



Research Article

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Teachers' Experiences in Contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in Intermediate Phase Classrooms in the Johannesburg North Region

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Abstract

The teaching and contextualisation of Life Skills as required by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document in the intermediate Grades 4-6 have been experienced differently by teachers. The CAPS requires teachers to make the curriculum and content relevant to the varied needs and lives of learners from different backgrounds. Resultantly, the paper is driven by three objectives a) exploration of teachers' training background; b) understanding and implementation of the CAPS requirements, and c) teachers' conceptualisation of contextualising Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase. The study employs the constructivist theory by Vygotsky and Piaget with the emphasis on knowledge construction, individually and socially. The study was qualitative in nature. Five Life Skills Intermediate Phase teachers were selected, observed, and interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that each teacher had different ways of interpreting and implementing the CAPS Life Skills. The experiences were both positive and negative due to many contextual factors that influenced the contextualisation of the content. Considering the findings, the study suggests that Life Skills should be prioritised in schools as are other subjects and be taught by specialist teachers. Further studies can be conducted to explore the impact of contextualisation of the Life Skills subject on the life of learners.

Keywords: *Life Skills, Contextualisation, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, Teachers' experiences, Learners' context*

1. Introduction

Teachers are faced daily with many challenges within the school environment. An example of such a challenge is their perception Life Skills curriculum they perceive as too content-based and limited time to cover all the content in the stipulated time frame of the curriculum. In the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills (Department of Education [DoE], 2011) the time allocation for one of the components of Life Skills: Personal and Social Wellbeing (PSW) is one and a half hours per week. Teachers constantly have to make multiple decisions regarding various educational matters, for example how to keep lessons relevant by contextualising to learners' different environments and also by including the use of technology – in this case, Life Skills. This implies that the inclusion of Life Skills in the

curriculum is important and requires teachers to teach them effectively so that learners can apply or transfer them to authentic real-life situations.

According to the CAPS (DoE, 2011, p. 8), “Life Skills equips learners with knowledge, skills and values that assist them to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential ... assist them to become independent and effective in responding to life’s challenges and to play an active and responsible role in society”. In other words, Life Skills develops a learner holistically and ensure that a learner is equipped with the skills and knowledge for his or her present and future life. For learners to acquire these skills the Life Skills teachers as described in policy documents from the DoE envisaged teachers should be qualified, competent, dedicated, and caring (Parker, 2011). These teachers should be capable of performing the seven roles of educators set out by the DoE, namely mediators of learning, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, leaders, administrators and managers, citizens and pastors, assessors, and subject specialists (DoE, 2011; Parker, 2011).

The World Health Organization (1997) defines life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that empower individuals to deal with life’s daily challenges. In agreement are Ebersohn and Eloff (2004) who noted that life skills are those skills that will enrich individuals’ lives, are vital to cope autonomously and proficiently with the daily activities, and all the demands and changes in various environments. Prajapati, Sharma, and Sharma (2017) added that life skills reinforce the capacity of an individual to meet the needs and demands of present-day society and assist with dealing with issues such as unemployment and others. Furthermore, Ramesht and Farshad (2004) through their study proved that life skills training increased the mental and physical health of individuals, problem-solving skills, reasoning skills, decision making, creativity, and teamwork. In the same breath, Albertyn, Kapp, and Groenewald (2004) stated that life skills training enhances critical thinking abilities, and it also aids individuals in being responsible in their job environment. This implies that Life Skills forms one of the important subjects that can help society and learners to deal with national and global social, emotional, and political problems. Thus, one can infer that teachers must consider learners’ backgrounds when teaching.

