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South AfricaDOI: [http://dx.doi.](http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v39.i3.13)[org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v39.i3.13](http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v39.i3.13)

e-ISSN 2519-593X

Perspectives in Education

2021 39(3): 169-182

PUBLISHED:

16 September 2021

RECEIVED:

02 November 2020

ACCEPTED:

21 January 2021

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# ASSESSING SELECTED TEACHERS' ADAPTIONS TOWARDS AN ADOLESCENT- ORIENTATED LIFE ORIENTATION CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*The primary aim of this qualitative case study was to explore the relevance of seven in-service Grade 10 Life Orientation teachers' teaching-learning operations in two different quintile schools regarding the curriculum topic social and environmental responsibility. Accounts of teaching-learning strategies were used to define the orientation of these seven participants towards the topic social and environmental responsibility, which primarily focuses on content relevant to the adolescent learner. The qualitative findings are discussed thematically and their implications for an adolescent-orientated Life Orientation curriculum are highlighted. Focusing on the teaching-learning strategies of a selected sample of Life Orientation teachers strengthen the merit for suggesting a multi-faceted framework to enhance curriculum outcomes and teaching quality regarding life skills education.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescent; constructivism; environment; Life Orientation; social and environmental responsibility; multi-faceted framework.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Grade 10 Life Orientation teachers are expected to teach sensitive topics under the theme of social and environmental responsibility to adolescent learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and child abuse are sensitive topics that accompany the adolescent learner into the school and the Life Orientation classroom (Diale, 2016; Du Preez *et al.*, 2019; Machenjedge, Malindi & Mbengo, 2019; Malindi, 2018). These topics should, according to the Life Orientation policy statement, be addressed in a holistic and meaningful manner, as they link with the adolescent learner's life outside the classroom. However, it seems that the focus on content in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) tends to overshadow progressive curriculum principles, such as active learning



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and critical and creative thinking (DBE, 2011: 4). For example, if one considers the prescribed summative assessment tasks and reference to specific teaching and learning support material (TLSM), such as textbooks, regarding the presentation of critical issues relating to social and environmental responsibility (see, e.g., DBE, 2011), it is possible that the progressive curriculum principles may deteriorate into a transmission model of teaching-learning. Such an approach towards life skills education through the school subject Life Orientation is in contrast with the cultivation of a Life Orientation teacher as a creator of conditions for learner agency (DBE, 2011: 25). This begs the question: how relevant are Life Orientation teachers' teaching-learning methodologies in developing the South African adolescent's knowledge, values and skills to mitigate environmental risks as outlined under the topic of social and environmental responsibility? The importance of such a question within the context of CAPS is crucial due to the emphasis on the "localization of learning" and "meaningful learning" (DBE, 2011: 3) as well as "holistic education" (DBE, 2011: 8). Each of these dimensions is vital for quality life skills education and, therefore, demands a more critical orientation from Life Orientation teachers towards the quality and relevance of their teaching-learning practices. Such a stance resonates with UNESCO's 2004/2005 Education for All Monitoring Report, which notes that teachers are one of the most significant determining factors in ensuring educational quality. Such education, according to this report, should not merely focus on knowledge acquisition but also incorporate values to enhance responsible citizenship. Since responsible citizenry is also a key focus within the Life Orientation curriculum (DBE, 2011: 8), it challenges life skills education, which mainly emphasises learning as a cognitive activity. Therefore, it be argued that life skills education should be viewed as a life practice in which the Life Orientation teacher and the learners engage and employ so-called non-cognitive processes, such as emotions and social processes.

Based on the aforementioned information, the core focus of this project was to explore how relevant the teaching-learning strategies of seven Grade 10 Life Orientation teachers were to the adolescent learner in light of a content-related curriculum with reference to social and environmental responsibility.

