

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study emanated from the awareness that Life Orientation educators in the Senior Phase of schools in the Mabopane district require more training in the teaching of Life Orientation. A literature study also indicated that more training is required in terms of content of Life Orientation, knowledge of the adolescent and Life Orientation skills. The researchers' experience in the teaching of Life Orientation led to her observation that there was a need for in-service training of Life Orientation educators.

From the orientation done in chapter one it is apparent that Life Orientation educators experience problems with challenges that are incorporated in this learning area. It appears as if problems are being experienced in dealing with the content of Life Orientation which includes the structure, skills for Life Orientation implementation and knowledge about adolescents. However, if Life Orientation is to be effectively implemented in schools, it is important for educators to find ways of dealing with the existing challenges.

A literature study was done in chapter two and chapter three to explore the concept Life Orientation by focusing on the following: outcomes of Life Orientation, the definition of Life Orientation, skills in teaching Life Orientation, developmental stages of adolescence and different teaching approaches. An understanding of these concepts is crucial for educators offering this learning area. The information gained from the literature study was used to verify the findings in the research study.

6.2 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE STUDY

6.2.1 The scope of Life Orientation

The literature study was carried out on the structure of and scope of Life Orientation. This was done because educators' needs with regard to the learning area Life Orientation seem to be unfulfilled. Furthermore by exploring the curriculum of Life Orientation as stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, it was clear that there are many requirements in order for educators to effectively offer Life Orientation.

The findings in the literature study revealed that educators seem to be struggling with the scope of Life Orientation (see section 2.4.2). It appears as though educators are struggling with basic concepts of teaching Life Orientation and it is therefore recommended that the curriculum of Life Orientation should be clearly explained to educators. Educators need training in that regard and training should to be more practical than theoretical.

The relevance of this study is emphasized in the results which indicate that, although Curriculum 2005 has been introduced in South African education, educators are still struggling in implementing relevant concepts which are expected. The results indicate that educators' information is inadequate and that there is a need for training Life Orientation educators.

6.2.2 The impact of adolescence developmental stages on the teaching of Life Orientation

A literature study was carried out on the developmental needs and concerns of adolescents in the Senior Phase. This was done because learners' needs and concerns direct the role of Life Orientation educators. Furthermore, by exploring the learners' needs and problems in the Senior Phase, it was possible to identify different requirements needed for Life Orientation educators. The literature study focused on various aspects of adolescence development such as physical, emotional, intellectual and social characteristics. The findings indicated the following:

In the area of physical development learners had to deal with dramatic changes which according to George et al (1998:28) highlighted that the physical changes that impact negatively on the growth of adolescents cause distress to many learners (see section 3.3.1). All the various ways in Life Orientation of dealing with these learners by becoming responsive to their needs, have been indicated in paragraph 3.3.1.1.

With regard to adolescents' emotional development, supportive and nurturing relationships are regarded as fruitful. Adolescents at this stage are striving for identity formation. The adolescent is able to develop a healthy personality if he or she can successfully avoid role confusion. Gouws (2004:33) maintains that educators must possess certain skills in handling emotions in an education context. It is true that adolescents may seek guidance and support regarding emotional problems (see section 3.3.3).

In the area of intellectual development (see section 3.3.2) there is a need to expand inductive and deductive reasoning with formal operational thoughts. Critical consciousness in adolescents necessitates guidance in developing the adolescents' discriminatory abilities concerning value systems and personal decision-making skills.

The relationship concept has been identified as important in the adolescents' social development (see section 3.3.4). Relationships such as peer-groups relationships and friendships are vital to adolescents. Adolescents become separated from their parents by adopting the culture of youth and depending on friends. The challenge is extended to Life Orientation educators to assist adolescents to deal with different developmental tasks facing them. Adolescents' needs point to the following:

- Educators need to focus on all the developmental patterns since adolescents' problems are interrelated.

- Adolescents need support regarding problems they experience at home and at school as it is vital for educators to understand their background to be able to deal with their problems efficiently.

6.2.3 The role of Life Orientation educator

A Life Orientation educator is viewed as a human development facilitator as they have to guide children into living their lives meaningfully in a society that demands rapid change. They therefore have to ensure that learners maintain good relationships with themselves and others. The Life Orientation educator must manifest certain qualities and skills so that they can be in a position to facilitate growth in learners (*see* Sections 3.5.1 & 3.5.3).