Based on the seven rules of teachers stipulated above, we maintain that for teachers to be able to teach and contextualise the Life Skill subject they need to be qualified and experts in the subject. Similarly, the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills requires teachers to teach learners so that they can transfer the content learnt to their authentic contexts – everyday life and environment. One of the aims of the curriculum is ensuring that learners acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are significant to their own lives (DoE, 2011). With teachers’ classrooms made up of different learners from varied environments, cultures, ethnic groups, genders, religions, and socioeconomic statuses to name a few, the study assumed that teachers would find it challenging to achieve this aim. This means then that, preservice teachers will have to be equipped with the necessary skills to apply Life Skills and to contextualise the content effectively. Adversely, many unqualified teachers of Life Skills teach the subject (Kalanda, 2010; Okech & Role, 2015).

Thus, the study endeavoured to see how teachers contextualise content in their classrooms and the experiences they gained in the process. We maintain that teachers must possess the necessary Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to be successful in contextualising the curriculum (Shulman, 1986). When teachers are not experts nor trained in the subject they teach, they will lack the necessary PCK (Shulman, 1986) which refers to the teacher’s subject content, acquisition of knowledge, and skills to teach the subject – in this case, Life Skills (Shulman, 1986). It is the “blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (Shulman, 1987, p.8). In other words, this means good knowledge of the content within Life Skills, presentation, and teaching skills which are governed by the teacher’s approach, techniques, strategy, and methods. Ornstein (2005) stated that teachers have to possess the necessary skills of teaching that they can acquire from institutions and on-the-job training.

Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) is a method of teaching that helps teachers to teach

learners the subject matter and helps them understand the subject matter by relating it to a real-world context or situation (Sears, 2002). Jilin (2018) added by stating that the priority is to employ children's experiences fully when the contextualised curriculum subject links with real life. Thus, this drastically increases learners' commitment to their schoolwork because they find meaning in learning the concepts and they understand how those concepts can be used in real-world contexts (Berns & Erickson, 2001). When teachers can draw on learners' previous experiences and use real-life examples, then learners can relate to what they are saying and make sense of the topics.

Various studies have been conducted on the teaching of Life Skills in schools and their importance to learners in South African schools. No study has been conducted focusing on teachers' experiences of contextualisation of Life Skills in the Johannesburg North region. In a study conducted in one school in Mpumalanga, Mosia (2011) found that many teachers experience difficulty with the implementation of the Life Skills subject due to a lack of training in this regard. Furthermore, it was found that teachers were not receiving additional support from the DoE and lacked the knowledge and expertise to effectively teach the Life Skills subject to learners.

Another study conducted in the Free State province by Stroebel, Hermanus, and Bloemhoff (2018) focused on the challenges that Life Orientation teachers experienced specifically with the component of Physical Education. Furthermore, Jansen van Vuuren and van Niekerk (2015) conducted a study with regard to Life Skills referring to the components of Music and Creative Arts and they pointed out the challenges these teachers faced with the implementation of the subject. In the study conducted by Chirwa (2009) in the Zomba District of Malawi on Life Skills teachers, it was revealed that teachers worked in poor conditions and received very low remuneration resulting in demotivation.

Considering this, the study aimed to investigate the experiences of Intermediate Phase Life Skills teachers at a school in Johannesburg North of contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in their classrooms to meet learners' needs. The research question was: What are the experiences of the Intermediate Phase Life Skills teachers in the contextualisation of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in order to meet the learners' needs?

2. Theoretical Framework

Since the study focused on how Life Skills teachers construct their knowledge and their experiences with the curriculum, the best-suited theory was constructivism. The constructivist theory is based on how people learn and construct knowledge, in this case, their experiences. According to Elliot, Kratochwill, Cook, and Traverse (2000), constructivism is an approach to learning where individuals create their own knowledge by basing new knowledge on previous knowledge (Elkind in Andrews, Pederson, & McEvoy, 2011) and by developing their own meaning through their own experiences (Arends, 1998; van Zile Tamse, 2021). In this case, Life Skills teachers will create contextualisation experiences by comparing requirements of the curriculum to their preservice training and already existing PCK and will actively sift the content to construct their own meaning.

