teachers need to experience belonging within the school and their department in order to feel acknowledged and meaningful. Furthermore, the promotion of a team culture provides opportunities for

collaboration between fellow L.O. teachers, thereby increasing their sense of support within the school community, as well as their sense of competency.

There is a definite need for the employment of school counsellors at high schools. Adolescents are a vulnerable population and L.O. teachers need assistance in dealing with some of the barriers to learning experienced by learners. Furthermore, as not all L.O. teachers are trained in psychology and basic counselling skills, there is a need for emotional and psychological support services. School counsellors can play a valuable role as L.O. teachers by gaining the trust of learners, as well as by collaborating with L.O. departments in tailoring intervention. Furthermore, the school counsellor can also become a part of the support network of the department, thereby helping other teachers too.

Human resource management decisions are important as they affect job satisfaction levels, motivation and perceptions of the demands of the job. However, FET L.O. teachers would also benefit from attention to the administrative aspect of their duties, for example, time taken in preparing for lessons. It would therefore be useful for L.O. teachers to have access to resource centres or online resources which can provide up-to-date learning materials and information. These need to be easily available to all teachers. However, limitations with regards to access to technology need to be taken into consideration. Possible sources of this information can be publishers who circulate regular newsletters and catalogues, the Department of Education, as well as online forums where L.O. teachers can form a discussion group or a community of educators. One participant suggested an annual Life Orientation conference which could be used for professional development purposes and the introduction and marketing of new resources.

In addition to this, opportunities for continuous professional development remain important objectives. It is important to encourage L.O. teachers to be life-long learners who engage in formal or informal learning opportunities to increase their knowledge and competencies. In particular, it would seem that there is still a need for development in the learning outcomes concerning career development and physical education, as well as the learning and application of basic counselling skills. This is of particular importance when considering that not all L.O. teachers have pre-service training in these aspects of the curriculum or its application, yet they are presenting the subject.

Policies and subject requirements also need to be reviewed to consider their impact on the perception of the subject. Teachers require more direction in terms of important areas to focus on, as well as clear and consistent expectations for teaching and assessment. One way to achieve this would be to standardise the subject. Participants clearly indicated that this would be preferable, but as the curriculum currently stands, this is impractical. Increased consistency and clarity with regards to expectations and practices in schools will therefore help to achieve a measure of standardisation. The nation-wide introduction of a small range of textbooks could assist in increasing consistency between schools, further helping to achieve some standardisation.

Furthermore, there needs to be increased communication and feedback between L.O. departments and provincial Departments of Education. This can take place in the form of cluster meetings, telephonic contact or visits to the schools. It is important for L.O. departments to build supportive relationships with their curriculum advisors.

Communication between L.O. departments and other members of a particular school community is also important. Structures need to be put into place with school management channels so that L.O. departments can voice their needs and concerns to those involved in decision-making. The role played by the teacher in charge, or Head of Department for L.O., is therefore a crucial one as these needs have to be communicated clearly and assertively. In addition to this, the school principal plays a significant role in achieving this and promoting positive attitudes and perceptions of L.O.

Training programmes for student L.O. teachers need to have a strong focus on practicum. It was strongly suggested that training programmes which focus on knowledge alone are not sufficient as there is more to the practice of teaching L.O. than theory. However, this theory is important as it is the foundation of becoming a competent, specialist L.O. teacher who is able to teach the different learning outcomes and fulfil the various competencies and roles outlined by the Department of Education (2000b, pp.12-14).

Furthermore, the teacher has the responsibility to make the curriculum relevant to their classes which requires skill in adapting the content and adjusting teaching strategies to optimally engage learners. This is of particular importance when addressing learners'

attitudes towards the subject as when similar material is presented to every grade with no progression in difficulty or depth, learners will naturally disengage.

The learning material which is offered to schools can play an important role in supporting teachers in presenting the content meaningfully. The participants suggested guidelines for textbooks which need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, textbooks need to be complemented by visual media which can be used to reinforce learning. Secondly, textbooks need to ensure that activities are easy to implement, clearly described and meet the assessment standards. Most importantly, learning material needs to be up-dated on a regular basis so as to ensure that the information is relevant and correct.

#### **5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study was fairly narrow due to the size of the sample. Although qualitative research studies are often characterised by a small sample size, the widening of the sample would help to increase the transferability of the research findings.

Although the research study focused on understanding the perceptions of FET L.O. teachers, and therefore used data collection methods which aimed to gain insight into their meaning-making processes, the use of additional methods may have enhanced the research findings. The use of observation may have been useful in order to provide more data regarding classroom practices and methods.

In addition, this study focused on the support needs of the FET L.O. teacher. Teachers in the GET band, however, would also benefit from such research into their support needs. This was unfortunately outside the scope and extent of the current study.

#### **5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY**

Due to the nature and structure of the research design, this study gained in-depth insight into the perceptions and experiences of FET L.O. teachers with regards to their support needs. This insight is important as it can provide important information which can be used to direct policy and support from the Department of Education.

Furthermore, one school identified participating in the research study as beneficial as it provided their L.O. department an opportunity to reflect on their practices. Such

conversations are important practices as a department's strengths and weaknesses can be identified and addressed.

Although several issues were raised which still need to be addressed by the Department of Education, this study suggested a number of practices which can be implemented by schools and L.O. departments in order to start promoting positive institutions. A further strength of this study was therefore the emphasis on positive psychology as it implies that there are strengths in each school which can be capitalised on to help create change. It also emphasises the role of teachers as change agents in such a process.

## **5.6 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

This research study was in the process of being completed during the time in which the Department of Basic Education announced forthcoming changes to the curriculum for 2011. It is therefore important to consider further research possibilities and how this may assist in continuing to support the needs of FET L.O. teachers.

The introduction of the Final Draft of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Orientation in the FET band has significant implications for the practice of teaching L.O. Firstly, the four learning outcomes have been reorganised into six topics. These include the “development of the self in society, social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, careers and career choices, study skills, and physical education” (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p.6). Secondly, although the document states that all topics are equally important, physical education is to be allocated one lesson a week, in other words, half of the teaching time allocated to L.O. The implication of this distribution is that teachers who already feel incompetent due to a lack of skills in the teaching of physical education are likely to be more vulnerable to the effects of such perceptions. Furthermore, the other five topics to be covered by the L.O. curriculum may be perceived as inferior to physical education.

A possibility for further research is therefore the study of this restructuring of L.O. in the FET band and teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding the importance of all six topics. It is also important to then reconsider what support teachers need to successfully implement the CAPS.

