

Teachers' perceptions and implementation of Religion Education in the Foundation Phase

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2016

Teachers' perceptions and implementation of Religion Education in the Foundation Phase

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree

Magister Educationis

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I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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DATE CLEARANCE ISSUED 18

CLEARANCE NUMBER :

EC 15/07/02

Teachers' perceptions and implementation of religion education in Foundation Phase

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Education

September 2015

March 2016

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Acknowledgements

“Now faith are the things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”

- I would like to thank my parents for raising me with a spiritual conviction, for teaching me about God and for giving me a sacred Hope to live by. Thank you to my sister for being an ally in faith.
- To my Heavenly Father, I am thankful for enduring Love, courage and opportunities.
- I would like to thank my beloved husband for his continuous prayers and for being such a good example of what a dedicated, postgraduate student is. You are an inspiration.
- Doctor MG Steyn, your duty as a supervisor can also be regarded as a calling. Thank you for your constant encouragement, it made a remarkable difference during the time that I worked on my dissertation.
- Thank you to Professor GD Kamper for your treasured input and for the meticulous manner in which you contributed to my dissertation.
- To the passionate participants that took part in this study, your time and valuable effort is cherished.

Summary

Children's spirituality has been disputed since the publication of South Africa's policy on Religion and Education in 2003 (Roux, 2006:152). This controversial topic, concerning the previous dispensation's religious education being substituted by the multi-religious subject of Religion Education (RE), begs the question of whether the change in policy has been well-perceived and adequately implemented by Foundation Phase (FP) teachers. In addition, it solicits a query on whether spirituality has justly been included as a central part of holistic development (Department of Basic Education, 2011:8) in the learning area of Life Skills. The main aim of this study is to investigate how teachers implement the policy of RE and to examine their perceptions of the subject. It furthermore aims at studying the theoretical insights concerning the FP child's spiritual development. Child development theories of Fowler (1981), Piaget (1969), Erikson (1982) and Kohlberg as well as the holistic models of Hettler (1976) and Winiarski (1997) provided a basis for the theoretical investigation. A multiple case study undertaken in four schools with varied contextual backgrounds has found that teachers had positive perceptions concerning RE even though they faced challenges with the implementation of the subject. In addition, it has been found that teachers still practise faith-based exercises in the classroom to improvise for the lack of spiritual development they observe in FP learners. The findings further indicate that teachers draw correlations between negative learner-behaviour and the non-provision of religious education in schools. This current investigation contributes towards greater insights regarding teachers' perceptions and implementation challenges of RE; and it reveals a gap with regard to spiritual growth within the holistic foundation that Life Skills should provide the FP learner. Careful evaluation on the part of policy makers and the Department of Education is desired, especially on issues concerning teacher training, guidelines on the subject of RE and finally the neglect of the child's spirituality in South African schools.

Key words:

Religion Education (RE)

Spiritual Development

Foundation Phase (FP)

CAPS

Holistic Development

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Though terrible atrocities have been committed in the name of religion throughout history, research suggests that religious and spiritual beliefs have tremendous benefits to individuals and societies. In this regard Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger and Gorsuch (1996: 398) assert that religious beliefs are broadly associated with the ability to cope with stressful life events and that prayer and the social support from a religious community play a significant role in positive coping. These authors also associate religious beliefs and practices with virtues, such as altruism, volunteerism, kindness and forgiveness (Hood et al., 1996: 398). Similarly, Blakeney and Blakeney (2006: 374) maintain that spiritual attachment and/or a strong belief in God may strengthen or replace asocial, institutional and normative connections for young people growing up in disintegrated families, neighbourhoods or societies.

Under the Apartheid government (1948-1994), the South African education system was underpinned by the Christian religion, and was known as Christian National Education (Prinsloo, 2008: 199, 200). The year 1994 brought about the first democratic government in South Africa and heralded important changes, especially in education. All schools that were once characterised by segregation policies, opened their doors to a diverse learner population (Hannaway, 2012: 1). Fiske and Ladd (2005: 4) mention that a major task of South Africa's new government was to design a more racially equitable education system using three concepts of equity: equal treatment by race (which implies that cultural, linguistic and religious diversity should be celebrated); equal educational opportunity; and educational adequacy. The implication was that learners from all ethnic, cultural, religious and language backgrounds could access the same classrooms. Avoiding the compulsory Christian religious frame of reference of the previous dispensation, the new policy of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) proposed educational outcomes which would ensure religious diversity; the ability of learners to demonstrate an active commitment and understanding of their constitutional rights and social responsibilities and lastly to display sensitivity to diverse cultures and belief systems (RNCS, 2002: 26). Therefore, instead of promoting a specific religious position, the new curriculum pursued “a

balanced approach to teaching and learning about religion;” which created possibilities for learners to attain a “deeper sense of self-realisation” and a “broader civil acceptance of others” (Chidester, 2003: 331).

A parallel model for the instruction of religious programmes (developed by different religious groups) was therefore considered as an option for school curricula; however was rejected on the basis that it would still embody religious discrimination (Chidester, 2003: 265). It also had to be taken into account that RE in the new dispensation “has a civic rather than a religious function, and promotes civic rights and responsibilities” (RNCS in Chidester, 2003: 261-262).

The document “Guidelines on the handling of issues of religion in public schools” (Department of Education, 2002: 2) defines the function of RE as follows:

RE is a programme for the study of different religions/cultures/ value systems from home, the community, province, the nation and the globe, in all its many forms, as an important dimension of human experience and a significant subject field in the school curriculum as elaborated on in the Life Orientation Learning Area of the Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9. RE is not engaged in the promotion of religion, as its approach to religion is academic rather than devotional.

Van Zyl (2014: 1613) asserts that the Constitution found expression in the Department of Education’s (2003a: 3) redemptive undertakings which does not side with one particular religion or religious grouping, nor imputes the qualities of a modern secular state, which is for or against religion. Instead, in the foreword of the policy on Religion and Education (in Prinsloo, 2008: 311) the Constitution “adopts a position of impartiality towards all religions and worldviews and supports the use of a co-operative model;” to this end continuous conversation between the South African government and the country’s religious affiliations is promoted.

Consequently, this study aims to investigate how teachers implement the RE policy in the subject Life Skills and what their perceptions and experiences are in teaching RE in the Foundation Phase (FP).

1.2 RATIONALE

“Partners in Life Skills Education” of the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1999) provides international standards for Life Skills Education, as well as guidelines for implementation. This document encourages countries to develop children holistically whilst also paying attention to the needs specific to each country (WHO, 1999: 1-2). In the Policy of the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (RNC, 2002:6-7), the South African government supports this endeavour and therefore endorses the overall aim of education as to ensure equality for all learners.

Life Skills Education in South Africa comprises the following study areas: Beginner Knowledge (including Social Science, Natural science and Technology), Personal and Social Well-being (of which Religious Education is part), Creative Arts, and Physical Education (DBE, 2012:9-10). According to Hay (2015:7-8) Life Skills Education is concerned with the holistic development of the learner and should include the following domains: emotional, physical, conative, cognitive as well as spiritual.

