

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

The introduction of Curriculum 2005 brought about changes into the South African education system. The outcomes-based approach was introduced which aims at developing skills, critical thinking, attitudes and understanding (Department of Education 1997:3). The underlying theory of outcomes-based education also aims at equipping learners with better skills for their life after school. All forms of learning are recognised so that learning should become an ongoing process. Learners should be able to build on what they learn as they move from one learning situation to another. The traditional perceptions of learning that include ideas that learners should be good listeners, memorise facts and reproduce such facts are to be replaced by more meaningful strategies in learning (Mokoka 1998:28).

Learning areas as opposed to subjects have been introduced. Learning areas are aimed at teaching learners to be more practical and to acquire skills rather than to acquire and reproduce knowledge (Department of Education 1997:7). Life Orientation is one of the learning areas introduced by the Curriculum 2005.

Life Orientation is desired to work preventatively but also curatively to develop responsible citizens. According to Kriege (2002:1), it aims to transform education to be socially relevant and address the needs of a diverse South African society. Life Orientation should be taught as a learning area that plays an important role in everyday life and future occupations. It guides and prepares learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation (Department of Education 2002:4). Life Orientation is regarded as the key area as it is central to the development and growth of all learners.

Learners should develop a range of life skills which will enable them to survive in the world of today. Life Orientation plays an important part towards developing learners holistically into responsible persons who will be able to function fully in the community. It ensures that learners are developed intellectually, physically, personally socially, spiritually and emotionally. All these aspects are covered to enhance the cooperation of people in a diverse society. Life Orientation locates its vision for individual growth within the quest for a free democratic and stable society, for quality of life in the community and for a productive economy (Kriege 2002:29). It is clear that the aim of the Department of Education is to help learners develop life skills and to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation. According to the Department of Education (2002:4), Life Orientation empowers learners to make informed decisions and take appropriate action regarding:

- Health promotion
- Social development
- Personal development
- Physical development and movement and
- Orientation to the world of work.

The scope of Life Orientation demands that educators teaching this learning area should be emotionally balanced and well equipped with knowledge to ensure that all the outcomes are realised. In the learning situation educators are expected to plan and implement programmes that will make the teaching of Life Orientation effective. If educators experience difficulty in offering this learning area, learners may not see it as an essential element of their lives. Educators have to make learners aware of the value of Life Orientation. Thus, they should feel worthwhile to teach it. The Department of education (2002:3-4) has a vision of Life Orientation educators who are:

- Socially and politically critical and responsible;
- Professionally competent and in touch with current developments (especially in their own field); and
- Open to views and opinions held by learners which may differ from their own.

It is essential to realise that Life Orientation educators need to deal with the new learning material with which many of them are not conversant. It is therefore imperative for them to develop their own lifeskills. Teachers are key agents in the schooling system, and the reconstruction of education in South Africa requires teachers to discover or rediscover their potential and responsibilities as teachers (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 2000:23).

Dlamini (cited by Mulaudzi 2000:3) states that while the euphoria of the elections has passed and the winds of change are blowing across South Africa, it is important to realise that change brings uncertainty. However, at the same time, it provides opportunities to look at areas that need urgent attention in education. Life Orientation teaching is one of such areas.

## **1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

### **1.2.1 Awareness of the problem**

The complexity of a rapidly changing contemporary South Africa has resulted in the formal education system being called upon increasingly to deal with issues which would previously have been considered to be exclusive responsibility of the family (National Department of Education 1994:1). There are numerous problems associated with the teaching of Life Orientation such as sexuality education, disintegration of family life, moral degeneration, changing of traditional values and a growing need for specialist knowledge in the new learning area. Educators are required to possess knowledge to deal with the individual needs of learners and to assist them in a case where they experience problems in adjusting to the life situation.