In addition, further research regarding the competencies of FET L.O. teachers needs to be conducted. Such research would need to focus on the pre- and in-service training received by L.O. teachers, particularly with regards to career choices, physical education and basic counselling skills.

Research into the human resource management decisions made by the Department of Education and schools needs to be explored. Considering that teachers play such a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the subject, the practices surrounding the appointment of L.O. teachers need to be further investigated.

Furthermore, research into the attitudes of school principals and school management teams (SMTs), as well as the Department of Education, towards L.O. need to be explored if the subject is to be adequately supported.

Research into the best practices of FET L.O. teachers would shed light on the successful implementation of the subject and indicate further areas for support.

## **5.7 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

During the course of this research study I became increasingly sensitive to the pivotal role played by teachers in the successful implementation and presentation of any subject, perhaps none more so than the subject of Life Orientation. This sensitivity started to develop as a L.O. teacher who was then given the responsibility of planning the learning programmes for two grades. As I became more involved with learners I gained insight into the complexity of the subject and the issues it attempts to address. As a result, I have a heart-felt belief in the value of L.O. and a desire to see it reach its full potential.

In a country where there is limited access to mental health services, and where the need for these services seems to be on the rise, L.O. offers a comprehensive approach to this dilemma. As an intern educational psychologist I have become increasingly aware of the need for preventative strategies which target youth, and in particular, adolescents. The preventative nature of the subject, with its emphasis on health promotion, is one which needs to be embraced by schools and communities alike. We have a responsibility towards our youth and society to attempt to prevent problems, as well as to intervene when necessary.

L.O. teachers therefore need to be trained in approaches such as health promotion and positive psychology in order to competently address the challenges of the classroom. Tertiary institutions therefore have the responsibility to equip teachers with this knowledge, and the Department of Education needs to create room for such approaches in schools. Furthermore, psychologists have a social and professional responsibility to share their knowledge and expertise with schools and teachers to ensure that school communities function positively.

In conclusion, much thought and insight has gone into Life Orientation's curriculum. The successful implementation thereof requires co-operation between the various members of the school community so that those teachers who are given the responsibility of supporting our learners, are adequately supported themselves.

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**ADDENDUM A**

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**Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement**

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**Western Cape Education Department**

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**ISEBE leMfundo leNtshona Koloni**

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Mrs Verena Strydom  
17 Blisseux Crescent  
Oakwood  
DURBANVILLE  
7550

**Dear Mrs V. Strydom**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF THE LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER  
IN THE FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND.**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. The programmes of Educators are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **3<sup>rd</sup> May 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen

for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

**DATE: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

## **ADDENDUM B**

The Principal

Dear

Request to conduct research study entitled *The Support Needs of the Life Orientation Teacher in the Further Education and Training Band*

I am currently registered as a student in the programme Masters of Educational Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. In order to complete my degree, I have to complete a research study on which a thesis needs to be written. Consequently, I have applied to the Western Cape Education Department for permission to conduct such research in schools. This permission has been granted and I have attached the supporting letter.

I have identified your school as meeting the selection criteria I have used in designing my study. I would therefore like to request permission to conduct research in your school. The focus of my study is on investigating the support needs of the FET Life Orientation teacher. I would therefore like to interview your Life Orientation department, or those teachers involved in teaching Life Orientation to grades 10 to 12.

The research will be conducted in three stages during July and August. The first stage involves the signing of the consent forms in which confidentiality and anonymity would be explained, as well as a short written piece in which the teachers would reflect on their role as Life Orientation teachers in the FET band. Thereafter a focus group interview would be conducted with the group of teachers involved with the grade 10 to 12 learners. Finally, one teacher will be asked to participate in an individual interview.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would please grant me permission to involve your Life Orientation teaching staff in my research study. I truly think that their involvement will help stimulate critical, reflective thought on their teaching practice and experience. This will hopefully have a positive influence on this, thereby benefitting the learners – for whom Life Orientation can be a meaningful contribution to their daily lives and education.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Verena Strydom

## **ADDENDUM C**



## ETHICAL CLEARANCE

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Researcher:	Mrs V Strydom
Research project:	The Support Needs of the Life Orientation Teacher in the Further Education and Training Band.
Nature of research project:	Master's research study in the Department of Educational Psychology of Stellenbosch University.
Reference number:	363/2010
Supervisor:	Dr Oswald, Department of Educational Psychology of Stellenbosch University.
Date:	26 June 2010

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An application for an expedited review was received from Mrs V Strydom on 25 June 2010. This request was approved by the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee (REC), and accordingly, the application was considered by a subcommittee of the REC in terms of the procedures for an expedited review. The result of this review will be ratified at the next meeting of the REC, and if any changes are made to the recommendation formulated below, the researcher and her supervisor will be informed immediately. In the mean time, the research can proceed along the lines recommended below.

The purpose of this review is to ascertain whether there are any ethical risks associated with the proposed research project of which the researcher has to be aware of or, alternatively, whether the ethical risks are of such a nature that the research cannot continue.

The Ethics Committee received the following documentation as part of the application for ethical clearance:

- A signed application for ethical clearance [signed by the researcher, the supervisor, and the departmental Chair];
- A research proposal in the format of a preliminary first chapter;
- A guide to write reflective notes, that is preceded by biographic questions;
- An interview guide for the focus group discussions;
- An informed consent form for research participants [in English];
- A letter of permission from the WCED;
- Two letters of consent from the principals of two schools.

It is noted that the principal of the third school at which the research will be conducted has granted verbal permission for the research, and that the researcher is awaiting the letter of written permission from this principal. It is also noted that the interview guide for individual interviews was not included in the application. This interview schedule can only be compiled once the focus group interviews have been completed.

The purpose of this research is to determine the support needs of Life Orientation (LO) teachers, with a view to inform policy development around the issues that have been identified. Three schools in the Western Cape have been selected to participate in this research. Three methods of data collection will be used: (a) interpretive notes; (b) focus group interviews; and (c) individual interviews. All of the teachers in the respective schools teaching LO will be invited to participate in (a) and (b), while one teacher from each school will be selected to participate in (c).