In spite of this, the Department of Education (2002:2) stipulates that RE must be approached as “academic and not devotional” which implies that RE should rather focus on the cognitive domain of the child and not on spiritual development (Chidester, 2003: 266). Although the importance of the development of the child’s spiritual domain is recognized by researchers like Zhang, 2012; Baker, 2012; Miller, 2006, it seems that RE is not permitted to address the spiritual domain of the child in South African schools.

In my experience RE teachers are often unsure of what to allow or promote during class dialogues, out of fear that these discussions would adjoin to the spiritual aspect of the different religions, instead of solely meeting the academic requirements outlined by the Department of Education (2002: 2). Because the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) asserts that Life Skills in the Foundation Phase (FP) intends to address the holistic development of the child (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8), it means that the educator should focus on the learner in totality with his/her physical, emotional, cognitive, conative, social and spiritual domains (Hay, 2015: 8).

The uncertainties that my colleagues and I encountered, made me question whether the spiritual development of our young learners receives its rightful place in the curriculum.

Furthermore, limited literature exists on how the spiritual domain of the child is addressed in South African schools. Roux's assertion (2006: 153) corroborates the abovementioned statement, when she remarks that "there are no guidelines for teachers on how to handle these spiritual issues or what they entail." To this end, Roux (2006: 154) wonders whether teachers in Life Skills are aware of the fact that children need to engage in dialogue on issues where they should understand their personal life stances, different beliefs, value systems and spirituality.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Van Zyl (2014: 1614), RE is part of the learning area called Life Skills prescribed for FP (Grades R to 3) and for Intermediary Phase (Grades 4-6). For the Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) it falls under Life Orientation as well as for the Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10-12). In addition, the elective subject of Religion Studies is relevant for the Further Training and Education Phase. The document, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8) states that "Life Skills as subject is central to the holistic development of learners" and allocates 60 hours per term for Life Skills Education in the Foundation Phase, of which two hours per term is allocated to RE.

Considering the fact that RE is the appropriate subject wherein the spiritual development of learners should be addressed, as well as the minimal weight allocated to RE in the Foundation Phase curriculum, the question arises as to how teachers address this aspect of the curriculum in the classroom.

The following research questions will therefore guide my study:

How do teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?

Secondary questions are:

1. What are the theoretical insights regarding the spiritual development of the young child?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers with regard to Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?
3. How do teachers implement the policy of Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?
4. What guidelines can be formulated for teaching Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?

1.4. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.4.1 Implementation

To implement is to make that which has been officially decided upon, happen. The Collins dictionary (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.) defines the word “implement” as: “carry out, effect, carry through, complete, apply, perform, realise, fulfil, enforce, execute, bring about, enact and put into action or effect”. The term could otherwise be said to refer to make something, such as an idea, plan, law or system start to work or to be used (Macmillan Dictionary, n.d.). The word implement can also be seen as a responsibility and action required of teachers in the creation of appropriate learning environments (Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012: 184). For the purpose of this study, to implement refers to the way in which teachers perform, fulfil, carry out, enact and put the Life Skills curriculum into action.

1.4.2 Perceptions

To perceive is to understand or think of something or someone in a particular way (Longman English Dictionary Online, n.d.); or, perceive means “to come to an opinion about something, or have a belief about something” (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d.). This word has a number of meanings that are interpersonal, as well as intellectual; therefore, it can be defined as “the processes that organize information in the sensory image and interpret it as having been produced by properties of objects or events in the external, three-dimensional world” (American Psychological Association, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I adhere to the four-part description of perception by Lewis (2001: 274-275): “Fundamental to perception is that there is an experiencing person or perceiver; secondly, that something is being perceived (either an object,

person, situation or relationship); thirdly, there is the context of the situation in which objects, events or persons are perceived and finally, there is the process nature of perception starting with the experiencing of multiple stimuli by the senses and ending with the formation of precepts.”

1.4.3 Religion Education

To clarify the concept of RE, Chidester (2003: 264) opines “Religion Education should be conceived as a tool to transmit knowledge and values pertaining to all religious trends, in an inclusive way, so that individuals realise their being part of the same community and learn to create their own identity in harmony with identities different from their own.” Mangena (in Chidester, 2003: 263) claims that a new policy of 'religion education' instead of the previous dispensation's 'religious education' develops educational goals of teaching and learning about various aspects regarding “religion, religions, and religious diversity.” Again, RE's function is outlined as civic and not devotional (in Chidester 2003: 261-262).

In the context of this study, I adhere to the term of the National Policy on Religion and Education (Department of Education, 2003a) that defines RE as a curricular programme with clear and age-appropriate educational aims and objectives, for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity in South Africa and the world (Department of Education, 2003a: 9). This policy states that the study of religion must serve educational goals, consistent with the aims and outcomes of other learning areas. Likewise, other learning areas like RE must contribute to developing basic skills in observation, listening, reading, writing, and thinking. As a result, RE can be outlined in accordance with the new constitution as taking on a less restricted approach to teaching in and about religion and making no specific religion the basis of its foundation.

1.4.4 Spiritual Development

According to Roux (2006: 152) children's spirituality has been one of the most widely debated topics in education and especially in Life Orientation subjects in South Africa, since the publication of the policy document 'Religion and Education' in 2003.

In addition, defining spiritual development may be challenging when the definition of spirituality itself is so broad. Nye (in Roehlkepartain, Benson, Ebstyne King & Wagener, 2006: 6) goes as far as to state: “Attempts to define spirituality closely, and derive an adequate ‘operational definition’ can be sure of one thing: misrepresenting spirituality’s complexity, depth, and fluidity – spirituality is like the wind, though it might be experienced, observed and described, it cannot be ‘captured’ – we delude ourselves to think otherwise, either in the design of research or in the analytical conclusions.”

There is little doubt that the development of the human spirit is an important issue to be addressed if we consider the individual in a holistic perspective (Huitt & Robbins, 2003: 7). Spiritual development is considered as moving from the simple to the complex, from the naïve to the sophisticated, or from insecurity to confidence in terms of the relational aspects of self, others, nature, God, or universal unknowns (Huitt & Robbins, 2003: 7).

Pargament (in Gross, 2010: 65) perceives religiosity as a facilitator of spirituality. Gellel (2010: 46) postulates that “Spirituality and its experience are tied to the ineffable”. However, humans, who are by nature social beings in need of communicating, express their spirituality precisely by conceptualising and concretising symbols through art, language and proto-religion.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, RE will be recognised as part of spiritual development. In addition, spiritual development will be seen as Bradford (in Grajczonek, 2010: 8) describes it: “Spiritual development is the process by which our human spirituality is (i) established, (ii) grows in relationship with and concern for others, (iii) is extended into devotional spirituality, (iv) responds to questions and is supported by membership of a faith community, and (v) becomes integrated within a human spirituality/devotional spirituality.”

1.4.5 Foundation Phase

The Foundation Phase (FP) is the first phase of the General Education and Training Band: (Grades R, 1, 2 and 3). It focuses on primary skills, knowledge and values and in so doing, lays the foundation for further learning. The following subjects are

provided in FP: Home Language, English First Additional Language, Mathematics and Life Skills (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 6).