## 2. FRAMING THE PHENOMENON "ENVIRONMENT" WITHIN LIFE ORIENTATION

Since the introduction of Life Orientation to the post-apartheid school curriculum, the construct "environment" has received much attention. The importance thereof is congruent with the expectation of the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996) that children should live in an environment that is not harmful to their well-being. Despite this constitutional awareness, there is a serious decline in the environment, which has an impact on the wellbeing of the individual who is connected to their environment (Le Grange, 2018: 9). While real risks such as teenage pregnancy and other environmental challenges, for instance substance and alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS are on the increase, merely learning *about* these issues in a trouble-free manner through prescribed learner textbooks becomes irrelevant. Given these challenges, the adolescent learner requires nothing less than a pedagogy that examines the socio-environmental issues within their live environment in a constructive manner. Such a pedagogy links with what Gruenewald (2003) refers to as a critical pedagogy of place that allows for a safe space to investigate socio-environmental challenges. Learning in this way becomes more meaningful because the curriculum is put into practice by linking it to current real-world problems (Pleven, 2016:184). For the adolescent learner, learning in this way can

be significant because it is value- and purpose-driven (Dabbagh, Marra & Howland, 2019: 7) and the knowledge and skills are connected to the context in which these will be used (Vakalisa *et al.*, 2004: 147). Therefore, if CAPS emphasises the importance of the application of knowledge, values and skills in real life (DBE, 2011: 8), it seems reasonable to argue that strengthening the knowledge, values and skills of the adolescent learner in a resourceful manner through life experiences is paramount. This encourages the inclusion of real-world socio-environmental challenges, which the compulsory school subject Life Orientation does well. However, research indicates that a poor understanding of the concept "environment" exists and teachers have little capacity for infusing it into their teaching-learning practices (Ramsaroop & Van Rooyen, 2013; Swarts, 2016). This observation about the environment can be linked to what researchers such as Reddy (2011), Le Grange (2004) and Schreuder (2004) have noted as complex and difficult to define. Despite this challenge, the framework adopted by Di Chiro (1987: 24) and Fien (1993), namely that the environment is socially constructed, is particularly useful in understanding this concept. The conclusion is that human activities (social) occur within the life environment (physical), which reflects human-environment interaction to provide a balanced life. However, this interaction has deteriorated to a state where risks and environmental variables have increased in the socio-physical environment, which makes the individual vulnerable in various ways. A focus on the environment, which is in line with the topic of social and environmental responsibility that seeks to ensure a responsible citizenry (DBE, 2011: 8), therefore becomes important within CAPS. Therefore, teaching-learning strategies that simply align with CAPS appear to be inadequate for the adolescent learner. More critical-orientated knowledge, values and skills, based on a holistic and meaningful approach, are required if responsible citizenry is to emerge among adolescent learners. Such an approach towards life skills education through Life Orientation has much to offer, especially to adolescent learners who find themselves in an environment beset with contextual risks.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Policy statement principles such as active learning as well as critical and creative thinking (DBE, 2011:4-5) creates the basis for adopting constructivism as the theoretical framework for this study.

Although a variety of constructivist views on learning exist, there are four agreed upon aspects (Khalid & Azeem, 2012:171; Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:95; 2006: 94) that can be summarised as follow:

- Principle of learners constructing their own meaning

The driving force behind this principle is meaningful learning and understanding. For this to happen learners must make sense of the information that comes their way (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142). With this in mind, it can then be argued that teachers cannot rely on textbooks to keep learners busy with activities that require little intellectual effort (Gravett & de Beer, 2015:3). To avoid this separation of learning from application, the focus should rather be to plan learning activities purposefully. For instance, in Life Orientation the subject matter on social and environmental issues could be taught and learnt in a formal classroom context as facts but the acquired knowledge should be translated into application (i.e. values and skills). In this way it is possible that learners will "internalise" what they have learnt (Donald *at et al.*, 2002:87) and apply it in real life situations.

- The principle that new knowledge is built on prior knowledge

This principle could be understood as connecting a new topic with learners' experiences. As Donald *et al.* (2002:91) put it "this can serve as a starting point to guide learners from what they know to new learning and discovery". Therefore, learners cannot be regarded as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 2002:72) on social and environmental issues.