The researcher's interest in the current problem was awakened by the number of learners who needed psychological help due to the problems that they encountered at school and at home. As a Head of Department of Life Orientation, educators referred learners to the researcher for assistance but it was difficult for her to assist them as she did not possess the skills to help them. This situation prompted her to register for the degree BEd Honours (Guidance and Counselling). This made the researcher aware of her experiences and frustrations as a Life Orientation educator and the challenges of the Curriculum 2005.

During the researchers' teaching career, she was involved with children from informal settlements. It was clear that the learners needed love and someone they could rely on as they were carrying a grave burden on their shoulders and they had no one to share it with. These learners need life skills which will assist them to cope with their situation. Learners are exposed to risk factors such as crime, drugs, public violence, car hijacking, HIV and AIDS, unemployment of parents, alcoholism in the family, divorce and orphanhood.

These problems motivated the researcher to choose this topic for research. It appeared that Life Orientation educators need attention at schools. Society is changing at an alarming pace yet Life Orientation educators are attached to the past system. The Revised National Curriculum Statement demands educators to be experts in their fields as can be seen by the scope of Life Orientation. According to the Department of Education (2002:5), the scope of LO covers the following:

- Enabling learners to make informed decisions about personal, community and environmental health promotion.
- Enabling learners to form positive social relationships and to know and exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities.
- Empowering learners to achieve and extend their personal potential to contribute positively to the society and to cope with and respond to the challenges in the world.
- Promoting physical development as an integral part of social, cognitive and emotional development from early childhood through the General Education and Training band (GET).
- Developing a positive orientation to study and work, and the ability to make informed decisions regarding careers and study.

### **1.2.2 Preliminary literature study**

The introduction of outcomes-based education brought about multi-faceted problems, with which educators must cope. Learners are to be taught skills, attitudes and values that will enhance a

positive practice in their community. Educators who are skilled in understanding and communicating with these young people are required (Schmidt 2003:38). The following challenges met by educators in the teaching and learning situation are highlighted.

#### *1.2.2.1 Teachers' qualifications*

According to Donald et al (2000:98), the orientation of new teachers into a school is an important aspect and often neglected step. Therefore, professional development of teachers must be a priority for any education system. Educators still adhere to the old methods of imparting knowledge without active involvement of learners. The new learning area demands that new approaches should be introduced so that learners understand its worth. The lack of qualifications and poor training compel educators to adhere to rigid methods and to depend entirely on textbooks (Mokoka 1998:4).

#### *1.2.2.2 Environmental setting*

The environmental setting impedes the delivery of education in most predominantly black schools. Educators find themselves faced with overcrowded classrooms where it is impossible to give learners individual attention. It is also difficult for educators to consult with learners privately as there are no rooms available. Learners do not feel free to consult with educators on matters that require confidentiality because of the fear of being seen by others. The prevailing conditions in many schools, such as the high learner: educator ratio, the lack of facilities and resources militate against creating the desired learning and teaching environment (Department of Education 1997:74).

#### *1.2.2.3 Educational support services*

The support services in the district are meant to coordinate with schools by helping the educators with problems that they cannot handle. The aim of the Department of Education is to support teachers in meeting the demands of social problems and special needs and they must coordinate and give focus to the vital process of health promotion as well as prevention (Donald et al

2000:25). The department's plans to introduce support services are well-founded but it is difficult for that process to take place due to lack of manpower.

#### *1.2.2.4 Sexuality education*

As it is expected by the scope of this learning area, learners should be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health. Learners should make informed choices about lifestyle and safety aspects. Lifestyle covers topics such as drug abuse and sexuality education which is crucial and should be treated with sensitivity. The department believes that sexual expression should be regarded as a positive and integral part of healthy living and interpersonal relationships (Van der Elst 1993:15)

The Department of Education introduced sexuality education in schools and certain educators have been trained to implement it and to act as master trainers of their colleagues. Educators have expressed their concern on the prescriptive type of training. On the other hand some parents and other religious leaders have rejected the programme on the grounds that it will corrupt their children as it includes topics which are taboos in traditional African culture (Van der Elst 1993:13). This move makes it difficult for educators to perform their duties as some parents refuse to allow their children be exposed to such subjects.