Mahlo (2011: 17) states that FP is a four-year phase that includes children between the ages of six and nine that correspondingly fall within Grade R to 3. However, the Department of Basic Education (2012: 2) states that FP learners range from ages five to nine years of old, but that the ages only serve as a guideline, since there are instances where a slightly younger or older child forms part of a particular phase. Grades R to 3 teachers usually teach all of the subjects in the curriculum to the pupils and an important part of FP includes promoting the child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical development (Mahlo, 2011: 17). In my study I shall focus on teachers of Grade R to 3 learners, teaching in FP.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to contextualize my study, the following aspects will be discussed. The background of Life Skills Education, the application of Life Skills in the South African curriculum and the context and role of RE within the subject of Life Skills.

1.5.1 The need for Life Skills Education

UNICEF (2012: 7) identifies a need to educate children from a young age so as to deal with life's challenges and subsequently enable them to participate in society in a productive way. From the mental health perspective, WHO (in UNICEF, 2012: 8) originally distinguished five elementary areas concerning life skills that are applicable throughout all cultures namely: "decision-making and problem-solving; creative thinking and critical thinking; communication and interpersonal skills; self-awareness and empathy; and coping with emotions and coping with stress."

UNICEF (2012: 11) points out that a growing body of evidence denotes the significance of incidents during children's early years and the effect it has on the progression of a person's life skills and attitudes; the home and family environment has been recognised as an important factor in establishing the fundamentals of life skills, morals and the way one relates to his/her community. Finally, research demonstrates how meaningful the close association between children's home life

and their social contexts are; it stresses the necessity for continuous support throughout primary and secondary school so that the advantages of early interventions can be maintained throughout one's later life (UNICEF, 2012: 11).

1.5.2 The Application of Life Skills in the South African Curriculum

The subject "Life Skills" presents an opportunity to address all the various aspects of Early Childhood Development in an integrated manner (Steyn, Schuld & Hartell, 2012: 160). Life Skills (of which RE makes up a part) aims to guide, prepare and equip learners to lead significant and effective lives and become well-adapted within a society that is constantly transforming (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8). In the Foundation Phase, this subject entails: Social science, Natural Science, Scientific process skills, Technological process skills, and "Personal and Social Well-being", the latter involves an integral study area for younger children as values taught in the aforementioned study area are not yet common knowledge to them (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8).

In order to be in line with these aims, the subject of Life Skills exposes learners to a variety of "knowledge, skills and values" to reinforce their:

physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development;

- creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music and drama, and visual art activities;
- knowledge of personal health and safety; and
- understanding of the relationship between people and the environment; an awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8).

The Life Skills study area was developed by keeping our country's social climate in mind. In the FP it involves: Social science, Natural Science, Scientific process skills, Technological process skills, and "Personal and Social Well-being", the latter deemed an integral study area for younger children as values taught in the aforementioned study area are not yet common knowledge to them (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8).

The designated subject focus on non-academic knowledge, such as individuality, positively relating to others and the environment, social and emotional health, exercising rights and responsibilities, and allowing for religious and ethnic differences; the aim of this study area is to support learners on their journey of becoming contributing citizens of our country (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 12). By scrutinising the listed subjects above, it is clear that the emphasis in FP is not only on academic knowledge, but that it recognises the importance of equipping young children with non-academic knowledge and skills, which Joseph and Strain (in Steyn, Schuld & Hartell, 2012: 161) refer to as “social-emotional curricular programs” being described as “protective factors and reducing risk factors associated with academic and social problems”. Amongst other things, non-academic input involves the survival and coping skills to assist individuals in overcoming specific challenges which they may be faced with in various dimensions of life; it constitutes personal growth and the knowing of self and others.

Finn (in Steyn et al., 2012: 161) reinforces the fact that there has been a paradigm shift worldwide with regard to the aims of education, so as to include non-academic subjects in school curricula in order to meet the needs of an increasing diverse and globalised community. Thus, Life Skills in our South African curriculum is applied accordingly.

1.5.3 The Context and Role of Religion Education within the subject of Life Skills

Denoting the context of the proposed induction of RE (as part of Life Skills) in schools, the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 32) states that “South Africa is recognised as being a deeply religious society, and religions offer highly organised and often very effective moral codes upon which value systems are based”. Thus, South Africa’s educational policy is endorsed by critical constitutional provisions that guarantee both the “freedom of religious expression and the freedom from religious coercion” (Chidester, 2003: 263). RE is described as “teaching and learning about religion and religions” (Chidester, 2003: 262).

Prinsloo (2008: 277) asserts that although the Department of Education explicitly states that RE will not endorse any religion in particular, it implicitly endorses religion

as “phenomenon”, as an imperative component of being human, and as an important subject in schools. In addition, its function is to encourage awareness of the role that religion plays within society.

Roux (2009: 6) states that although South Africans are forerunners in the field of investigating our country’s diverse religions, there is still a reluctance to implement the policy (Department of Education, 2003a) on RE in schools, even though it is approved as policy (Roux, 2009: 7).

1.5.4 The value of spiritual development

According to Narayanasamy, Gates and Swinton (in Zhang, 2013), focusing on the spiritual aspect in a child’s development, can be essential in aiding the development of self-efficacy, relationships and life-puropose. Zhang (2013: 244) furthermore refers to researchers, such as Baker (2003), Miller (2006) and Selway and Ashman (1998), who have found that personal empowerment, optimism, empathy, understanding, intellectual confidence, academic performance, physical and psychological health, and self-esteem are positively associated with spirituality. Crawford, O’Dougherty, Wright and Masten (2006: 356) have also drawn a positive correlation between religion and spirituality in promoting resilience in youth. Huitt and Robins (2003: 3) affirm that the related processes of spiritual development involve acts, such as prayer and professions of faith and relate this to a wide range of beneficial outcomes, such as healthier lifestyles, less depression and faster healing. Pargament (in Gross, 2010: 67) notes that “religiosity facilitates spirituality” and therefore, spirituality becomes the essence of meaning making.

Valenkamp (2008: 330) lists psychologists who endorse a positive outlook of religion’s function, such as Carl Jung (1938), James Fowler (1981), and Anton Bacher (2006). These psychologists wrote on the topic of children’s spiritual development, and regarded it as a necessity for healthy personality development. Religion and faith play a role in finding basic security in life and in forming the ego-identity of children whilst growing up (Valenkamp, 2008: 330). The Manifesto of Values, Education and Democracy (2001: 32) affirms that religions embody characteristics, such as “mercy, love, care, commitment, compassion and co-operation”; these offer progressive ways of relating to others.

In the South African context, where many parents are unable to fulfill their parental responsibilities, educators may become a critical source of support, nurturing and stability (Steyn, 2006: 42-44). Therefore, the role of correctly practicing RE in our country's education system can play a crucial role in the holistic development of learners.

1.6 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A conceptual framework can be seen as a study's directional compass; it is meant to provide the researcher with a course of action to approach the task at hand (Miles & Huberman in Athanasou, Mpofo, Gitchel & Elisas, 2013: 42). The conceptual framework that guides this study consists of various theories which relate to the spiritual development of the child. The following figure (Figure 1.1) depicts the theoretical perspectives of this study.