- The principle of learning is enhanced by social interaction

The processes of comparing and sharing ideas with others are central to this principle (Grösser, 2017:59; Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142; Donald *et al.*, 2002:95). These processes, which are based upon the idea of dialogical learning, are currently viewed as a powerful and effective teaching-learning strategy for Life Orientation (Botha & du Preez, 2017:42; Magano, Mostert & Van der Westhuizen, 2010:10). Research has also proven that learners prefer "debating", and the "sharing of ideas" with others in the Life Orientation classroom (Magano, 2011: 124). Thus, to promote meaningful learning (i.e. learning with understanding) on social and environmental issues, learners need to be given the opportunity to work in a cooperative learning environment. This is relevant to life skills education through Life Orientation, where the focus is on holistic and meaningful education for the individual to be able to act responsibly in their society (DBE, 2011: 8). Such a stance is in accordance with Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002; 2006) as well as Steyn, Badenhorst and Kamper (2010), who point out that the social and physical environment can influence the adolescent's well-being.

- The principle of meaningful learning develops through "authentic" tasks

If the aim of this principle is to stimulate learners with real life encounters (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004:142), then the teacher cannot rely on the textbook. To involve learners in relevant learning tasks, the teacher must act as an agent of transformation who moves beyond the transfer of knowledge (November, 2015:316) particularly concerning social and environmental issues. The concept "environment" in this article is, therefore, understood to mean a "constructivist" approach where the teacher uses the live environment as a medium of instruction to enhance the adolescent's place of consciousness. A constructivist approach towards the live environment also focuses on maximising learners' potential to construct their own knowledge and share their constructions of knowledge on particular issues (Waghid, Waghid & Waghid, 2018: 166). It is this awareness that, according to Ontong and Le Grange (2014: 29), will enable the adolescent learner to understand the localness of social and environmental problems, which often require local action. Consequently, the role of a constructive pedagogy to enhance local action cannot be underestimated. For this reason, Dixon *et al.* (2018: 18) emphasise that teachers should consider children's lives and life experiences as an important entry point to build knowledge, values and skills.

From the above, it thus seems that the adolescent's life environment can be a key component to provide meaningful real-life teaching-learning opportunities. Furthermore, the adolescent's live environment has the potential to make content personally significant. Consequently, the Life Orientation classroom can become a critical teaching-learning space that engages the adolescent learner in how to (re)connect to their environment – the place in which they live – in order to promote responsible social and environmental citizenry. This includes the ability to generate/construct knowledge and enables access to other ways of thinking, doing, being and knowing about socio-environmental issues that are useful for their context.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study, with an interpretive approach, focused on understanding, describing and explaining research participants' teaching-learning strategies towards the phenomenon of social and environmental responsibility "from the inside" (Flick, 2018: x). This approach allowed the researcher to use various methods of data generation, such as observations and interviews. Using multiple data generation methods enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings (*cf.* Schreier, 2010: 27). Firstly, 14 structured classroom observations were used to explore how useful the teaching-learning strategies of seven Grade 10 Life Orientation teachers from two different quintile schools were regarding lessons related to the topic of social and environmental responsibility. I observed a total of 14 lessons (two per research participant). Although a variety of issues were concentrated on during the classroom observations pertaining to the three phases of a lesson presentation and various questions were posed during the interviews, I drew only on three for this article: 1) TLSM; 2) teacher-approach towards life skills education and 3) the participants' views on social and environmental responsibility. The second data generation method used to triangulate the data generated during the classroom observations was one-on-one, open, semi-structured interviews.

A case study design was deemed educationally suitable for this project because it allowed for knowing as situated inquiry (*cf.* Le Grange, 2018: 11) within a bounded context (*cf.* Rozsahegyi, 2019: 130). This approach enabled me to uncover the manifest interaction of significant characteristics of the phenomenon of social and environmental responsibility, to capture various nuances, patterns and more latent elements and to focus on holistic description and explanation (*cf.* Berg, 2007: 284). It also opened up a pathway to gain insight into and compare and investigate the way these seven Grade 10 in-service Life Orientation teachers from different quintile schools taught and how their learners experienced issues related to the topic of social and environmental responsibility. The focus on seven participants corresponds with Neuman's (2000: 196) opinion that qualitative researchers focus less on a sample's representativeness or on detail techniques for drawing a probability sample but, instead, on how the sample of a small collection of cases, units or activities illuminates social life. Because the pool of participants for this project was small, the interpreted data are not meant to be generalised but rather viewed as informative, as is customary with qualitative research designs (*cf.* Rapley, 2018: xi). Within this context, the research findings were shaped by the participants' actions and perspectives and not through research bias.