The theory of constructivism was developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). He believed that social interactions played a major role in how children learn. His major assumption was that children learn through collaborative learning with an expert called the 'knowledgeable other', wherein cognitive abilities are developed through social interactions with parents, teachers, and peers (Vygotsky, 1987). Furthermore, to Vygotsky (1978), a child's cultural development will occur twice, firstly on a social level and then secondly, on an individual level. Learning was not only influenced by adults and the learner's peers, but also by cultural beliefs. He said that each culture provides "tools of intellectual adaptation" in which memorisation or note-taking influences the way children think and what they think about (Vygotsky, 1980). In essence, the theory implies that all knowledge is socially and culturally constructed, and a learner cannot learn on their own. Meaning that Life Skills teachers will draw and base their teaching experiences on the people they interact with – both learners and colleagues, their training as teachers, through their cultural lenses, and what they understand

contextualisation to be. In the Life Skills Intermediate Phase, teachers must rely on and collaborate with peers, learners, and the facilitators to help them gain knowledge and skills. The teachers' agency to construct contextualisation experiences is important in this regard and will be influenced by their approach, technique, strategy, and the methods they employ in their teaching.

Another proponent of constructivism is Jean Piaget. Piaget (1964) believed in cognitive development, and he believed that children had to be allowed to learn and discover on their own. Piaget's theory of constructivism argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences (Piaget, 1964). He believed that children create their own understanding of the world around them. In so doing, they expand their new knowledge and build on their previous knowledge. In the context of this study, teachers interpret, construct, and make meaning on their own knowledge in contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills as a means of developing the cognitive ability of their learners. They construct knowledge cognitively, through working independently by reading through the CAPS policy document, using the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) and Scripted Lesson Plans (SLP), and their knowledge from Outcomes-Based Education (OBE).

This theory was relevant to the study because it helped address the issue of how the Life Skills teachers construct their experiences as they contextualise the Intermediate Phase CAPS Curriculum Life Skills. The theory allows teachers to construct personal experiences through interpretation and making meaning individually and socially as they interact with learners and peers in school and the classroom (Hein, 2007). In this case, Life Skills teachers who hold different cultural beliefs and experiences about their PCK as teachers, interact with learners and implement the curriculum and try to understand their classroom environment and how to deal with different issues pertaining to the impact on teaching and learning. Thus, the researchers considered the meaning making and Life Skills teachers' contextualisation experiences as critical to the construction and conceptualisation of teaching as they took place in their classroom context. The researchers held the view that there would be no experiences anywhere in the classroom until the Life Skills teachers grappled, construed, and constructed their own meaning. Constructivism was also relevant because meaning is subjectively constructed from the Life Skill teachers' backgrounds and experiences. This means that the experiences of the Life Skills teachers would not only be formed through interaction with learners and others but also subjectively, and as affected by their social interpretation of contextualisation of the content (Creswell, 2003).

3. Methodology

This study is aligned with the interpretivist paradigm which stresses that social reality is perceived and interpreted by an individual subjectively (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Fraser & Robinson, 2004; Johannesson & Perjns, 2014; Integrity, 2016). According to Willis (2007), the main belief of interpretivism is that it is socially constructed, and participants make meaning of the context based on their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. In this case, Life Skills teachers created knowledge based on varied experiences from their classrooms as they interacted with learners and tried to contextualise the content for different learners with different needs (Bryman, 2012). It implies that the Intermediate Phase Life Skills teachers uniquely interpret and make meaning of contextualisation as influenced by their understanding and perceptions (Creswell, 2014). Thus, all Life Skills teachers were granted an opportunity to share their experiences of contextualising the content as prescribed by the curriculum in the Intermediate Phase from their own perspectives (Longhurst, 2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2012).