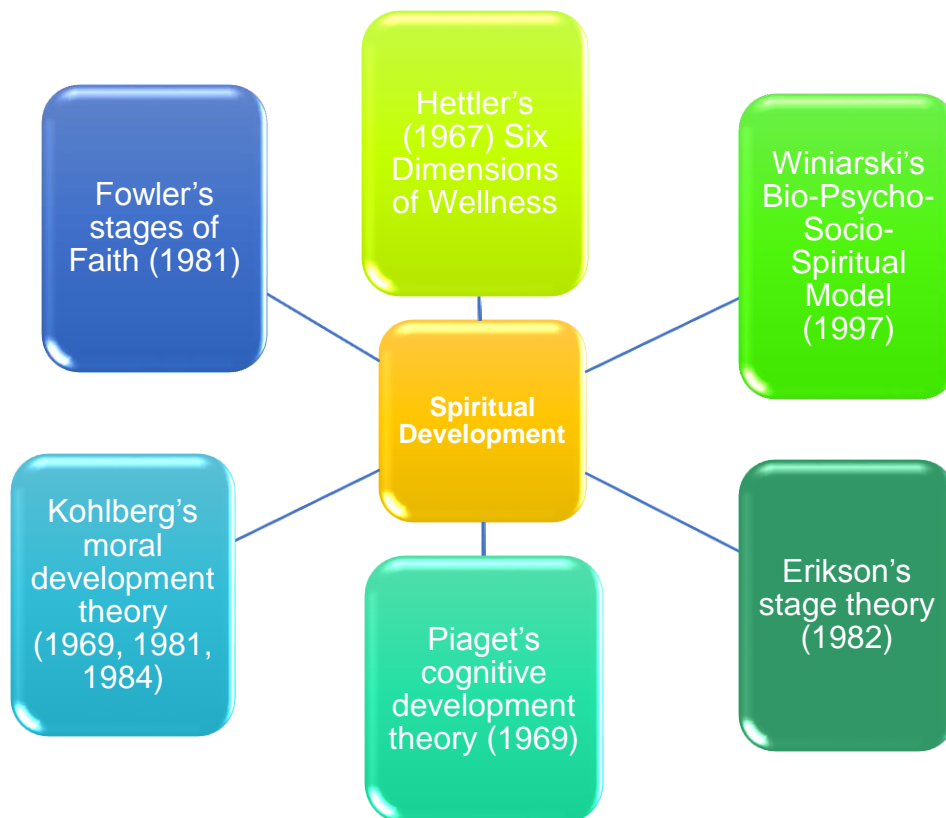


Figure 1.1: A diagrammatical figure of this study's conceptual framework

The spiritual development of the Foundation Phase learner will be investigated in the light of the child developmental theories of Jean Piaget (1969), Erik Erikson (1982),

Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) and James Fowler (1981), as well as Hettler's model on Wellness (1976) and Winiarski's holistic model (1997). These theories are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following section clarifies the research methodology to be used in this study.

1.7.1 Research design

The research design provides the overall structure for the procedures the researcher follows, the data the researcher collects, and the data analysis the researcher conducts. In other words, research design is the planning of research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 76). McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 20) describe research design as a technique or general plan used for involvements in a research study and the type of data collection this plan includes. For example, the specific arrangement of the research and the particular plans for involving the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 20). With reference to the research design of this particular study, the structure for research procedures, data collection and data analysis that were utilised, will be discussed next.

1.7.1.1 An interpretivist paradigm

A paradigm can be seen as a worldview or assumption that reflects a particular stance, as well as further shaping a research study (Creswell, 2007: 19). Coleman (in Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 70) describes a research paradigm as a set of conceptual frameworks that explain a particular theoretical approach to research. As qualitative research is usually focused on interpretation and meaning, the main philosophical tradition underpinning qualitative research is interpretivism. Proponents of interpretivism argue that human experience can be understood only from the viewpoint of people (Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 73). Even though the interpretivist paradigm uses systematic procedures, it maintains that there are "multiple socially constructed realities." Thus, there is less emphasis on numbers and more emphasis on values and context (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 6). According to Ferreira (2013: 35) an interpretivist paradigm is ideal when a researcher requires insight into the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to research teachers' perceptions regarding the teaching of RE in FP.

1.7.1.2 Qualitative research approach

Cresswell (2007: 37) declares that qualitative research begins with an assumption, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. My primary and secondary research questions centered on the perceptions of teachers and enabled me to make recommendations on how RE implementation can be improved in schools. In order to achieve this, the study was based on a qualitative research approach which was well-suited to my goals, as this approach is generally concerned with interpretation and meaning (Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 72). The qualitative research approach tends to collect data “in the field” at the site where participants experience the issue or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007: 37). The purposes driving qualitative research in the social sciences and humanities are frequently about understanding behaviour and experience from the point of view of the research participants (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 60). In addition, I the researcher, could not separate what participants say from the context in which it was said (Creswell, 2007: 40) ; this is another trait of qualitative research. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was used in the study so as to understand the context within which participants experience and later implement RE in FP. This study’s research approach involved looking at “characteristics, or qualities, that cannot entirely be reduced to numerical values” as it aimed to interrogate “the many nuances and complexities” of this phenomenon which is teachers’ perceptions and their implementation of RE in FP (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 97).

1.7.1.3 Research type

Creswell (2007: 73) states that case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a case or cases over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and thus reports a case study description and case-based themes. Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 143) describe case study as researching “a particular individual, programme or event” in detail over an extent of time. Simons (in Seabi, 2013: 83) reports that the case study is “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in real life context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led”. In this study, I applied a

multiple case study as used when two or more cases that are unrelated or comparable in key aspects, are investigated (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 143). McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 344) describe a multiple case study as using more than one example or setting. Since I wanted to understand teachers' perceptions on educating RE in FP, and grasp how teachers implement this subject, multiple case study was the most appropriate research type to apply. I therefore identified a group of teachers teaching RE in FP from four different schools, so as to apprehend their perceptions and experiences of teaching RE; to discover the theoretical insights of RE regarding the spiritual development of the young child and to imply possible research based aims and guidelines for teaching RE in FP.

1.7.2 Research Methods

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 9) research methods are the ways in which data are collected and analysed. In order to gather these research data, I will made use of the following processes:

1.7.2.1 The Role of the Researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher is data gathering, through the investigation of documents and the observation and questioning of participants (Creswell, 2007: 38). Even when using instruments for the collection of data, the researcher is the main gatherer of information (Creswell, 2007: 38). Qualitative researchers are noted for their critical self-examination throughout the research process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 20). For the purpose of this study, focus group interviews with FP teachers were held at four schools with various contextual backgrounds. Since I was the instrument through which data were gathered; critical self-examination was practiced throughout the study to ensure disciplined subjectivity and reflexivity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 20).

1.7.2.2 Participants and research site

A sub-set of the population, known as participants, are selected in a process called sampling that is used for research (Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 69). The study was conducted by applying purposeful sampling to select participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 154) describe purposeful sampling as researchers selecting participants who will "yield the most information about the topic under investigation." I used this method

to ensure experienced and well-informed participants concerning the phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 326).