Life Orientation educators should serve as counsellors (*see* Section 3.5.2). They should help to modify learners' behaviour towards positive instead of negative behaviour. It is essential that Life Orientation educators acquire relevant skills to fulfil their roles effectively in a teaching-learning situation as effective communicators. They should also show care and concern to learners.

Life Orientation educators require personal skills to enhance their work. Some of these personal skills are empathy, sympathy and attentiveness. All these skills can enhance the quality of their work. The Life Orientation educator should also be a remedial educator who is able to assist learners with learning disabilities. There are many learners in mainstream schools who require the expertise of these educators to identify and refer them for relevant assistance. It requires of Life Orientation educators to possess the skills in this regard.

6.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

A questionnaire was developed to test the confidence of Life Orientation educators with regard to their knowledge of Life Orientation content, adolescence and Life Orientation skills. The

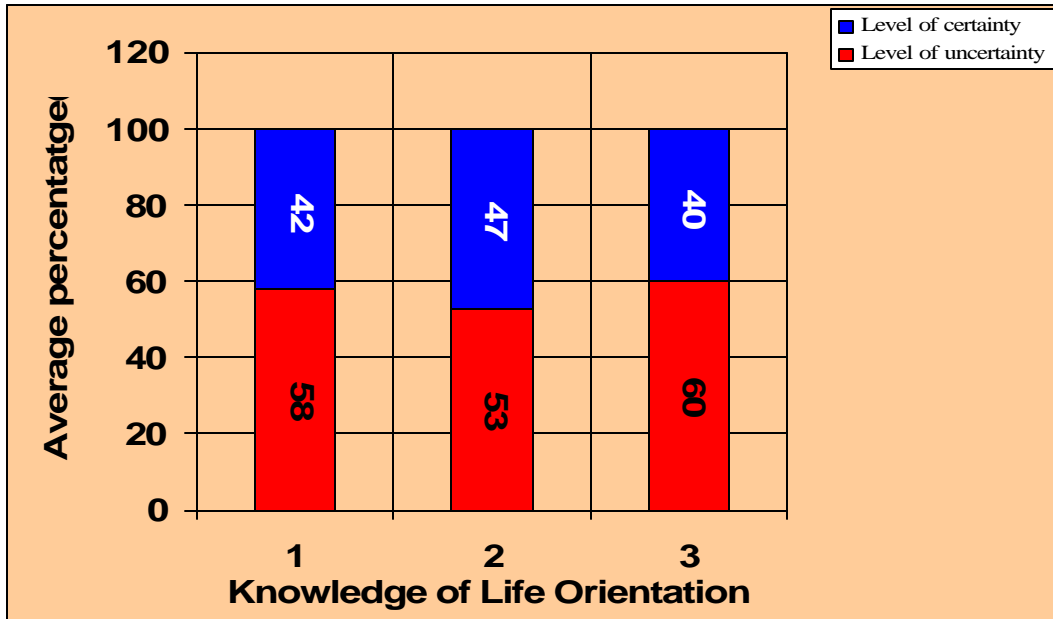
results of the study proved to be useful in determining whether the developed hypotheses should be rejected or accepted.

6.3.1 Hypotheses

- A significant number of Life Orientation educators have no confidence in their knowledge of Life Orientation content (*see* paragraph 5.2.2). The null-hypothesis was accepted.
- A significant number of Life Orientation educators have no confidence with regard to their knowledge of adolescents (*see* paragraph 5.2.3). The null-hypothesis was accepted.
- A significant number of Life Orientation educators have no confidence with their skills to present Life Orientation (*see* paragraph 5.2.4). The null-hypothesis was accepted.
- Different groups do not differ significantly in their confidence with their knowledge of Life Orientation content (*see* paragraph 5.2.5). The null-hypothesis was accepted.
- Different groups do not differ significantly in their knowledge of adolescence (*see* paragraph 5.2.6). The null-hypothesis was accepted.
- Different groups do not differ significantly in their Life Orientation skills (*see* paragraph 5.2.7) The null- hypothesis in this regard was accepted.

It is evident from the results of this study that educators have not been able to deal effectively with the many challenges that they face in the teaching of Life Orientation (*see* Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Educator level of uncertainty regarding their knowledge of Life Orientation



The recommendations given below are based on the literature study and the results of the research study:

- Life Orientation educators need training in content of Life Orientation.
- Life Orientation educators require training to understand an adolescent.
- Life Orientation educators need in-service training to equip them with relevant skills for teaching Life Orientation.