The Faculty of Education at the North-West University and the Department of Basic Education within the JB Marks Region granted ethical clearance for this project. During the research process, I paid attention to anonymity, informed consent, confidentiality, the right of the participants to withdraw, privacy and conducting classroom observations and interviews within a relationship of trust and transparency.

## 5. CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Before I continue, it is important to give a contextual overview of the research participants because such information has the potential to influence teaching-learning (*cf.* Van den Berg & Schulze, 2016: 71). Two of the participants (C and D) received their formal teacher qualifications prior to 1997 – the year in which Life Orientation was introduced into the South African school curriculum. Three of the participants (A, B and G) obtained a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with Life Orientation (Senior Phase and FET Phase) as a

major subject, while participant F obtained a one-year PGCE qualification with Setswana and Physical Education as major subjects. Participant E obtained an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) with Life Orientation as one of the major subjects. These qualifications suggest that participants C, D and F, who were recruited to teach Life Orientation, might have been exposed to ideas and approaches that are not necessarily appropriate for life skills education. The question can also be posed whether participants A, B and G could have been pedagogically prepared in one year to effectively teach Life Orientation, which is regarded as an academic and an experiential subject (*cf.* DBE, 2011: 25). The postgraduate ACE obtained by participant E was introduced by the South African Qualifications Authority during the 1990s to provide teachers with an opportunity to upgrade their teaching skills and to specialise in specific fields, such as Life Orientation. However, the old-fashioned way of teaching by taking notes from the writing board in this participant's classroom is in total contrast with an outcomes-based Life Orientation curriculum, which emphasises that teachers must prevent this skills-based subject from becoming too theoretical (DBE, 2011: 25).

**Table 1:** Contextual information of the research participants.

	Teacher qualification	Former Model C-school	Township school	Quintile 1-5	Diverse classroom composition	TLSM (textbook)
Participant A	PGCE (LO)	√		4	√	√
Participant B	PGCE (LO)	√		4	√	√
Participant C	BA (Biblical Studies & History) + HOD	√		4	√	√
Participant D	BEd (Technical Studies)	√		4	√	√
Participant E	ACE (LO as major subject)		√	3	√	√
Participant F	PGCE (Setswana + Physical Education)		√	3	√	√
Participant G	PGCE (LO)		√	3	√	√

Focusing on the teaching-learning strategies of a select sample of Life Orientation teachers from two types of quintile schools in former Model C and townships schools, highlight the need of a multi-faceted teaching-learning framework to support meaningful life skills education on social and environmental responsibility for the adolescent learner.

## 6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A particular characteristic that emerged from the 14 classroom observations was the use of learner textbooks by all of the participants as their preferred teaching-learning source for social and environmental responsibility. A teacher-instructivist approach and a fragmented conception of social and environmental responsibility interacted with a learner textbook approach.

### 6.1 Learner textbook approach

Although participants B, C, D and G felt that learner textbooks were insufficient, it was still regarded as the indispensable, trustworthy TLSM for life skills education through Life