The selected group of participants consisted of FP teachers in one geographical region, namely Bloemfontein in the Free State Province. The catchment area included an inner city school, a township school, a rural school and a private school. As a starting point for finding participants, I approached teachers teaching RE in FP with knowledge and training in CAPS. This was to ensure that my participants had the necessary background knowledge of what is expected when teaching RE.

1.7.2.3 Data Collection

Data collection can be described as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions (Creswell, 2007: 118). The following instruments were utilised during my study:

i) Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were used for data collection, as Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 155) state that focus groups bear exceeding amounts of useful data, such as: “facts; people’s beliefs and perspectives about the facts; feelings; motives; present and past behaviour; and standards of behaviour.”

Creswell (2007) and Neuman (2011) recommend focus group interviews when interaction amongst interviewees yields the best information; when interviewees are cooperative, and when individuals may be hesitant to provide information in a one-on-one setting (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 156). Another reason for utilising focus group interviews in this study, is that participants would hopefully contribute to key issues and ideas surrounding the proposed topic (Seabi, 2013: 90).

There are, however, limitations to focus group interviews. Morgan (in Seabi, 2013: 90) emphasises that one of the limitations of focus group interviews can be that certain participants may experience the group dynamics as threatening. Thus, this study’s objective was to cultivate a non-threatening atmosphere by, amongst other things, treating each contribution as valuable.

The following were expected from the participants:

- Teachers need to give informed consent to participate in focus group interviews;
- Teachers will be expected to attend the focus group interviews which will be conducted at the various schools; and
- Teachers will need to be proficient in English, as this will be the language in which the focus group interviews will be conducted.

ii) Document Analysis

Educators' lesson plans on RE, as part of Life Skills, were used for document analysis. In general, these documents should provide a rich source of information (in Seabi, 2013: 91) and ought to offer knowledge on the teachers' actions, experiences and beliefs, with regard to teaching RE in FP (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 361).

1.7.2.4 Data Analysis

Creswell (2009: 183) states that data analysis involves the preparation of data for analysis; the supervision of different analysis; the progress into deeper comprehension of data; the representation; and eventually the interpretation of data.

Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 160) describe Creswell's data analysis spiral as "equally applicable to a wide variety of qualitative studies." For the purpose of data analysis in this study, I followed Creswell's "Data Analysis Spiral" to move through the following stages: organisation of data; perusal of data; identifying general categories or themes, as well as integrating and summarising the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). By using this approach, I, as a qualitative researcher, could move in analytical circles, during data analysis, rather than using a fixed linear approach (Creswell, 2007: 150). In other words, by using this approach I could examine the data several times, by following these steps: Organising the data; perusing the data; identifying general categories or themes; and, integrating and summarising the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160).

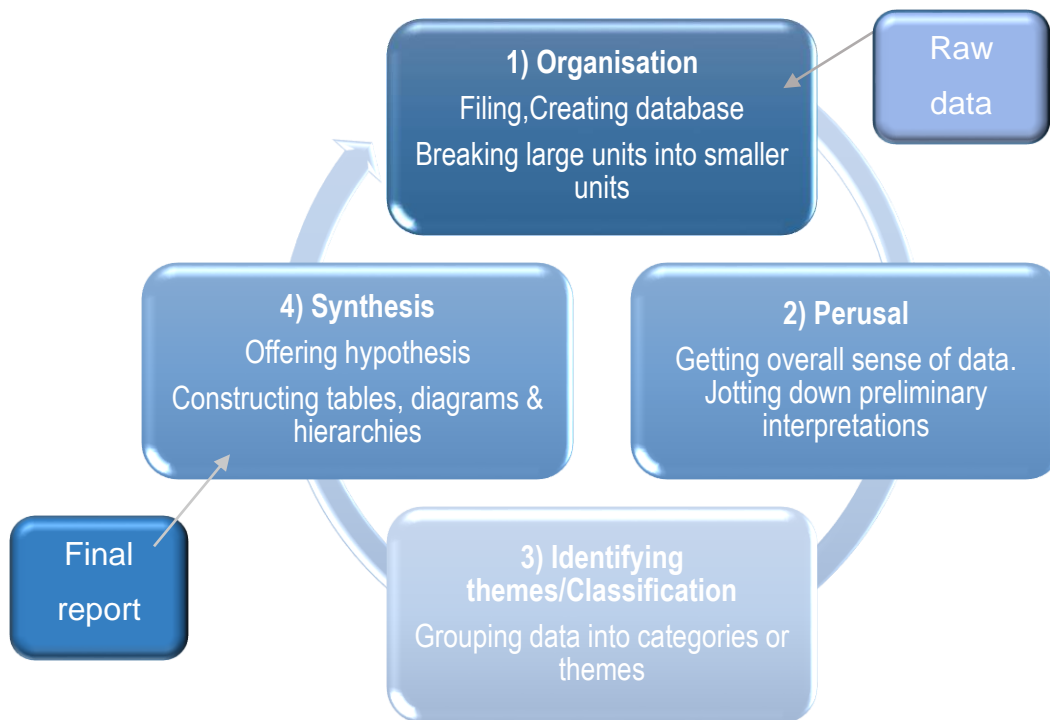


Figure 1.2: Practical Research: Planning and Design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 161); see also Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design (Creswell, 2007: 151)

Step 1: Organisation of data

This study's data were organised according to filing or creating a database and breaking down large bodies of text into smaller ones (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). Data were arranged into different types depending on the source of the information (Creswell, 2009: 183).

Step 2: Perusal of data

The frequent perusal of the entire data set, provided an overall idea of the data contents. During this process I made notes of possible categories that might present itself. For the purpose of this study, I also read through the transcribed interviews in order to categorise them according to the specific topics.

Step 3: Identifying themes/Classification

At that point, I attained a general sense of patterns and observed the significance of the study's data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). Creswell (2009: 183) states that the

generating of themes, follows on the previous steps. These themes should then appear as the main findings of the study.

Step 4: Integration or Synthesis

The final step in data analysis was the integration and summarising of the data. This step included offering propositions or hypotheses that describes relationships amongst the categories. I interpreted the data to amalgamate their significance or as Creswell (2009: 183) states, to make meaning from them.

After following all the above-mentioned steps, my aim was to draw a conclusion from the research findings.

1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Perakyla (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140) refers to trustworthiness as “the way in which data are collected, sorted and classified, especially if they are verbal and textual”. Miles and Huberman (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140) name the following criteria for evaluating trustworthiness or the reliability of data: truth; credibility corresponding with internal validity; transferability corresponding with external validity; dependability corresponding with reliability; and confirmability with objectivity. The following points guided the trustworthiness of my research:

1.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the degree to which others recognise the study’s findings to be substantial (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 272). In other words, how realistic or plausible the findings are (Wallace & Atkins, 2012: 20). Miles and Huberman (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140) maintain that the credibility of data refer to factors, such as the significance of results and their credibility for participants and readers.