The aforementioned recommendations will be discussed under the following headings:

6.3.2 Knowledge of Life Orientation content

The response of educators revealed that there are certain aspects in the curriculum of Life Orientation which they are uncertain of. They displayed most uncertainty in the following aspects: how to identify relevant concepts for each learning outcome (86%), how to incorporate Religious Education (82%), all concepts needed in teaching Life Orientation (74%) and learning outcomes of Life Orientation (70%). The following recommendations can be made:

- Educators need to attend ongoing training programs as well as developmental programmes that deal with curriculum development especially the mastery of learning outcomes designed for Life Orientation. The emphasis in this regard is that there should not be ad hoc training programmes; there should be a follow up of programmes dealt with in workshops for educators to reflect on their experiences during their teaching and to highlight the aspects that need more attention.
- There should be school cluster meetings where educators come together to share their experiences and make suggestions how to address different concepts in their teaching of Life Orientation.
- An in-depth study policy is needed particularly in terms of culture and religion. The Department of Education should provide workshops to help educators deal with policy related issues that affect the school.

6.3.3 Knowledge of adolescents

Educators in the research study identified specific challenges that they are most uncertain about when dealing with adolescents. Most emphasis should be placed on the following aspects: dealing with at risk adolescents (64%), factors that influence adolescents' familial relationships (64%) and factors influencing adolescents' scholastic achievement (62%). The following recommendations are made:

- Life Orientation educators should attend courses that are more psychologically inclined since many aspects in Life Orientation require a background on adolescent development.
- The triangulation concept should be put into place i.e. the school; the learner and the family (*see* Section 2.5.4). Educators need to involve the family whenever dealing with the learners as the family plays an important role in understanding the learners' background. Families should be more involved in the teaching and learning of their children and this should be initiated by Life Orientation educators as they work with the learner in all aspects of their development.

6.3.4 Life Orientation skills

It has been noted that Life Orientation educators lack some skills with regard to the implementation of Life Orientation. Most emphasis should be placed on the following aspects; how to assess learners with learning barriers (76%), how to assist learner with learning disabilities (72%) and how to assess learners' distress (70%). To address these problems, Life Orientation educators need to be empowered with such skills. It is recommended that the following should be done:

- Educators should be equipped with skills on how to assess and assist learners experiencing learning barriers in order to actualize their full potential.
- In-service training should be offered by the department to enable educators to perform their tasks efficiently.

6.3.5 General recommendations

In the light of literature study and the research study, Life Orientation educators have proved to be lacking knowledge with regard to content of Life Orientation, knowledge of adolescence and

Life Orientation skills. It is the responsibility of Life Orientation educators to upgrade their qualifications by registering privately with institutions that offer courses in Life Orientation.

According to the findings in this study, it appears the longer the educator has been in the teaching system, the lower the motivation. In order to curb such problems, the Department of Education should target those educators who have been teaching Life Orientation for more than six ;years and give them regular workshops. This will inspire the motivation to work as they seem to be experiencing burnout as a result of lengthy service.

With regard to trainingof educators, it is recommended that more emphasis should be put on male educators in the field of **Knowledge of adolescents** and **Life Orientation skills** as the results in the study indicated a lack in these fields. In contrary, the study has revealed that female educators are less confident about the knowledge of the **Content of Life Orientation** which implies they require additional training. It is also recommended that the collaborative teaching should be implemented among educators of Life Orientation i.e. females, who have shown proficiency in dealing with **adolescents** and **Life Orientation skills** should assist their male counterparts, while the males, who have shown proficiency in the **content of Life Orientation** should assist their female counterparts. This will mitigate the laborious exercise by the Department of Education of cascading such workshops to the educators.

It is recommended that research be done to find out whether initial training of Life Orientation curriculum is catered for in institutions.

6.4 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

The sample-size appeared to have been too small (n = 50 respondents). This might have had a negative impact on the results because the reliability of the results has been positively correlated with the sample size (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:221).

6.5 CONCLUSION

By critically reflecting on the practice of Life Orientation in schools in the Mabopane district, the immediate need for training Life Orientation educators in this learning area was highlighted. If the present situation of more uncertainty continues, quality education is at risk. Therefore, educational planners' envisaged mission and vision of making Life Orientation part of the fundamental learning component in the Further Education and Training Band will not be realised (Department of Education 2003:19).

The Department of Education should produce human resources that will contribute to the betterment of education. It is imperative that educators be trained in Life Orientation as this is a learning area that forms the basis of human development. Life Orientation should be given status it deserves. Educators should be more committed and focused. This will help them in their quest to deal with educational challenges encountered in their teaching of Life Orientation.