Orientation in both former Model C and township schools. This observation indicates that not only are the participants blindly following curriculum instructions that emphasise textbooks as recommended source for life skills education (see for example DBE, 2011: 18), but Life Orientation teachers are also prevented from asking key educational questions about content and the purpose of lessons related to social and environmental responsibility. This is in contrast with the preferred teaching-learning strategies such as debating, participating, sharing information and expressing feelings, as key contributors for successful life skills education through Life Orientation (Griesel-Roux *et al.*, 2005; Magano, 2011). These positive emotions not only engage learners in the construction of life skills knowledge, values and skills (Bullard, 2017: 3; Corcoran & Tormey, 2012: 1; Rosiek, 2003) but can also enhance the application thereof through a real-life teaching-learning environment approach (Swarts, Rens & De Sousa, 2018). However, researchers such as Diale (2016), Swarts (2016), Mthayana and Vincent (2015) and Jacobs (2011) indicate that learners are often stripped of their positive emotions through an overemphasis on textbook knowledge in South African Life Orientation classrooms. Such teacher-controlled teaching-learning strategies have the tendency to divorce the adolescent learner from their live world. For example, practical knowledge of risky sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and so forth is not only about lesson topics that can be addressed through textbooks alone. Le Grange (2007: 11) is of the opinion that educating learners *about* such real-life experiences should be viewed as, what he called, a “lesson of hypocrisy”, whereby learners are only provided with basic textbook information on (their) environments. To the contrary, teaching-learning about socio-environmental issues must encourage learners to find alternative ways of looking at and remedy real-life experiences known to them. Therefore, to enhance the adolescent learner’s learning on real-life issues, Nel and Payne-Van Staden (2017: 209) encourage Life Orientation teachers to develop rich teaching-learning environments outside of the textbook. To do so, I argue that Life Orientation teachers must have a firm foundation of a holistic approach towards educating the adolescent and a deep understanding to meet the primary curriculum outcome, namely, to ensure that meaningful learning occurs. However, the attainment of such a lofty curriculum goal is questionable if teachers are not enthusiastic about Life Orientation (Jacobs, 2011: 217; Mthayana & Vincent, 2015: 53), if Life Orientation is seen as a second-class subject compared to Mathematics and Science education (Diale, 2016: 101) and when teachers are appointed to teach Life Orientation without proper qualifications within the field of life skills education (Ferreira & Schulze, 2014: 8; Pillay, 2012: 171).

## 6.2 Teacher-instructivist approach

The sole use of learner textbooks by all the research participants highlighted education as a form of control (*cf.* Freire, 2000). Such an attitude, especially towards life skills education through Life Orientation, has the potential to silence the voice of the learner and isolate them from complex socio-environmental issues in their live environment. Here, communicating knowledge *about* risky socio-environmental issues without learners playing an active role in creating their personal meanings suggests that intellectual awareness is enough. Such an approach towards life skills education through Life Orientation is in contrast with education policies where the emphasis is on “active learning, critical and creative thinking” (DBE, 2011: 4). Consequently, there is a need to (re)create opportunities for the adolescent learner to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct and then share their own narratives on risky socio-environmental issues facing them in their life environment. Steyn *et al.* (2010) support this sentiment, as their research findings revealed that the adolescent’s voice should not be

silenced in Life Orientation classrooms, especially on specific social challenges such as violence, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and the like. Instead, the idea should be to either stimulate adolescent learners or encourage a willingness in them to know and think about their own health and wellbeing when it comes to these pressing real-life issues. This raises the important issue that Life Orientation teachers should know their role as life skills facilitators within the context of social and environmental responsibility.