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This research design took on a phenomenological approach which is subjective, and its main focus is on individuals' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). Creswell (1998) argued that a phenomenological study portrays the meaning of lived experiences for many

individuals about a hypothesis or phenomena. This means that the Life Skills Intermediate Phase teachers' perspectives on their own experiences of contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills were shared. The choice of this approach was influenced by the aim, research question, and the theoretical framework of the study. It links with the lens of this study as it also emphasises the importance of individual meaning making, understanding, and interpretation of the phenomenon. The study adopted a qualitative research design (Shank, 2002). It takes place in a natural setting and aids in discovering and understanding how individuals or groups of people make sense of their experiences (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kothari, 2004). Researchers are concerned with the meaning that individuals attach to circumstances in their lives, and they are concerned with individuals' own points of reference (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). The qualitative methods allowed the researchers to ask different questions to explore, interpret, and gain an understanding of the teachers' experiences about the contextualisation of the Intermediate Phase CAPS Curriculum Life Skills (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012; Marguerite, Dean, & Katherine, 2006; Silverman, 2006).

3.2 *Participants*

Participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the purposeful choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan, Abubakar Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Teachers were purposively selected according to their relevance (Flick, 2015) to the Life Skills curriculum teaching. Five teachers in the Intermediate Phase who taught Life Skills Grades 4-6 were chosen because they had first-hand experience, had different experiences, and varied years of teaching Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase. They also provided different perspectives on teaching methods and techniques to contextualise the content in their classrooms (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010).

There were four females and one male between 20 and 49 years old. Their teaching experience ranged from five years up to 28 years and they had varying qualifications such as a Higher Diploma in Education, Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), and BEd Honours in Education. Three of the teachers were Life Skills specialists, while two were English specialists teaching Life Skills. To protect the identity of teachers, pseudonyms were used.

3.3 *Data Collection Methods*

In the study, data were gathered through two data collection methods. Firstly, semi-structured interviews were used which are oral exchanges, where the interviewer usually tries to extract information from their participants (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie, & French, 2016). The interviews were flexible and adaptive, allowing room for probing, changing the order of the questions, and rephrasing them when necessary to access teachers' lived experiences on contextualisation of the content (Galletta & Cross, 2017). Teachers were allowed to speak about their experiences in a non-judgemental environment where they could express themselves freely and comfortably about their contextualisation experiences. The researchers listened to elicit information that would answer the research questions (Denicolo, Long, & Bradley-Cole, 2016).

The teachers were asked the following questions in the interviews:

1. Please describe your teacher training experiences with regard to teaching Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase.
2. How were you trained on the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase?
3. Please describe your experiences with the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills as a teacher trainee.
4. What is your understanding of contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills?
5. What general experiences do you have with teaching Life Skills?

The second method of data collection employed was observation. Observation is the mindful perception and detailed evaluation of participants' behaviour in a natural setting, in this study, through watching them presenting lessons (Guest et al., 2013; Sakui & Cowie, 2008). An observation

schedule was prepared for all five Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6 classrooms to observe as teachers presented Life Skills lessons to their learners. All teachers were observed twice due to Covid-19 protocols and restrictions. The researchers were non-participants who viewed the interaction between the teachers and learners. While observing, notes were taken on how contextualisation was presented through the implementation of the content, activities and examples used, interactions between teacher and learners, and teaching methods and techniques (Sakui & Cowie, 2008).

3.4 *Data Analysis*

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and observations were analysed through content analysis (Bowen, 2009). The study followed steps stipulated by Thomas (2003) to analyse data using two phases. First, the interview data were transcribed, and observation notes were analysed. Next, the researcher reduced and systematically organised data by comparing concepts and themes from the interviews to develop themes until they were exhausted, and no new themes could be derived. Then, transcripts were read and reread to identify themes that were not pre-existing but developed from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Flick, 2015) to develop codes. After completing the initial coding phase, the process of consolidation and reinterpretation of the data that led to the creation of categories took place. Finally, the categories were grouped into final themes.