The Ethics Committee finds as follows:

1. The proposed research essentially complies with the requirements of the University of Stellenbosch with regards to informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality of personal information. Specific areas of concern nonetheless exist that the researcher must attend to.
2. The attention of the researcher is respectfully drawn to the purpose of question 7.2 in the Application Form, which is to determine whether adequate measures have been put in place to keep the data safe, and to prevent unauthorized access to it. The researcher is requested to take note of this dimension of best practice in data management.
3. In the preamble of the Informed Consent Form, it should be explicitly stated that the results of this research will be published in the Master's thesis of the researcher.
4. In Section 6 of the Informed Consent Form, it should also be stated that the identity of the school at which the research will be done, will be kept anonymous in the reporting of results. It should furthermore be explicitly stated in the section that the results of the research will not be used in any way whatsoever for purposes of staff performance evaluation, evaluation of the department(s) involved in the teaching of LO, or evaluation of the performance of the school in general.
5. In order to respect the language preferences of teachers participating in this research, it is strongly suggested that the Informed Consent Form, and other research material is also made available to teachers in their mother tongue. The researcher is therefore requested to indicate in a note to the Ethics Committee whether this suggestion can be taken on board or not, and if so, copies of these research tools should be submitted to the office of Ms Maléne Fouché of the Division for Research Development of Stellenbosch University for record purposes.

In view of the information at the disposal of the Ethics Committee, the proposed research project may continue with the proviso that:

1. The researcher will remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal, particularly in terms of any undertakings made in terms of the confidentiality of the information gathered.
2. The research will again be submitted for ethical clearance if there is any substantial departure from the existing proposal.
3. The researcher will remain within the parameters of any applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of research.
4. The required letter granting permission from the third school in this research will be submitted to the office of Ms Maléne Fouché in the Unit for Research Development of Stellenbosch University.
5. The required note will be submitted to the Ethics Committee.

6. The researcher will edit the current Informed Consent Form as indicated under paragraphs 3 and 4 above, and also submit a copy of this new formulation to the office of Ms Maléne Fouché in the Unit for Research Development of Stellenbosch University.
7. The researcher will consider and implement the foregoing suggestions to lower the ethical risk associated with the research.

On behalf of the Ethics Committee

26 June 2010

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Callie Theron, Johan Hattingh

## **ADDENDUM D**

**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

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**The Support Needs of the Life Orientation Teacher in the Further Education and  
Training Band**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Verena Strydom, from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of this research study will be published in the researcher's Master's level thesis, as well as possibly an academic journal.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your involvement in teaching Life Orientation to the grade ten to twelve learners at your school.

**1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to gain in-depth understanding into the way in which Life Orientation teachers in the FET band make meaning of their teaching experience and associated support needs. It is hoped that this understanding can lead to increased knowledge with which to inform L.O. teacher training and the support offered by both the Education Department and schools.

**2. PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a short form including your biographical information. This information will be summarised into a table where your identity will be disguised and you will be allocated a code, for example, P1 (Participant 1). This will be used to help establish any patterns later in the research process.
2. Complete a written piece in which you reflect on your role as Life Orientation teacher in the FET band. This piece should be approximately a page in length.
3. You will then be asked to participate in a focus group interview. This is an interview where all the teachers at your school who teach L.O. to the grades 10 to 12 will be asked questions to facilitate a discussion about your needs as a FET Life Orientation teacher. Depending on the size of your department, this interview should take between 60 to 90 minutes. This interview will take place in a venue at your school at a time which suits your department. For purposes of accurate data collection, a tape recorder will be used.
4. Lastly, one teacher in your department will be requested to participate in an individual interview which should not last more than 60 minutes. This interview will take place at a venue and time which is convenient to the participant. This interview will also be tape recorded.

**3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

No foreseeable risks have been identified that may affect you as a result of participating in this study.

In terms of inconvenience, a time to conduct the research interviews will be arranged that is most suitable to all research participants at a convenient location.

#### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

It is hoped that you as Life Orientation teacher will benefit from your participation in this study in the following ways:

- By reflecting on your teaching practice and experience that you will be able to identify your competencies and skills as a Life Orientation teacher.
- Critical discussion and reflection on your support needs as a L.O. department may encourage you to seek solutions or strategies that may help facilitate change in your school.
- To reflect on how you make meaning of your role as L.O. teacher and how this affects you as person.

It is hoped that society and social sciences will benefit from your participation in this study in the following ways:

- By understanding your support needs so that they can be addressed, thereby benefitting the learners who you teach.
- The consequence of this should be that we can help develop resilient and responsible learners who enter society and are able to make a meaningful contribution to their world, as well as being able to cope with the demands of the changing times we live in.
- Little research exists which investigates Life Orientation in the FET band. This is necessary to help with the development of relevant policies and strategic planning. This is of particular relevance to the planning of teacher training and resource allocation.

#### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

Unfortunately no remuneration will be offered for participating in this study.

#### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of disguising your name and that of your school. Your school will be referred to by a code such as S1 (School 1), and you as P1 (Participant 1). The identity of you and your school will therefore be protected and remain anonymous.

As previously mentioned, all interviews will be tape recorded to ensure accurate data collection. These interviews will then be transcribed verbatim, and any reference to your name will be substituted with your code. Data will be stored on a PC at the researcher's home, and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to such data.

Should disclosure of data be requested, your consent will first be sought. It should however be noted that such disclosure is not anticipated.

You as research participant reserve the right to review and edit the transcriptions made of the interviews conducted and your participation in them. The tapes will be erased following the completion of the thesis for which this data is being used.

Due to the purpose of this study being the completion of a Masters degree in Educational Psychology and the requirement of the publishing of a thesis, data collected, analysed and interpreted in this study will be reported on. Similar coding procedures will be used in the writing of such thesis in order to protect your identity and maintain confidentiality.

Data will not be used for any purposes other than the above stated. It will therefore not be used to evaluate your work performance, the performance of your L.O. department, or of the school in general.

## **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Mrs Verena Strydom, at 072 3853972. If you have any other questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact the supervisor of this study, Dr M.M. Oswald at (021) 808 2306 during office hours.

## **9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Mrs Maléne Fouché (021 808 4622) at the Unit for Research Development at the University of Stellenbosch.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

The information above was described to me by Verena Strydom in Afrikaans/English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF PARTICIPANT**

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>DATE</b>
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**TO BE COMPLETED BY INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/English and no translator was used.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of Investigator*

*Date*



## **ADDENDUM E**

**The Support Needs of the Life Orientation Teacher in the Further  
Education and Training Band**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above mentioned research study. Your assistance and time is greatly appreciated, and it is hoped that this study can in turn contribute to your experience of teaching Life Orientation by helping to identify your support needs.

As was stated in the consent form provided, all identifying details will be masked, and information collected will be treated as confidential. In order to help interpret the data, I request that you please complete the following section entitled *Biographical Information*.