Factors such as age, gender, marital status and parenthood seem to be obstacles in the teaching of sexuality education. Educators should recognise the differing needs, values and vulnerabilities of learners and be familiar with stages of psychosexual development. Educators should learn to be non-judgemental as learners are inquisitive and anxious to know about their physical changes. All these require an openminded and skilled person who is committed and responsible.

#### *1.2.2.5 Inclusive education*

Inclusive Education takes into account that all learners can learn and they need support to benefit in the teaching and learning situation. This means that all learners who require low-intensive

support should receive this in ordinary schools (Department of Education 2001:15). All learners who have been excluded and labelled as special needs should be included in mainstream schools. The department is endeavouring to redress the imbalances of the past by inclusive education instead of special schools. There are various learning barriers that learners are faced with, such as lack of resources and skilled educators who can provide necessary help. The Ministry of Education suggests that learners who experience severe barriers to learning should be identified and supported. This is a difficult task for educators due to lack of expertise in inclusive education.

#### *1.2.2.6 Parental involvement*

Parents from the previously disadvantaged communities are still struggling to come to terms with their new role in their children's education. They still believe that a teacher is a source of knowledge and they cannot contribute positively towards their children's learning. They are seldom available when they are called to address their children and fail to come to school to check on the progress of their children. Involvement of parents in the life of the school is of great benefit to the school, learners and parents (Donald et al 2000:100).

### **1.2.3 Statement of the problem**

The preliminary literature study presented in the foregoing section showed that there are many factors that contribute to the lack of competence of Life Orientation educators in the teaching and learning situation. Life Orientation educators are also confronted with the new learning area which requires them to understand the following:

- Knowledge of adolescent development;
- Knowledge of Life Orientation content; and
- Knowledge of Life Orientation skills.

The research questions addressed by this study are as follows:

- Is the knowledge of educators concerning the content of Life Orientation adequate?
- Do Life Orientation educators have the skills to teach relevant life skills effectively to learners?
- Are Life Orientation educators knowledgeable about the development of adolescents?
- Is there a need for in-service training of life Orientation educators?

### **1.3 AIMS OF RESEARCH**

The aims of the study are:

- To determine the competency of Life Orientation Educators in the teaching of the learning area Life Orientation.
- To determine whether Life Orientation educators have the skills to teach Life Orientation effectively.
- To determine whether Life Orientation educators possess adequate knowledge about adolescent development.

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research study will be quantitative in nature. The study will focus on the knowledge of Life Orientation educators with regard to the content of Life Orientation, the skills of Life Orientation educators and the knowledge of Life Orientation educators about adolescent development.

A questionnaire will be used in this study. A sample of Life Orientation educators from 10 different schools will be selected to respond to the questionnaire. The sample will be selected in order to obtain a diverse view about the skills and knowledge possessed by Life Orientation educators in the senior phase. A description of the sample and research method will be explained in chapter four.



## 1.5 DEMARCATION OF RESEARCH

The focus of this research will be on the training needs of Life Orientation educators in the senior phase of the General Education and Training band. The senior phase educators have been chosen in this study as learners in this phase are in their last years of compulsory education and they require guidance with regard to life outside school. For the purpose of this study the term **adolescent** will be used as it has the same conceptual connotation with a **Senior Phase learner**, that is, individuals who are at a particular developmental stage attend the senior phase. Both terms refers to stages of human development. The adolescent referred to in this study is between the ages of 13 and 16 years. These adolescents need knowledge and skills as they are exiting into the Further Education and Training band (see **figure 1.1**). It is therefore important to validate the educator's contributions to learners' well being in terms of their need to be trained in this regard.