3.5 *Ethical Considerations*

According to Bloor and Moor (2006) ethics is a group of principles guiding and directing researchers while they are conducting their research. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity of participants were enforced. To protect the identity of teachers and learners their names were not used (Bloor & Moor, 2006; Harding, 2013). A letter granting permission to conduct interviews was obtained from the school in Johannesburg North where interviews were going to be held with teaching staff members (Trochim, Donnelly, & Arora, 2016). To ensure the validity of the study, the researchers employed Schmidt's (2004) techniques by thoroughly reading through the transcripts before analysing the data. The transcripts were then given to teachers to read (each their own transcript) to ensure and confirm that it was a true reflection of their contributions. The researchers ensured that the findings were triangulated (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by using different viewpoints and through confirming data.

4. **Findings And Discussion**

The results revealed that teachers had varied experiences regarding contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase in a school in the Johannesburg North region. Teachers indicated how Life Skills is taken for granted and undermined in schools. They also indicated how some teachers use the Life Skills period to catch up on their subjects. Teachers who were not qualified to teach Life Skills had to teach it as there were no qualified Life Skills teachers. Two teachers specialised in English, another teacher specialised in Guidance, and two were Life Orientation teachers. The teachers' training on the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills varied from excellent to poor. Some lacked the necessary PCK as prescribed by the curriculum and struggled to implement the subject. Furthermore, teachers received no support from the School Management Team (SMT) and had to find out on their own how to implement and contextualise the curriculum. Teachers found that the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills was too content-based and entailed topics that were not age-appropriate, and that learners were not emotionally ready to understand the content. Furthermore, teachers felt they did not have enough time to reinforce and consolidate topics as they were restricted by time. It was also found that teachers experienced the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills as too rigid which prohibited teachers from being flexible and creative. Lastly, it was also found that teachers appeared confused by the disconnect between the policy and the practice. Thus, the above

findings were interpreted in five themes as follows.

Theme 1: Teachers' background training at institutes of higher education

The data revealed varied aspects of training. It was revealed by most teachers interviewed and observed that they were trained in different subjects such as Guidance and/or Life Orientation which includes Life Skills. One teacher indicated that she specialised in English, but Life Skills was imposed on her against her will because there was no one to teach it. The participants noted the following:

MO: At teacher training college I did a 2-year specialisation course in Education Guidance.

JB: I studied Life Orientation as one of my majors at university. I have been teaching Life Skills for one year which is easy, as Life Skills was derived from Life Orientation with adjustments made to Life Skills.

AK: No, I specialised in English ... and did not even have Life Skills as one of my modules. I taught English for six years before I was forced to teach Life Skills because there was no suitable teacher.

Paris, Polson-Genge, and Shanks (2010) found that when preservice teachers are qualified with teaching techniques, strategies, and classroom ethics, they can competently perform their teaching roles and transmit the expected skills to the learners during practicum. It is important for trainee teachers to be trained and to specialise in the subjects they envisage teaching, for example, Life Skills. It means then those institutions should train teachers to ensure that they have the necessary skills (Shah et al., 2021). Teachers should be prepared to master their subjects' PCK. Morgan and Bourke (2008) highlighted that the two elements, teachers' experiences and their backgrounds, are essential factors that affect the teaching and learning process. According to Adams-Ojugbele and Moletsane (2019), one of the main signs of an effective teacher training programme is the ability of its preservice teachers to practice the skills they have learnt.

Theme 2: Impact of pre-service training on implementing the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in the Intermediate Phase

It was found that teachers had varied experiences. Three out of five teachers lacked the necessary understanding due to a lack of preservice training in this regard. Two of the teachers felt that they did not receive adequate training to assist with lesson implementation of the curriculum and that impacted them both positively and negatively. As in the first finding, the lack of training caused confusion that resulted in teachers being unsure of contextualising the content for various needs based on race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, and age to name a few. Most teachers indicated that they struggled and had challenges understanding how and what they were expected to teach. Two of the teachers felt despondent and had a negative perception towards teaching Life Skills.