**Biographical Information**

1. Name – \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age – \_\_\_\_\_

3. Gender – \_\_\_\_\_

4. Qualification – \_\_\_\_\_

5. Number of years teaching experience – \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of school – \_\_\_\_\_

7. Grades and subjects / learning areas taught – \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Nature of training in Life Orientation (please provide relevant information)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Position at school (including responsibilities and other roles) – \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Reflective Notes

In order to gain insight into the support needs of the Life Orientation teacher in the FET band, it is necessary to first understand how you see your role as an L.O. teacher, particularly with regards to the grade 10 to 12 learners. I would therefore appreciate your answering the following question in writing:

*How do I see my role as an FET Life Orientation teacher?*

Also consider the following in your response:

- What has influenced the way in which I see my role?
- What qualities does a L.O. teacher need to have?
- Why do we include L.O. in the curriculum?

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## **ADDENDUM F**

## General Interview Guide – Focus Group

### 1. Background information

*As taken from the reflective notes*

### 2. Perception of role as L.O. teacher

OPEN QUESTION: How do you see your role as a L.O. teacher in the FET band?

PROBES:

- Please identify the roles you play as L.O. teacher.
- What has influenced the way in which you see your role?
- How do you see your role within your school community?
- What is the status of L.O. in your school
  - How does this affect your motivation to teach this subject?
  - Influence your perception of your value as a teacher?
  - What thoughts do you have on how to change the status of L.O. within your school?

### 3. Sense of competency

OPEN QUESTION: How do you see your competency and skill as a LO teacher?

PROBES:

- Please describe your personal skills in your capacity as an L.O. teacher.
- Where did you develop these skills?
- What influenced your development of these skills?
- How do you understand the term competency?
  - Describe your competency as L.O. teacher:
    - In presenting the 4 learning outcomes
    - In fostering a supportive and caring classroom environment
    - In developing resiliency among learners
- How do you develop learners' competencies?

### 4. Needs

OPEN QUESTION: - How do you understand the term 'support needs'?  
- Please describe your support needs in the LO classroom?

PROBES:

- What are your emotional needs as teacher?
- What are your psychological needs?
- What are your professional needs?
- What do you need in order to develop resiliency as a teacher?

- Please describe the way in which these needs are supported by your school community?
- What is the influence of these needs on your motivation to teach L.O.?
- What is the influence of these needs on your motivation to seek professional development?

5. Support required

OPEN QUESTION: - What support do you require to present L.O. effectively?

- What support do you require to develop your competency as L.O. teacher?

PROBES:

- What support do you think the school can provide you in meeting your needs?
- What support do you think the WCED and National Education Department can provide you in meeting these needs?
- What support could pre-service and in-service training offer teachers new to the field of L.O.?
- What resources would help facilitate the teaching of L.O. in your school?
- How can the learning material be adjusted to support your needs?
- What do you want to accomplish with this subject?
  - Aims
  - Learners attitude/ participation

## **ADDENDUM G**

## Individual Interview Guide with School 1

1. How are the support needs of the LO teacher in the FET band different to those in the GET band?
  - a. What specific competencies are involved?
  
2. In your experience, what is the importance of leadership in supporting LO teachers?
  - a. Influence on job satisfaction
    - i. Other influences on the experience of job satisfaction
  - b. Influence on sense of autonomy
    - i. Other influences on the experience of sense of autonomy
  - c. Influence on sense of purpose
  
3. What can be done to enhance the status of LO at your school?
  
4. What advice would you give to other schools to help them develop a team spirit?
  - a. Describe the need for a team culture in your school.
    - i. Why is there such a strong need for this?
  - b. What role does the team play in supporting the teachers?
  - c. What support does the team need in order to function effectively?
  - d. Should all schools have this?
  
5. What are the implications for teachers if we need to model positive behaviours and emotions?
  
6. How do you perceive your own strengths or positive traits, and that of your teams?
  - a. Please identify those competencies
  - b. Please identify possible areas of development in terms of competencies?
  
7. What role does the teacher play in preventing the development of mental health problems?
  - a. What influences their ability to do so?



8. Please describe the quality of the learning material you use.
  - a. What changes would you make if you could?
  
9. In your experience, what is the difference between LO and Guidance?
  
10. In your experience, how could the curriculum adviser – LO teacher/department be supported to address school's needs?
  
11. What is necessary to develop staff into specialist LO teachers?
  - a. What competencies need to be developed?
  
12. What suggestions would you like to give the WCED with regards to the curriculum changes facing education to lead to the sustainability of LO as subject?

## **ADDENDUM H**

## **Individual Interview Guide with School 2:**

1. How are the support needs of the LO teacher in the FET band different to those in the GET band?
  - a. What specific competencies are involved?
  
2. Please describe your understanding of the concept of 'life-long learning'.
  - a. What role should this play in supporting the needs of the FET LO teacher.
  
3. Please describe your point of view regarding teaching as a calling versus something you can learn
  
4. In your experience, what is the importance of leadership in supporting LO teachers?
  - a. Influence on job satisfaction
    - i. Other influences on the experience of job satisfaction
  - b. Influence on sense of autonomy
    - i. Other influences on the experience of sense of autonomy
  - c. Influence on sense of purpose
  
5. What are the implications for teachers if we need to model positive behaviours and emotions?
  
6. What advice would you give to other schools to help them develop a team spirit?
  - a. Describe the need for a team culture in your school.
    - i. Why is there such a strong need for this?
  - b. What role does the team play in supporting the teachers?
  - c. What support does the team need in order to function effectively?
  - d. Should all schools have this?
  
7. How do you perceive your own strengths or positive traits, and that of your teams?
  - a. Please identify those competencies
  - b. Please identify possible areas of development in terms of competencies?

8. What role does the teacher play in preventing the development of mental health problems?
  - a. What influences their ability to do so?
  
9. Please tell me more about your idea of a LO conference.
  
10. In your experience, what is the role of Education Support Services in supporting LO teacher?
  - a. Or what should their role be?
  
11. What suggestions would you like to give the WCED with regards to the curriculum changes facing education to lead to the sustainability of LO as subject?