### 6.3 Fragmented views on social and environmental responsibility

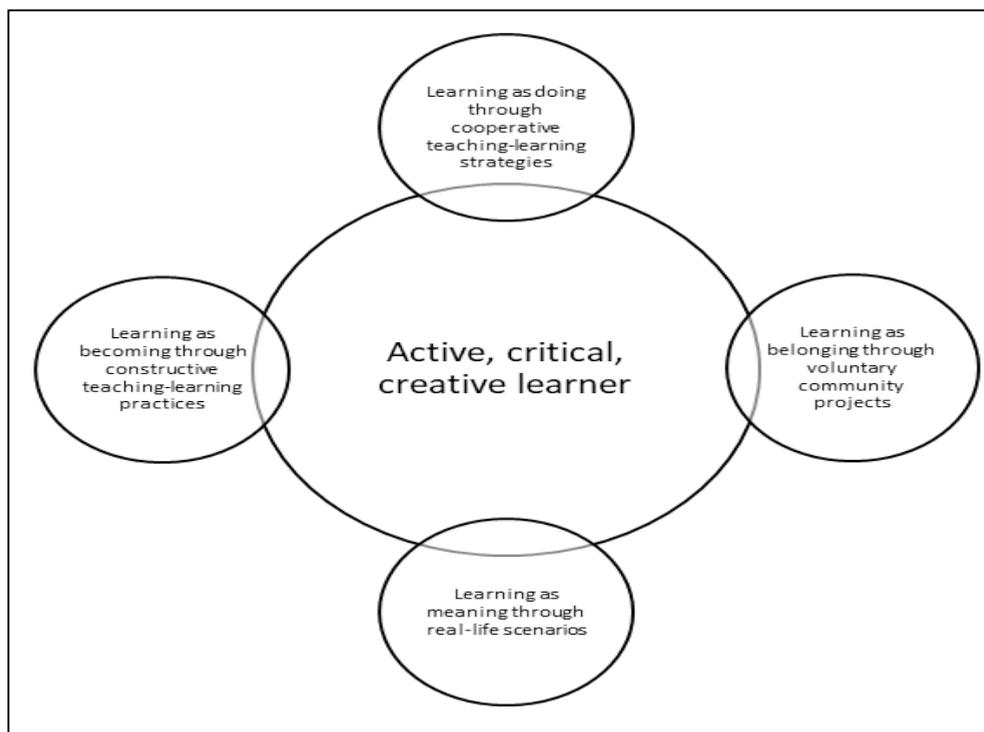
Only three of the seven participants held a holistic view of what social and environmental responsibility entails. The strengths of their views were expressed in phrases such as “an awareness of how to live, how to be, how to take care of the world in which we live” (participant A); “to develop learners holistically in terms of their responsibilities” (participant E) and “it focuses on the wellbeing of the person. In terms of this, social and environmental responsibility links very well with the human as a whole” (participant F). The important matter here is not that such participant views are encouraging despite a lack of a clear policy explanation of what social and environmental entails; instead, the failure to incorporate additional TLSM and alternative assessment activities that might encourage the mastering and manifestation of particular knowledge, values and skills on complex issues with which the adolescent learner was confronted in their live environment (see for example Wood, 2008: 59) were evident during classroom observations.

The above research findings revealed noticeable shortcomings in the participants’ teaching-learning strategies regarding an adolescent life skills-driven Life Orientation curriculum on the topic of social and environmental responsibility. In order to improve the evidence-based content of the adolescent learner’s knowledge, values and skills on lesson experiences relating to social and environmental responsibility, it becomes important to suggest a framework that takes into account policy requirements and serves as a valuable tool to assess lesson outcomes.

## 7. A MULTI-FACETED LIFE SKILLS TEACHING–LEARNING FRAMEWORK TO (RE)CONTEXTUALISE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ADOLESCENT LEARNER

The suggested framework (see Figure 1) addresses two important issues, namely 1) strengthening the Life Orientation curriculum principle regarding the development of “self in society” (DBE, 2011: 8) and 2) supporting the recommendation of Du Preez *et al.* (2019: 6), namely increasing learner resilience concerning risky behaviour. This means, for example, that social and environmental responsibility should encourage adolescent learners to understand themselves in relation to the wider context of their live environment. Such awareness can assist adolescent learners to move beyond knowledge acquisition towards understanding and expressing their opinions through constructive dialogue and put their reflections on risky socio-environmental issues into practice. Therefore, an effective life skills pedagogy within the context of social and environmental responsibility cannot be divorced from pragmatism where knowledge should serve the needs of the individual (Nel, 2017: 10). The notion that knowledge should serve the needs of the individual invites a rethinking of what the purpose of life skills education is. This observation is timely because the adolescent learner is confronted with socio-environmental issues the South African society faces daily. Thus, the Life Orientation teacher must be skilful to educate adolescent learners about these issues for them to be

able to make informed decisions or choices and take appropriate action to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing 21<sup>st</sup> century society. For this reason, Freire's (2013) idea of education for critical consciousness to restore the connection between human beings and the world meets the requirement to encourage the adolescent learner to engage with socio-environmental issues in a constructive manner. Using Figure 1 as a curriculum vehicle has the potential to assist (and encourage) Life Orientation teachers to boost situational interest and to provide adolescent learners with an opportunity to expand their language on risky real-life scenarios known to them within a community of practice. In addition, if applied effectively, this framework can promote adolescent resilience by engaging in decision making and strengthening risk reduction through place-based activities.