AK: When I started teaching Life Skills no training was offered. I do not fully understand how to incorporate scripted lesson plans in my lessons.

SJ: No, I have not ... however, the policy and Annual Teaching Plans guide me, but I sometimes I feel like I don't know what I am doing or that I am teaching what I am supposed to teach or even how I'm supposed to teach ... but I make it work and learners enjoy it.

In a study conducted by Mosia (2011) on the implementation of Life Orientation in a school in Mpumalanga, he found that many teachers lacked knowledge and understanding in terms of the Life Skills subject, which caused feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. There was one teacher who said she was coping even though she was despondent.

JB: Yes, I was trained in 2011. It was challenging like with any changes. The training was really very insightful. ... This made me feel despondent at times as I didn't always know how to teach the lessons and I wasn't sure if I was teaching the way I was supposed to.

Mudekunye and Sithole (2012) stated that teachers may adopt a negative attitude towards a subject if they do not have enough knowledge on how to implement it and if they cannot see its worth. This implies teachers' performance is linked to the support they receive. Teachers cannot perform their duties adequately if they are not supported and do not receive the necessary in-service training. Proper systems and training programmes need to be put in place to keep teachers updated with curriculum changes and to keep up their morale. Park and Sung (2013) stated that if teachers are

expected to change the fundamentals of their practice, they should be provided with ongoing in-service training.

Theme 3: Teachers' experiences with the implementation of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills

When teachers were asked about the requirements of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills, they showed varying experiences. Three knew the requirements and two did not. The three indicated that they followed the aims and principles of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills. One participant, who is qualified as an English teacher, ensured adherence to the aims as a way of learning, while another one said she observed how other Grade 6 teachers taught, copied, and implemented what they observed in her teaching. During observations it was also found that two of the teachers had no knowledge of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills requirements due to the manner they presented the content with less interaction, narrating and giving learners notes. One experienced it negatively as a heavily loaded curriculum that lacked flexibility and limited creativity. The other two experienced it as an important curriculum that deals with real-life issues, and this was also evidenced in their presentation and interviews. These two teachers supported each other and shared ideas of presenting Like Skills in Grades 4 and 5. Collaboration provides various factors essential for effective professional development such as connections with other learning activities and group participation from teachers teaching in the same grade or subject (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001).

Topics were removed from the Life Skills Teaching Plans, but now they have been re-introduced through the SLPs. The topics that are to be taught are not age-appropriate, as learners are not mature and ready for them.

SJ: The changes I have experienced is how the curriculum is teaching the learners about information that sometimes learners are not ready to receive. ... I feel that some content is not relevant to their age though it is necessary and important for their future ... the content is too much for the Grade 4 learner ... at least it should be taught in high school and not primary.

MO: The ATP has far too much content to be taught in three periods a week ... but the content is good ... I go to the teacher ... to consult when necessary and then practise it in my class.

JB: The first change will be that some topics have been removed from the curriculum and now with the SLP. ... The second change was the number of assessments that changed with PSW, PE, Art, and Music. All the same, it's a good subject that is necessary and I found joy teaching it and sharing real-life issues with my learners who always become enthusiastic and look forward to interacting with me.

Du Plessis and Marais (2015) argued that this curriculum offers guidance to teachers on the planning and implementation of the topics and assessments, but that it could hinder teachers' creativity.

Theme 4: Teachers' understanding of contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills

Teachers had positive experiences with implementing the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills by using authentic materials, information, activities, matters, and interests that are relevant to learners' lives even though some highlighted the lack of sufficient resources.

AK: When I teach my learners, I also make sure the lesson is about them. I involve them as much as I can. When I teach my lesson, I ask them questions and they lead the discussions and talk about their background knowledge and experiences related to the topic.

SJ: In my classroom, I allocate time for group work. In this way, learners learn from each other by taking turns to listen to each other. I ensure that each learner gets a turn to speak and interact with each other so that they exchange their experiences and learn about new experiences.