## **ADDENDUM I**

Coding	<u><b>PORTION OF THE TRANSCRIPTION FROM THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH SCHOOL2</b></u>	Comments
<p>Teacher skill: adapting curriculum</p> <p>Teacher skill: making curriculum relevant</p> <p>Teacher practice: relevant examples</p> <p>LO goal: developing learners' skills</p> <p>Teacher skill: making curriculum relevant</p>	<p>R: Alright, everyone, thank you very much for being here. Right, um, I think let's start with the same question you answered in your reflective notes, and that question is "How do you see your role as a FET Life Orientation teacher?". Who would like to jump in?</p> <p>P5: Can I read my answer?</p> <p>R: How about we just talk it through?</p> <p>P5: I don't want to answer very differently to what I wrote. (laughter) Okay, basically, it's very similar to the answer, the role of the Life Orientation<sup>1</sup> teacher is, <b>once the curriculum has been decided upon which is relevant</b>, is to actually make it relevant using the right kind of examples, uh, to our learners. So what we're trying to achieve is actually take topical life issues and make <b>it incredibly relevant</b>, so learners are encouraged to <b>use the necessary life skills in those relevant examples</b>.</p> <p>R: So it's very much based on teaching life skills.</p> <p>P5: Absolutely. And we try <b>encourage them to reflect, think and make informed decisions, uh, awareness</b> regarding you name it; career education, sex education, so it's about <b>using things very relevant to them regarding current life issues</b> and what <b>abilities</b> they require to actually get by, what <b>coping skills</b> they may need. So relevance is a really big deal to me.</p> <p>R: So it sounds as though there's a really broad spectrum to LO.</p>	<p>Relevance of curriculum</p> <p>Relevance</p> <p>Application of life skills</p> <p>Learners apply skills</p> <p>Skills-based approach: coping, abilities</p>

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as LO

<p>Role: not just teachers Role: life coaches LO goal: life fitness</p> <p>LO: has unique role LO: class environment important</p> <p>LO goal: develop learners' skills</p> <p>LO teacher: important role in school</p> <p>LO teacher: holistic approach, integrate</p> <p>Teacher skills: counselling skills central</p> <p>Teacher skills: emotional competencies</p>	<p>P5: It's a really broad spectrum, yes.</p> <p>R: And it's aimed at helping learners to cope and to develop certain skills?</p> <p>P5: Yeah, absolutely. Reasoning skills, um...</p> <p>P8: There's just one thing I really want to say. Um, like with other teachers <b>I don't really see us as 'teachers'</b> (emphasises). More like <b>life coaches</b>, obviously. Like he said, we make them, like, <b>life fit</b>. That's how I see our role. They don't come into class and it is formal, and we force them to study and whatever like in <b>other subjects</b>. I think it's the one lesson in a day that they can actually <b>feel comfortable</b> and we can <b>teach them about life, and issues and help them cope</b> with that.</p> <p>R: I'm just wondering about what you said, does it imply that the LO teacher needs to have certain qualities?</p> <p>P8: Absolutely.</p> <p>P9: Absolutely. Um, I think that we are the <b>most important teachers in the school</b>, and we must fight that off every day. We are, because <b>we balance out</b> the others. We provide <b>the complete circle</b>. They get the academia in every period, but then when they come to our class, it's like the other part. We <b>pull everything together</b> from what they learn at home, what they learn at school. We pull through the emotional bits, we put it all together, we complete the circle. So we are the most important and <b>you can't be a LO teacher if you don't have certain basic skills</b>. Um, I think we all survive because we have the <b>basic training which is the empathy</b>. We might <b>have the heart, the heart is at the centre</b> of all of this. And I don't think the heart as in, the heart as in</p>	<p>More than teachers</p> <p>Different roles to meet aims of LO</p> <p>LO plays unique role</p> <p>Life skills</p> <p>Belief in importance of LO teachers</p> <p>Holistic approach provides balance Integrates learning</p> <p>LO teachers need basic skills</p> <p>Emotional competencies central</p>
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<p>LO: based on emotional competencies</p> <p>LO teacher: holistic approach LO goal: develop learners' skills</p> <p>Role: facilitator</p> <p>LO teacher: recognises frames of reference</p> <p>Teacher trait: non-judgemental</p>	<p>the empathy that you can listen, listen, share, feedback.</p> <p>P8: And try and help.</p> <p>P9: If you <b>don't have the heart, then you're just teaching another academic</b> subject. Because you can become academic, okay, but the heart makes it Life Orientation, life skills – it completes the circle.</p> <p>R: It sounds to me as if you're saying that there are components to LO. But also different aspects of the child.</p> <p>P9: The LO teacher <b>supports the other aspects</b> of the child. By trying to teach more of <b>life skills, and skills for life</b>. When they leave here and they must learn to <b>cope out there</b> in the world.</p> <p>R: So coping is a strong focus here. P6, what do you think?</p> <p>P6: I think that, I use the word <b>facilitate</b>. The word facilitate can be a lot, that's how I see it. How we give them situations, there's not a right or a wrong answer, because <b>everybody will deal with life differently depending on where they're coming from</b>, and what situation they're in, so. But they've got to have the options and the knowledge, and the options. And that is our job to show them, discuss in class what is options, and that it's not a right or a wrong option, it's just a different option. And we also need to have, I think in our classes, a very much of a <b>non-judgemental stance</b> cause. We walk in there, and it doesn't matter if we do the alcohol week now, when they tell us 'Yes, but I got totally trashed on the weekend.' It's like, okay now, was that a good choice? Why not? Will you do it again? Why, why not? Those kinds of things so they feel open, you</p>	<p>Emotional competencies increase impact of LO</p> <p>Holistic approach Life skills</p> <p>Coping skills for adult life</p> <p>LO teacher as facilitator</p> <p>Individual frames of reference</p> <p>Teacher non-judgemental</p>
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<p>LO goal: decision-making skills Teacher trait: non-judgemental LO: learners' voice</p> <p>LO goal: sharing knowledge and information</p> <p>Learners' challenge: peer pressure</p>	<p>know sort of comfortable to say what they want to say, and then to discuss the options in life are, that's why, you know, that's why it's not an academic subject. Because we don't discuss your personal life or private life, the <b>choices you make out there</b>, you don't discuss it in maths or science or English.</p> <p>P7: To me the <b>non-judgemental</b> part is a big deal. And I think it's just important that we <b>enable them to voice</b>, you know, the things they think about and they feel unsure about that they have the opportunity to just talk and get them to relate and listen to themselves. They don't often get the opportunity to voice their, you know.</p> <p>R: As you're talking, I'm wondering do you think these learners have another place where they can talk about these things?</p> <p>P7: I find that very seldom.</p> <p>P6: I think that they do talk to each other, but you know, if you talk <b>on the playground, you might get the wrong information</b>. We're talking about sex, or contraception. You might information that's not right. Or correct, or 100 percent correct. So if we could facilitate these discussions where them we can at least say to them, 'No, you're a little bit off track here' or 'You know, this is the fact' you know, take it and use it from that. They've got to listen to their peers, but they've also got to get the <b>correct facts</b>, and that's where we are there. So it's not just playground talk where things are skewed and they don't get the right information.</p> <p>P7: I just want to say that, um, when they talk amongst themselves, <b>they say what they know their friends want to hear</b>. And I think in the group they want to</p>	<p>Decision-making and evaluation</p> <p>Teacher non-judgemental</p> <p>Safe environment to share</p> <p>School important place for conversations</p> <p>Accurate information shared</p> <p>Influence of peer pressure</p>
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<p>Teacher trait: approachable</p> <p>Teacher trait: open</p> <p>Teacher trait: available</p> <p>Teacher trait: non-judgemental</p> <p>Teacher challenge: diverse barriers to learning</p> <p>LO: flexible curriculum</p>	<p>be the macho guy, and ‘I drank three beers after the rugby’ and so on. But in the class situation, I find that they’re honest about what they do and what and how they feel about it. And they sometimes talk about the peer pressure.</p> <p>P8: I also think that you must be the <b>type of person that the kids feel comfortable to come to</b> and say, because they don’t feel comfortable with all the other teachers. If you’re a LO teacher, you <b>can’t be the type of person that’s not open</b>. The kids must be able to feel comfortable to come to you after the lesson and to tell you about the problem. I mean, I think that’s one of the most important things I think about LO teachers. <b>You must stay behind, and the kids must be able to stay there</b> and tell you about any problem that they have.</p> <p>R: Without you getting freaked out.</p> <p>P8: Yes, and judge them. They’re <b>very scared of you judging them</b>.</p> <p>P5: And I also, with every other subject, it’s not made into the curriculum. There’s not time or space for it in maths or science. They have a very cool curriculum designed to achieve their end objectives and (bell rings). You are the weakest link, good-bye (laughter). And so, without leaving room or space in any other curriculum to achieve that, science often does not get through the curriculum, neither does maths. And there are a whole <b>variety of learning problems encountered</b>, they need certain remedial or ILST, whatever, to fix the problem because the kids aren’t coping there. So we’ve got to plan into our curriculum, and as a result, we are given the <b>freedom to address</b> it with <b>incorporating all the</b></p>	<p>Teacher is approachable</p> <p>Openness</p> <p>Available</p> <p>Teacher non-judgemental</p> <p>Diverse barriers to learning and development</p> <p>Flexible curriculum Many skills involved</p>
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<p>Teacher skills: varied</p>	<p><b>skills that the teachers have</b> to do that.</p>	<p>Influence of teacher on addressing problems</p>
	<p>R: If I'm hearing you correctly, it sounds like LO has very important role in our curriculum.</p>	
<p>Team: culture Team: co-operation Team: increases status of LO</p>	<p>P5: Absolutely.</p> <p>R: By fulfilling a role which other subjects don't necessarily do. On that note, if we can say that LO has value in the curriculum, do you think that this school sees that value or recognises that value?</p>	<p>Team culture and collaboration Status of LO influenced</p>
<p>Team: passionate about LO</p>	<p>P9: I think that because we're such a <b>strong team</b> and we <b>work very well together</b>, we're <b>raised the level of LO</b> (group nods). How it's perceived by others. I think, let's use this week as an example. It's amazing how many other subjects are talking about the topic this week. And taking up a particular issue that we felt was important to raise. And, um, I think that it's because we're making it meaningful to them, it's spilling over. And we're really <b>passionate about our subject</b>. We <b>will fight</b>, and we work as a team. And it's spilling over. Young people are asking what are we doing, the teachers are referring them to us, have we talked about that. So the <b>value of the subject is being seen by the other subjects</b> in the school.</p>	<p>Passionate about LO Assertive</p> <p>Subject valued and recognised</p>
<p>Team: affects perception of LO's value</p>	<p>R: And in terms of that, how does that influence the way in which you perceive your role as LO teacher?</p>	
<p>LO teacher: personal belief in LO</p>	<p>P9: Me, personally, I've <b>always felt that we were the most important ones</b>. Okay, so it hasn't really affected me, but it's nice to see that other people are seeing our value – it's not just another LO teacher. Okay, we make it important, and we've raised it to such a point that its <b>provides the other things that they can't</b>.</p>	<p>Personal belief in subject acts as buffer</p>
<p>LO: holistic approach, unique Support: specialist</p>	<p>P7: I think we're also fortunate in that we have that <b>some</b></p>	<p>Complements other aspects of school Specialist LO teachers</p>