**Figure 1:1 National Qualification Framework**

<b>HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</b>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	
5, 6, 7, & 8	Diplomas, Degrees, Higher degrees, Further Research Degrees	
<b>FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</b>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Grades</b>
4, 3 & 2	Training certificates, mix of units	10, 11, & 12 , Technical colleges
<b>GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND</b>		
1	Senior Phase	7, 8, & 9
1	Intermediate Phase	4, 5, & 6
1	Foundation Phase	R, 1, 2, & 3

## 1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For clarity of this study the following concepts will be explained.

**Life Orientation** is the study of the self in relation to others and the society. It is concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor, physical growth and development of learners and the way in which their dimensions are interrelated and expressed in life (Department of Education 2003:44). Life Orientation focuses on the learner as an independent self in the society and how the learner should contribute to the democratic society that demands rapid change.

**Outcomes-based education** is a process that focuses on what is to be learned, the outcome is a demonstration of learning. It is what the student is to know or do (Pretorius 1998 ix). Outcomes-

based education according to Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:7) is an approach that requires educators and learners to focus their attention on two things which are:

- The desired end result of each learning process;
- The instructive and learning processes that will guide the learners to these end results.

Spady (1993:18) defines outcomes as highly quality demonstrations of significant learning in context. It is a demonstration of learning that occurs at the end of a learning experience.

**Life Skills** is defined as an ability to do a particular function that helps one to cope with and or overcome life's challenges. Skills include proficiency, competence and expertise in some activity. The essential element of a life skill is the ability to make and implement a sequence of choices to achieve a desired objective (Nelson-Jones 1991:11). Life Skills, according to Department of Education (1997:vii), are adaptive and positive behaviour that enable us to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of every day life.

**Educator** is a person whose profession is teaching. It is derived from the word education which means the development of knowledge, skills, ability and character by training, study or experience (World Book Encyclopaedia 1995:671). An educator is a person whose work involves educating others at all levels of education in any type of education or training context, including formal and informal settings, for example, teacher, lecturer, parent or youth counsellor (Department of Education 1997:iv).

**Life Orientation educator** is a person who is able to fulfil his or her role as a contributor towards a learner's health promotion, personal development, social development, physical development and movement and orientation towards the world of work (Department of Education 2002:38). The Life Orientation educator should be dedicated, caring and passionate about his or her work as he or she works with a learner holistically.

**Learner** is a person who requires knowledge or skills by observation, study or instruction (Webster Comprehensive Dictionary 1999:779). This word is derived from the word learning

which is defined as a process by which changes in behaviour result from experience or practice (World Book Encyclopaedia 1995:1192).

**Senior Phase** according to Department of Education (1997:6) is the last phase of the General education and Training Certificate. It is assumed that at this phase learners are able to reason independently of concrete material and experience. They are able to engage in open argument and are willing to accept multiple solutions to problems.

**Adolescent** is derived from the Latin word *adolescere* meaning ‘to grow up’ or ‘thus referring to a development phase in the human life cycle that is situated between childhood and adulthood (Gouws, Kruger & Burger 2000:2). This definition emphasises a period in the life span of an individual which requires the acquisition of social, physical, emotional and personal skills necessary to enter the world of adult society (Dusek 1987:14).

## **1.7 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

The aim of **chapter one** has been to introduce the topic under discussion. There has been an orientation of the reader to the study and the various areas that this study aims to achieve.

**Chapter two** will deal with the review of literature in order to shed more light on the background, the scope and the concept Life Orientation.

**Chapter three** will highlight the role of the Life Orientation educator, the skills of Life Orientation educators and their understanding of adolescent development.

**Chapter four** will focus on details of research methods.

**Chapter five** will be based on research findings and discussions.

**Chapter six** will provide conclusions and recommendations.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

The introduction of Life Orientation into the curriculum seemed to be a key to solving psychological, societal and emotional problems learners encounter in life so that they are able to deal with these challenges. Educators are confronted with pressures in the teaching and learning situation that hamper their abilities to perform their duties effectively. Chapter two will focus on the overview of Life Orientation.