MO: The Grade 5's and 6's enjoy lessons about how the human body works e.g., communicable diseases – watching video clips of how viruses replicate and spread in the body, puberty – how the body changes. When I taught Grade 6 PSW, I spent a long time dealing with body changes for boys and girls. I spoke openly and honestly and answered questions.

JB: Learners are very shy even though they have a lot of questions about their bodies. They sit in small groups and discuss the topics and they are free to ask questions and answer each other if they feel they know the answer.

SB: Learners are given an opportunity to learn and ask questions that they are afraid to ask their

parents, as many learners come from a background where parents are not present in their children's lives. When we cover certain topics such as drug abuse, we do role play and learners re-enacted scenes from their own lives as many of them come from societies where they are exposed. Others try to be cool and act out scenes from movies.

One can thus infer that in this instance, contextualisation took place as teachers considered learners' backgrounds and needs. The content was also made relevant through the constructivist teaching approach employed. Teachers presented content in such a way that learners could construct their own meaning based on their own experiences. This is supported by Utech (2008), who asserted that contextualised lessons are a very good source for learners to learn and assess certain skills and competencies. According to Gray (2008 in Saidova & Ergasheva, 2019), a constructivist teacher and a constructivist classroom are set apart from a traditional teacher and classroom by certain qualities: the learners are actively involved, the environment is democratic, the activities are interactive and learner-centred, and the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which the learners are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous.

It also emerged that participants felt that Life Skills is seen as a 'lesser' subject and as a 'filler' subject. This is also supported by Wright and Lee (2014, p. 203) who asserted that Life Skills in schools is "under-prioritised at the implementation stage". No sufficient resources are set aside for the implementation thereof.

5. Recommendations

5.1 *Teacher qualification at IHE and provision of in-service training*

Institutions of higher education (IHE) should ensure that Life Skills teachers are prepared to specialise in the subject as a standalone. This will ensure that when teachers enter the classroom, they have the necessary PCK and the required qualifications and skills to teach Life Skills to learners. Pre-service teachers should be provided with a methodology on how to prepare and implement Life Skills lessons in the classroom and be equipped with the necessary practical skills and activities in Life Skills lessons. They should be provided with knowledge using relevant contextual examples and illustrations to suit any learning environment. Professional development is important for teachers as it assists them with providing quality education for their learners.

5.2 *Correlating aspects of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills at school with Life Skills at IHE*

The Life Skills taught at IHE should be correlated with aspects of Life Skills at school so that pre-service teachers can become familiar with the content and methods taught at school. The pre-service teachers should be trained from the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills that is used in schools to guide and assist them with implementing the Life Skills curriculum when they are in schools. The following components should be emphasised: Beginning Knowledge (BK), Personal and Social Wellbeing (PSW), Physical Education (PE), Performing Art (PA), Creative Art (CA).

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the experiences of Intermediate Phase teachers' contextualisation of the Life Skills curriculum and to answer the following research question: What are the experiences of the Intermediate Phase Life Skills teachers in the contextualisation of the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills in order to meet the learners' environmental needs? The experiences of the Intermediate Phase teachers in contextualising the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills were both positive and negative. Aspects of the positive experiences were that some of the teachers had the necessary qualifications and experience to implement and teach the CAPS Curriculum Life Skills. Another positive aspect was that teachers could use learners' experiences and prior knowledge to contextualise Life Skills lessons. One

participant found it to be a relevant and beneficial subject, necessary to address the day to day needs of the learners and the society they live in. The negative experiences were that a few of the teachers were unqualified and not Life Skills specialists, therefore, they did not have the knowledge and skills to implement and contextualise the Life Skills curriculum. Another negative aspect was that teachers felt that the Life Skills subject is not prioritised and only used as a 'filler subject'. Teachers found that the ATP and SLPs did not provide enough assistance with the implementation of Life Skills lessons in the classroom and that there was too much content to teach in a short period.

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