1.8.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the research process and methods over time; it influences the degree of control in a study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140). The chapters to follow will present the dependability of this study as models for data collection and data analysis will be used to ensure the stability and consistency of the research process.

1.8.3 Confirmability

“Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the data and the absence of research errors” (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 141). Lincoln and Guba (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 141) maintain that results can be regarded as “confirmable” when they are derived from the participants and the research conditions, rather than from the subjective opinion of the researcher. To safeguard this study’s confirmability, focus group interviews were used so that results could be derived from participants and research conditions, instead of my subjective opinion.

1.8.4 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140) define transferability in qualitative research as the range to which the results can be exported and “generalized” to other contexts. In other words, the features of the research have to be described to enable researchers to assess whether qualitative results are transferable to other contexts (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140). I anticipated that my research would provide valuable data that could be tried in classroom settings of the different phases of Life Skills and not only be used in FP.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.9.1 Ethical Clearance

McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 15) state that the researchers are morally and ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of their participants. Furthermore, they opine that most studies require that informed consent be given by the participants or the relevant institution, as well as laws that are in place to protect the confidentiality of data and the privacy of subjects. My study was conducted in accordance with the terms and conditions of the ethical regulations stipulated by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria. I was required to apply for ethical clearance according to the regulations before my participants are contacted.

1.9.2 Informed consent

When research involves documents or records that human beings have created, such documentation is considered fair game for investigation by researchers. However, when specific participants are recruited for research, they should be provided with

information involving the nature of the study, as well as be given the option to either participate or not (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 107). Seeing that purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants, they had the choice to participate in this study after being fully informed concerning the aspects the study embodies, as well being informed of the part they would play in the research facets.

1.9.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Even though strict anonymity is not possible during focus group interviews, the privacy of participants should be protected as far as possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 121, 122). Confidentiality requires the researcher to be the only person having access to the data and the participants' names. It necessitates that data should not be linked to individual subjects' names (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 122). I used pseudonyms for my schools and participants in order to protect their original identities.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 introduced the research study. To allow an understanding of what is to ensue in the following chapters, the background and context of RE within Life Skills, the rationale, the purpose of this study, theoretical perspectives, research questions and research methodology were expounded on.

The next chapter offers descriptions of the accepted and recognised child development theories and the part each of these play in the child's holistic development. Chapter 2 furthermore offers theoretical perspectives on the spiritual development of children based on models that include the spiritual aspect of holistic or universal development.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE YOUNG CHILD'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to determine how teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in the Foundation Phase, which involves children ages 5 to 9 years old. In this chapter a literature review will be conducted on the theoretical insights regarding the spiritual development of the young child.

Chapter 2 is therefore informed by two models and four child development theories namely: Hettler's Six Dimensions of Wellness Model (1967), and Winiarski's Bio-Psycho-Socio-Spiritual Model (1997). The developmental theories which will also be discussed, are Fowler's stages of Faith (1981); Piaget's cognitive development theory (1969) Erikson's psychosocial theory (1982) and Kohlberg's moral development theory (1969, 1981, 1984). By discussing these prominent child development theories, an awareness of the importance of the holistic development of the child is created, which in turn, stresses the necessity of balanced child development. It is critical that teachers, caregivers and policy makers understand where children in their care are coming from and what their dispositions are. A number of models and theories on child development have stood the test of time in providing frameworks for understanding children's development and learning. This list of theories and models is by no means exhaustive, but they do offer a critical point of departure towards understanding the young child and why early childhood development is indispensable. To follow then, the abovementioned child development models and theories will be explored.

2.2 A HOLISTIC OR MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SYSTEMS APPROACH TOWARDS WELL-BEING

"Since ancient times the relation between body and mind has been a source of speculation and controversy" (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 45). The origin of the word "health" descends from the word "wholeness," an old English term that was also used to describe "physical health" and "spiritually holy" (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 45).

Furthermore, the WHO does not only regard health as the absence of sickness, but the presence of a complete state of wellness, including aspects of physical-, mental- and social well-being (Wissing, in Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 45) The strength of this definition lies within linking the various aspects of health, therefore seeing health as a state of overall wellness, or observing health through the lenses of holism (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 45). Lee (in Mahoumoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi & Liaghatdar, 2012: 179) states the following: “The concept of holism comes from the Greek concept ‘holon’ that sees the universe as made up of integrated wholes that cannot be reduced in parts.” Humans have a deep-seated need to experience themselves and their surroundings as coherent wholes (Kruger, Lubbe & Steyn, 2008: 7). Looking at “wholes” or its scientific term, namely “systems approach” became a necessity for better understanding the traditional schools of thought (Forbes, 1994: 4). During the 1970s, an emerging body of literature in science, philosophy and cultural history provided an overarching concept to describe this way of understanding education; a perspective known as holism (Miller, 1997: 3). Some supporters of the holistic approach claim that views central to holistic education are age-old and observed in humanity’s practice of religion (Forbes, 1994: 1). Other supporters are inspired by pioneers, such as Steiner, Montessori, Jung and Maslow and believe that holistic education originated from a “cultural paradigm shift” in the 1960’s (Forbes, 1994: 1). Interestingly, one of the inspired learners in the Montessori school of thought was Erik Erikson himself whose Psychosocial stage theory will be discussed later on in this chapter; Erikson too, was trained and certified as a Montessori teacher (Elkind, 1970: 4).

When researching spirituality and spiritual development, it seems only rational to focus on these educational philosophers who, like Maria Montessori (1965), so purposefully included spirituality in their educational writings concerning young children. Grimes (in Mahmoudi et al., 2012: 180) reminds one that in the past two hundred years, the most important holistic educators were Rudolf Steiner (1976) and Maria Montessori. Steiner, was the founder of the “Waldorf school movement,” and believed in nurturing the “soul-life” of children, whilst Maria Montessori, founder of the “Montessori school movement”, highlighted the importance of nurturing the spiritual development of children (Mahmoudi et al., 2012: 180). Montessori herself was concerned with every detail that concerned the life of children and their families (Bone, Cullen & Loveridge,

2007: 346). Standing (in Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007: 346) states that even though Maria Montessori had a Catholic background, her teaching approaches investigated the cosmos as well as the natural world. Standing adds that Montessori had a passion for science, she questioned convention in her own life and engaged with the physical, intellectual and moral aspects of education which she described as its joy. Finally, Montessori strived to call attention to what she called “the life of the spirit” (in Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007: 346). Forbes (1994: 5) agrees with the aforementioned idea when saying that, “There is little argument amongst holistic educators concerning the fact that there cannot be an education of the whole child if there is no education in what is transcendent”

Holistic education therefore, celebrates advancing alternative views of reality and multiple ways of knowing; it is believed that not only the intellectual and vocational aspects of being human needs guidance and nurturance, but also the physical, social, moral, aesthetic, creative, and, in a non-sectarian sense, spiritual aspects. In various ways, wholeness is a vitally important ingredient of human happiness and fulfilment, and desperately needs to be reclaimed (Mahmoudi et al., 2012: 184). Miller (1997: 7) states that holistic educators recognise entire dimensions of the personality, such as the aesthetic, expressive, and spiritual dimensions and are chronically undernourished, if not actively suppressed, by schooling and other childrearing practices. The concept of “wholeness” should be the focal point of education which implies that every subject field or learning area simply offers a different outlook on the phenomenon that is life (Mahmoudi et al., 2012: 184).