**Figure 1:** A multi-faceted risk-reduction, cooperative teaching-learning framework to (re) contextualise meaningful and holistic life skills education regarding critical socio-environmental issues

Various activities that can assist Life Orientation teachers in enhancing the adolescent learner's critical consciousness of socio-environmental issues within their live environment in a constructive manner can be employed through this framework. For example, linking the interplay between burning live environmental issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy, can assist the adolescent learner to build resilience and adaptive capacity through various stages within this framework. One way to think about these links is to illustrate them by using the following conceptual loops. Firstly, use constructive teaching-learning strategies to encourage the idea of learning as meaning through real-life experiences. Recent evidence of teenage pregnancy in any South African newspaper article can drive this phase. The goal should be to encourage a willingness to know and think about one's own reality. Such an

approach towards socio-environmental issues will show the adolescent learner that teachers care for their health and wellbeing, which is not the case with outdated textbooks (see, e.g., Boler & Aggleton, 2007: 7).

Secondly, learning as becoming, through effective teaching-learning practices that cannot be divorced from a constructive classroom atmosphere. Researchers such as Dali and Hunter (2018: 93), Nel (2018: 12) and Magano (2011: 123) share the sentiment that a welcoming and caring classroom atmosphere creates a safe space in which learners are allowed to share ideas, express their opinions, discuss controversial topics and even respectfully disagree with their peers and teacher. This suggests that the Life Orientation teacher should create a classroom atmosphere in which the adolescent learner can apply their conscious mind to the lesson at hand. Since the learner textbook can isolate the learner from their live environment (Magano, 2011: 121), learning as becoming through meaningful real-life scenarios may, therefore, be beneficial to adolescent learners in former Model C and township schools.

Thirdly, the notion of learning as doing can be encouraged through cooperative teaching-learning strategies such as role play, tableaux, found poetry, personalised collages and drawings, to initiate an active, critical and creative adolescent learner. Through such approaches, adolescent learners can share their contextualised understandings regarding risky sexual behaviour and teenage pregnancy. Awareness of reflection through cooperative teaching-learning strategies may, in this instance, promote a practical connection between knowledge, values and skills, which is a concern in Life Orientation (Mosia, 2011: 87).

Fourthly, learning as belonging, which links with the curriculum principle of the “self in society” (DBE, 2011: 8), can be realised through a voluntary community project. Such an activity, which is in line with policy statements (DBE, 2011: 29), would create an excellent opportunity for the adolescent learner to play a constructive role in fostering risk reduction behaviour among their peers in life environments where socio-environmental health challenges are rife. More importantly, such learning, which is situated in the adolescent learner’s live environment, can be seen as a starting point for understanding the world, acting on it and transforming it.

Emerging from the above discussion is the recognition that the learning process around socio-environmental issues should involve cognitive, emotional and social processes to bind the whole (body and mind) together. This optimistic outlook of shifting the focus of social and environmental responsibility towards the live environment can, thus, add value towards the holistic education of the adolescent learner (see, e.g., Smith, 2018: 7).

## 8. CONCLUSION

Life Orientation can be perceived as the most significant school subject to empower the adolescent with appropriate knowledge, values and skills regarding social and environmental responsibility at a contextual level. As Freire (2001: xii) would argue, teachers should not reduce their (the learners) intellectual task to pure technicism but should contribute to the development of a critical reading of the world. In the context of this study, it implies, for example, that teachers should have the ability to understand and appreciate that the live environment of the adolescent learner cannot be divorced from their teaching and learning practices. Seeing the Life Orientation classroom as an extension of the adolescent learners’ live environment can acquaint them with other ways of knowing, thinking, doing and being.

## 9. LIMITATIONS

It is acknowledged that this research was only exploratory in nature.

## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Prof Lesley Wood, Director of COMBER in the Faculty of Education at the North-West University, for her critical reading of and valuable input in this article.

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