<p>teachers</p> <p>Support: human resource (HR) management decisions</p> <p>Support: HR decisions influence perception of LO</p> <p>Team: vision and objectives</p> <p>Team: transparency</p> <p>Team: vision and objectives</p> <p>LO goal: well-rounded learners</p> <p>LO goal: decision-making skills</p> <p>LO: curriculum differentiates</p> <p>LO goal: well-rounded learners</p>	<p><b>of us only teach LO.</b> And I hear from other schools that it's just another lesson here and there, they actually teach another main subject, and maybe LO here and there. But, we have the <b>opportunity to really specialise here.</b></p> <p>P6: So it's seen <b>more as a whole</b>, not just a subject where 20 teachers have 1 period each. It's a full department with full-time teachers. That goes a long way towards the perception of how important the subject is.</p> <p>P9: I just want to add to what P6 was saying. We have a <b>vision about where we're going</b> and where we would like to take the kids. And we quite <b>publically advertise where we want to take them</b>, what we want our school's kids to be like when they leave.</p> <p>R: Let's focus on that thought: what is your aim for your department?</p> <p>P9: We actually haven't, um, verbalised it, put it down on paper. But our <b>aim is that we set ourselves a department's objectives</b> for the year which we'd like to achieve. At the end, this would be my aim: When a learner leaves S2, they are a <b>well-rounded learner</b> who has got all the little bits and know what their options are in life. And when they get to that difficult point in life, they <b>choose the option that best suits them.</b></p> <p>R: And the teacher plays a very important role in this.</p> <p>P9: Yes, because throughout the five years, it's a <b>five year process</b>, okay, you teach them what the different options are, and eventually, when they get to that point, they can make a choice.</p> <p>P6: To answer that question about our aim, they are <b>well-rounded, functioning</b> young people that must walk</p>	<p>Staff allocation influences perception of its importance</p> <p>Team vision and goal-directed</p> <p>Transparency</p> <p>Set objectives for development</p> <p>Aims for learners</p> <p>LO progresses in depth over high school</p> <p>Aims for learners</p>
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<p>LO teacher: responsible for achieving goals</p>	<p>out of that front gate. Otherwise, <b>we haven't done our job</b>. They know what a CV is, and how to write one. They know what an application letter is, and how to write one. They know what peer pressure is and how to counter-act it. And they know the different options that you have and then there's not only one option, there's just the thought process. They might not know the answer for a problem they've got, but they know in the end <b>there's a process that they can work it through</b> and also who they can go to. I mean at school they can go to somebody, a teacher you can trust, LO teacher, a counsellor. But out there, who you going to go to? But they'll be able to think, there must be somebody I can go and talk to. And that's what they must go out there knowing they've got the <b>tools to be able to cope</b>.</p>	<p>Teacher responsibilities</p>
<p>LO goal: develop skills</p>	<p></p>	<p>Decision-making processes</p>
<p>LO goal: develop skills</p>	<p></p>	<p>Coping skills</p>
<p>Teacher practices: identify barriers to learning</p>	<p>R: It sounds as if you want to put strategies in place and to teach them problem-solving skills.</p> <p>P6: Mm, mm.</p> <p>P5: Um, other than just, we also have the <b>room to identify possible learning problems in other areas</b>. So, it's the area where lots of teachers, be it science, biology, they're expected to achieve results, get their 50 percent. In LO you're expected as much, but the <b>responsibility also falls to the educator</b>, or the LO facilitator, to identify serious learning problems, serious family problems, things that come up in behaviour that are often not identified. And it's a big issue because a learner who is not having a fulfilling life outside of high school, be it a family situation, or personal, be it drug-related, are they, what are they going through. You don't have the room to identify</p>	<p>Teachers have insight into learning processes</p>
<p>LO teacher: responsibility</p>	<p></p>	<p>Teacher's responsibility</p>