2.2.1 The Six Dimensions of Wellness

The National Wellness Institute (NWI) (in Strout & Howard, 2012:196) creates a link between holism and wellness, and defines wellness as “a multidimensional and holistic state of being that is conscious, self-directed, and constantly evolving to achieve one’s full potential”. Several wellness models have been proposed, but Hettler (1974) (in Strout & Howard, 2012: 196) describes wellness as an ever-changing process that encompasses six dimensions, namely the occupational; social; intellectual; physical; emotional; and spiritual dimension. The following figure explains the interconnectedness of these various domains.

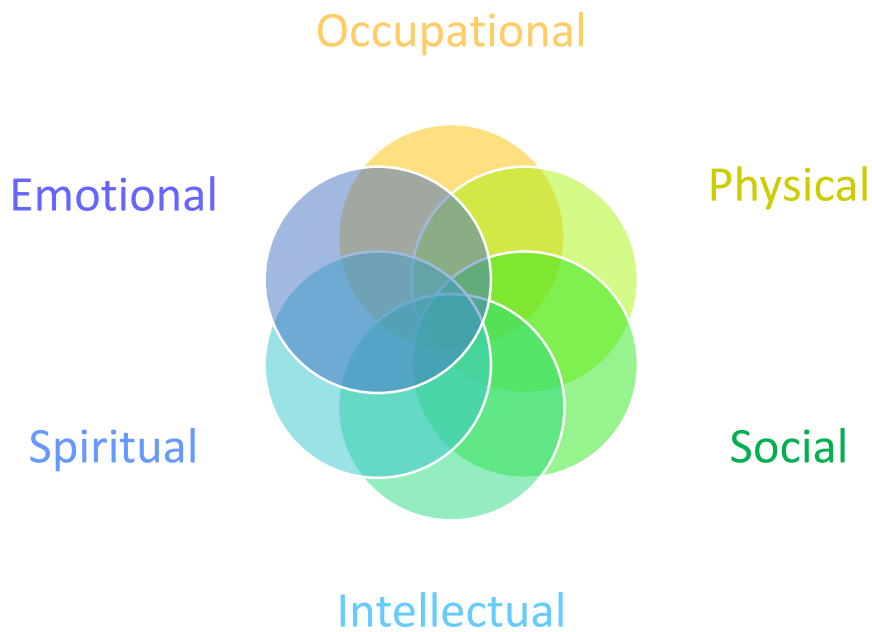


Figure 2.1: The Six Dimensions of Wellness(The National Wellness Institute, in Hettler, 1976: 1)

In Figure 2.1, the occupational dimension recognises that one's life is enriched through work since work contributes to personal satisfaction (Hettler, 1976: 1), whereas the physical dimension acknowledges the need for regular physical activity and believes in physical fitness above being out of shape (Hettler, 1976: 1). In other words, fitness is prioritised as part of a well-rounded lifestyle. The social dimension encourages contribution to one's community and deems this contribution as surpassing one's solitary, self-interest (Hettler, 1976: 1). The intellectual dimension recognises the stimulation of one's mental activities and the expansion of knowledge and skills; the model deems challenging our minds with intellectual and creative pursuits greater than becoming unproductive (Hettler, 1976: 1,2). Furthermore, the spiritual dimension recognises our search for meaning and purpose in human existence; it includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life. This dimension values pondering the meaning of life as a personal practice and values tolerating the beliefs of others, instead of becoming and practicing intolerance. Additionally, it espouses consistency to one's own values and beliefs, instead of being disloyal to these (Hettler, 1976: 2). As the final dimension, the emotional recognises the awareness and acceptance of one's feelings, and esteems the acceptance of these

feelings above the denial thereof. This dimension views an optimistic life approach greater than a pessimistic course of action (Hettler, 1976: 2). Thus, the “six dimensions of wellness” interconnect with one another to represent the person as a whole (Strout & Howard, 2012: 196). By applying the wellness model, a person becomes aware of the interconnectedness of each dimension and how each contributes to healthy living (Hettler, 1976: 2).

When reviewing South Africa’s National Curriculum Statement, CAPS claims to support the holistic approach by stating that Life Skills rotates around the holistic development of learners (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8). In this regard, Hay (2015: 8) asserts that because the Department of Basic Education refers to holistic development in their curriculum statement, the implication is that the teacher should focus on the learner in totality. Hence, the focus should be on their physical, emotional, cognitive, conative, social and spiritual domains. It is to be reiterated that a mere two hours of the 60 hours allocated to Life Skills are allocated to Religion Education (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 16).

In order to address holistic development, Engel developed the biopsychosocial model in 1980 based on general systems theory, which acknowledges the interconnection of all systems. With this model, the whole human being can be engaged (Bishop, 2011: 234).

2.2.2 The Biopsychosocial/spiritual model

The biopsychosocial model proposes that humans and their health are influenced not only on a micro level (for instance, changes in body chemicals) but also on a macro level (for instance the culture within which someone lives) (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 54). In other words, Engel argues that the human being is not merely a body; he is a body with a psyche and a body within a social framework (Bishop, 2011: 234). The systems-oriented scientist, including the physician always has in mind the distinction between the individual system and the collective order of systems, and the complementarity inherent in it (Engel, 1981: 107). The biopsychosocial model does not make the distinction between mind and body, but rather connects mental events and biological changes with each other (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 45). Winiarski (1997) adapted this model to include the spiritual aspect of human conduct. Pertaining

to the spiritual, Baker (in Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007: 344) echoes this notion of wholeness when stating that “spirituality may support feeling whole or complete and there are suggestions that it is a unifying or connecting force.” According to Van Niekerk and Prins (2009: 54) Winiarski perceives people as holistic beings who have bio-, psycho-social and spiritual qualities. To make his case, Winiarski states the following: “If we think it through...it seems that every aspect of life has biomedical, psychological, social and spiritual components that affect one another” (Winiarski, 1997: 6). He adds that this model sensitises professional counsellors (or teachers, in the case of this study) to different influences (biopsychosocial/spiritual) that impact the clients (or learners in this case) and allow for better assessment and treatment of clients (Van Niekerk & Prins, 2009: 54).

When spirituality is included in a holistic model, it is beneficial to the child or individual for that matter, this is why Sexon (in Neuman, 2011: 45) states that children use spirituality and religion for a variety of things, such as coping with physical illness or trying to understand other difficult situations in life. The biopsychosocial/spiritual model recognises that individuals have numerous facets and that these facets interrelate with one another (Winiarski, 1997: 6). The following figure will depict the different aspects of this model.