<p>Teacher practices: identify barriers to learning</p> <p>Team: professional development</p> <p>Team: professional development Teacher skill: knowledge of content Teacher skill: emotional competencies LO teacher: life experience</p> <p>LO teacher: life experience</p>	<p>that in another subject. And that's really critical. We often pick up issues. We're the first people they go to, or the first people that other subjects refer those learners to. It's a key area in <b>identifying major life problems</b>.</p> <p>R: And providing support.</p> <p>P5: Absolutely.</p> <p>R: Thank you. If I can quickly just go back, you mentioned that LO teachers need to be specialists. I'd like to explore that. How do you become a LO specialist?</p> <p>P7: We talked about this, it's actually one of our <b>goals in our department which is to go for training</b>. We often go for workshops on suicide, um, we've been doing the careers training. We'd like to get everybody to do that.</p> <p>P9: So it's <b>on-going, in-service training</b>. But I don't think the information is all. It's good to have <b>information, because that is your core</b>, the basic, but it is the heart, no it's in the knowing of the subject. You can relate core and information the whole time, but if you don't <b>have the heart</b>, and some <b>life experience</b>, it's a very difficult subject to teach.</p> <p>P8: I just want to say, it's less of the other persons involved. I think with LO teachers, <b>experience is really important</b>. Because if I think when I started here four years ago, LO was a really, all the kids thought it was a loafing subject, all the kids were, I had, I really struggled, because I had Afrikaans, I also teach Afrikaans and then LO. And then both the kids are negative towards Afrikaans and LO in the beginning when I started here. And they don't want</p>	<p>Part of intervention process of LO in supporting learners</p> <p>Aim to develop team's skills</p> <p>Continuous professional development Need to know subject, have skills and life experience</p> <p>Importance of experience</p>
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<p>Teacher practices: personal growth</p>	<p>to do Afrikaans because they're forced to do it and they don't see the reason. And also in LO we don't really do any work, warra warra. You don't have to study, it's not really work. It has changed completely (emphasis) in the four years I've been here. <b>And I changed with it</b> I think. I wouldn't have been able to be the LO teacher I am today if I didn't go through the past four years, with the LO department. But I think experience, <b>you can go for all the training you want, but you must also go through the experience</b>, and go with the kids and everything.</p>	<p>Personal growth</p>
<p>LO teacher: life experience</p>	<p>R: What I'm hearing is that there are different types of facets to being an LO teacher.</p>	<p>Need more than training</p>
<p>Teacher trait: common sense</p>	<p>P8: Yes.</p> <p>R: It's important to have professional, expert, knowledge, but it's important to have certain personal characteristics and experience, life experience, experience with kids, is what I'm hearing is really important.</p>	<p>Have common sense</p>
<p>LO teacher: awareness</p>	<p>P6: Also, two things. You've got to have, I don't know how to say it, <b>common sense</b>. It's basic common sense of how you would deal with a situation yourself. And then you've got to try and apply it to how a kid could, you know, how you could get it across to a kid. And then also, an <b>awareness of what's the things around you</b>. Like, community service, and it's easy to do it in a book, or to give it as a research project, or to tell grade tens you've got two days to go do it. <b>We've got to have been out there</b>. Know what's going on out in the world there, otherwise how do you bring that back? You know, <b>it's not a insular subject</b> that goes on in four walls and then we go on and carry on with our life. <b>It is</b></p>	<p>Awareness of context</p>
<p>LO teacher: life experience</p>	<p><b>LO: exists in context</b></p>	<p>Experience</p>
<p>LO: exists in context</p>	<p><b>LO exists in context and is real</b></p>	<p>LO exists in context and is real</p>

<p>Teacher skill: emotional competencies Teacher practices: have learners' trust LO: relationship with learners important</p> <p>Team: leadership important Team: vision Team: increases status of LO</p> <p>Teacher skill: making curriculum relevant</p> <p>LO: exists in context</p> <p>Teacher practice: self-disclosure</p>	<p><b>life.</b> So an LO teacher can't just be someone who is a, who's very much into, um, the theory side of it. Because it's not the theory. (Bell rings).</p> <p>P9: We've unfortunately had people in the department who have just been about the information. They didn't have life experience. They didn't have the heart part. And they were terrible LO teachers. You can have all the information in the world, but if you <b>don't have the heart, and you don't have the trust</b> of the kids...</p> <p>P5: Just also, when the team, with the <b>right leadership</b>, and when <b>the team shares a goal</b>, the total <b>impact that LO has is quite phenomenal.</b> A good example is the alcohol abuse right now. We have posters all over the school, every lesson that we've been covering has been around alcohol. We've been making it <b>relevant to every learner.</b> From grade twelve to grade eight, we should be varying it according to where their experience of alcohol, and the impact is massively felt. And it's stirring – some of the youngsters do not like it, others love it and are really inspired by what we are trying to achieve. So, immediately, 1200 odd kids are affected by what we are doing, and that really spreads in word throughout the community. So <b>it is a community thing as well.</b></p> <p>P8: I think it's also important for the LO teacher to sometimes <b>share something of yourself.</b> Of your personal life. Not like personal, personal, but I know that P5 and I, we like telling these stories about ourselves, cause when I started out I was 22, I mean life experience... 22 is not, I can't catch up to these people. (laughter, group comments and jokes). I mean, life experience. But it's so nice to actually say</p>	<p>Empathy and trust important Relationships with learners</p> <p>Importance of leadership and sense of direction: increases impact of subject</p> <p>Relevance to learners</p> <p>LO includes the community</p> <p>Self-disclosure as a tool</p>
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<p>Teacher skills: critical thinking</p> <p>Teacher skills: adapting curriculum</p> <p>Teacher skill: adapting teaching methods</p> <p>Teacher skills: emotional competencies</p> <p>Teacher skills: basic counselling skills</p> <p>Teacher trait: non- judgemental</p>	<p>that so that the kids realise you're also human, you also make mistakes. Like now with the alcohol week, I don't mind telling them that I've been drunk before. Really, they get so much more respect from you if you actually just share something of your life with them. You're also human.</p> <p>R: Thank you. I think that what everyone has said is important, so let's bring this all together. What qualities make a good LO teacher?</p> <p>P5: <b>Strategic thinking. Critical reasoning,</b> but strategic thinking.</p> <p>R: Explain that a little more for me please.</p> <p>P5: Strategic thinking. When you're dealing with a variety of learners, and the subject is very topical and very life relevant, often enough the context changes from class to class. And if you aren't able to <b>read the class, and strategically adjust your teaching method</b>, you actually may not engage that group of learners. And when you do actually adjust that thinking, you are actually able to engage. I have, for example, two grade twelve classes, both of them reacted very differently to the alcohol campaign. I had to adjust very quickly, and draw in relevant examples to make sure that I held their engagement, otherwise they lose the impact of the lesson.</p> <p>R: So it sounds like you've got to have sound knowledge of different teaching methods, but you need to judge the kids and stay with them.</p> <p>P5: Absolutely.</p> <p>R: What other qualities are important?</p> <p>P9: <b>Empathy.</b></p> <p>P7: <b>Compassion.</b></p> <p>P6: <b>Not judging.</b> An <b>ability to listen</b>, just to listen.</p>	<p>Learners identify with teachers, build relationships</p> <p>Critical thinking</p> <p>Adapt teaching methods and approach to engage learners and successfully present topics</p> <p>Emotional competencies, basic counselling skills</p>
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<p>Teacher trait: flexible</p>	<p>Sometimes whether you agree or don't agree, whether it's irrelevant or you think it's not topical to what you're doing, just to listen to why it's coming out now or why it's being said at the moment. So that kid is really comfortable right now to discuss something, you see, that's why it's important not to be based on content all the time because then you've got to say, 'Okay, in a minute, cause we just have to finish this worksheet'. You've got to give the time out, so you've got to be <b>flexible</b>. And you've got to be able to move with the tide.</p>	<p>Being flexible and paced by learners</p>
<p>LO: exists in context</p>	<p>R: It sounds like basic counselling skills are important.</p> <p>P9: I think we <b>cut into the issues of the school</b>. By listening in class we figure out that this is a problem and that perhaps ... Or maybe there's a special issue that we want mentioned, we might spend five ten minutes of the lesson doing that. So we pick up, we have our ears...</p> <p>R: You're in touch with the school.</p> <p>P9: And we pick up the issues that are pertinent to the school, and we talk about it. We don't hide it.</p> <p>R: So transparency is also important. And I think it also links to what you were saying about self-disclosure.</p>	<p>Address issues in school community</p> <p>Transparency</p>
<p>Teacher skills: adapt classroom management</p>	<p>P8: But also, <b>you can't be a teacher that wants the kids to just sit quietly</b>. Like very strict people. But just sit there and move, and just listen and not say anything. Not, it mustn't be chaos in your class, but I mean you can't have that very formal, strict lesson with them in LO.</p>	<p>Class management that facilitates sharing</p>
<p>Teacher practices: have learners trust</p>	<p>P6: And also <b>trust</b>. They've got to trust what they say to us will be taken into the context that it was said, and that kind of thing. But I think we've done it very well here. Our whole department. I think the kids</p>	<p>Learners must trust</p>

<p>Teacher skill: basic counselling skills Teacher skill: organisation</p> <p>Teacher practices: identify barriers to learning</p>	<p>are quite good, I think in the lessons they just blurt out things and tell us things that, and want our opinions on what they say. And I think that a lot of other departments, most departments, won't get that information out of the kids, even under duress.</p> <p>R: So if I can summarise, it sounds as if there are basic competencies which teachers need to have. And that this stretches from knowledge to teaching methods, and then very strongly based on counselling skills, such as listening, empathy and who you are as a person. How do your competencies influence the way in which you teach?</p> <p>P5: You want me to discuss the relevant competencies, or...</p> <p>R: Ja, let's go there.</p> <p>P5: Okay, well aside from the <b>empathy, the counselling nature of the subject, I would think sound organisational skills.</b> But I mean, regardless of that, if you, I mean I sometimes have up to eleven classes depending on the year. And that's quite a few classes. Where English, maths they have half the amount of classes although double the amount of lessons. But in terms of administration, you're actually doubling up your time for portfolios or whatever you're doing. You at least need to have sound organisational skills, just so that you can get by in that area. Other than that, it's the full set of counselling, empathy, or strategic thinking. The learners, <b>how you deal with their problems, identifying barriers to learning,</b> so that's pretty much it.</p>	<p>Emotional competencies</p> <p>Organisational skills important with teaching load</p> <p>Problem- solving Identify and address</p>
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## **ADDENDUM J**

## Teacher practices

School	Participant	Use own experiences as positive learning opportunity																			
		Affected by access to and availability of external resources		*																	
		Develop own survival skills		*																	
		Private life separate			*																
		Identify other role-players and refer		*																	
		Model certain traits and behaviour													*						
		Provide balance, holistic approach	*		*																
		In touch with child and their world	*	*	*	*															
		Classroom practices to facilitate sharing, self-disclosure																			
		Reflect on practices					*				*										
		Can change others' perceptions of LO, important in school									*										
		Identify and address learners problems									*										
		Make LO appealing, lack of interest affects learners	*																		
		Influence of training and experience																		*	
Preparing for lessons	*								*												
Relationship with learners important	*	*																			
Approach to topic important, teaching methods used	*				*				*									*			
Have learners trust	*	*	*						*												
Personal growth and self-awareness		*	*						*												
Keep up-to-date	*	*			*				*												
Use examples to make relevant		*	*						*										*		
School	P1																				
	P2																				
	P3																				
	P4																				
2	P5	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*					*		
	P6	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*							
	P7																				
	P8			*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*							
	P9	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*							
3	P10	*							*												
	P11		*		*				*	*	*	*	*	*							
	P12				*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*							
	P13				*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*							
	P14	*			*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*							