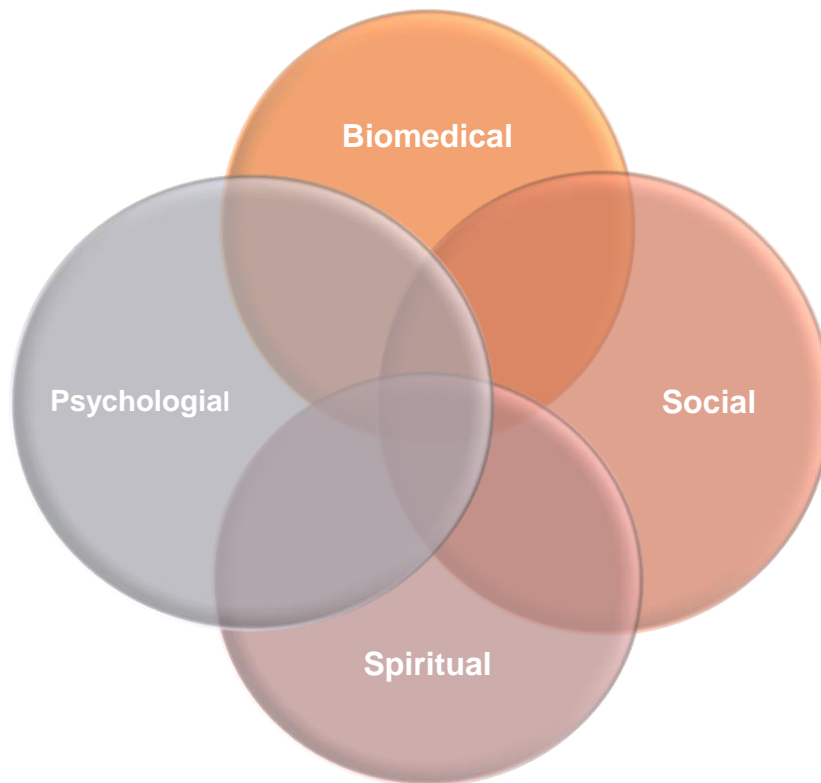


Figure 2.2: The Biopsychosocial/spiritual model (Winiarski, 1997:7)

Each circle in the figure represents aspects of our lives. According to Winiarski (1997: 7) these broad, interlocking aspects can be generally defined as follows:

- Biological/Biomedical: pertaining to flesh, blood, bone, organisms and viruses.
- Psychological: having to do with the inner life of individual, including emotions, self-judgements, and motivations for relatedness with others and internal reasons for behaviours.
- Social: the person's participation or lack of participation in family, community and society and the effect of these groups on the person. Culture is included in this realm.
- Spiritual: an internal belief or sense that acknowledges "other", a reality beyond normal experience, which may be a presence or meaning that surpasses current reality. In this realm we include belief in God and particular cultural expressions of spirituality (Winiarski, 1997: 7).

This model stresses that these numerous aspects interplay and affect one another. Even though the different realms may be separated for the purposes of distinguishing

major components, it should finally be viewed as part of a bigger whole (Winiarski, 1997: 7). The role of Winiarski's biopsychosocial/spiritual model (1997) in this study, is to reiterate the importance of the spiritual aspect of development in the Foundation Phase child and to raise awareness of the significance of spirituality as part of all-inclusive well-being.

Bridges and Moore (2002: 3) refer to the relation between religion and spirituality and Kruger et al. (2008: 7) explain religion as humanity's response that emerged in an attempt to understand perplexing and pressuring life aspects, by seeing them as part of a coherent and integrated design.

The CAPS document, (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 8) has included RE as part of Life Skills, the learning area central to holism. Kruger et al. (2008: 7) state that the role of religion may be called the comprehensive integration of aspects pertaining to the practice of religious beliefs. As an aside, it begs the question: To what extent are learners being developed spiritually within Life Skills, as this learning area prides itself on the learner's holistic development (Hay, 2015: 8).

While Hettler's model on wellness (1967) and Engel (1981) and Winiarski's (1997) holistic model emphasises the importance of all-inclusive child development, specific domains are highlighted in the various developmental theories that are to follow. As part of the conceptual framework that guides this study, the following theories are examined next: Fowler's spiritual developmental model (1981), Piaget's cognitive model (1969), Erikson's psychosocial model (1982) and Kohlberg's model on moral development (1969, 1981, 1984). As the focus of this study is on the child in the Foundation Phase, only the stages relevant to children between 5-9 years will be concentrated on (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 2) see also (Department of Education, 2003b: 19). Consequently, spiritual development will be examined first as it forms an integral part of my study.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Neuman (2011: 44) states that "knowledge of child development, including faith development, is important in providing holistic care to the child." Furthermore, she emphasises the importance of considering all of the developmental facets when

attempting to understand children in a holistic manner, namely considering their growth through “cognitive, social, behavioural and faith perspectives.” It is, therefore, important to remember that theories of child development serve a purpose in helping us to discuss and classify elements of a child’s growth; however, they are separate frameworks and should be seen as that (Woolley, Hyde & Adams, 2008: 42). In other words, these separate entities of the child’s development form part of a considerably bigger picture.

Relating to one of these separate entities, I am deliberately choosing to focus on the spiritual aspect of development as it has been neglected in the past and has only started featuring as part of a holistic model after Winiarski posited his view of spirituality as an integral part of the human dimension as a whole (Winiarski, 1997: 6). Spirituality and religiosity are exceptional characteristics experienced by only humans, nonetheless “cognitive, emotional and behavioural characteristics that operationalise spirituality and religiosity are not present in the new-born”; these develop across the life span (Lerner, Alberts, Anderson & Dowling, 2006: 60).

This said, there are compelling arguments suggesting that spirituality is, in fact, an ontological reality; something that belongs to every human being, including children. Erricker’s (2001) thesis draws attention to a salient point that RE plays an essential role in the nurturance of a child’s spirituality (in Hyde, 2010: 3). In addition, religion education provides learners with “rituals, signs, gestures and sacred texts” which have been used for centuries, to demonstrate, facilitate and contribute to the child’s spirituality (Hyde, 2010: 3). In addition, “spirituality may foster an integrated moral and civic identity within a young person and lead the individual along the path of becoming an adult contributing integratively to the self, family, community and civil society” (Lerner et al., 2006: 61).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, many positives, such as empowerment, optimism, empathy, understanding, intellectual confidence, academic performance, physical and psychological health, and self-esteem are associated with spirituality (Zhang, 2013: 244). Tacey (in Grajczonek, 2010: 8) affirms that an individual needs both the form and substance of spirituality and religiosity, but states that each can attack and cancel out the other if the conditions are not propitious. This author warns against an

imbalance between spirituality and religion; his statement regarding the need for an individual to experience both form and substance makes an interesting claim when looking at the subject of RE as part of the holistic development of the FP child. Members of the general public express an urgent need to engage young people in a new way of seeing, knowing and discovering; there is an emerging sense among developmental scholars that something has been missing in the scholarship, and that domain is spiritual development (in Roehlkepartain et al., 2006: 1-2). This statement is yet another motivation for undertaking this study and its research aims.

Despite the fact that spiritual beliefs vary, it speaks to a need within every human being. Peterson and Seligman (in Steyn, 2008: 1) believe that all cultures have a basic concept of an ultimate, transcendent (uplifting, inspirational), sacred, and divine power that directs life on earth. This facet of human functioning, which together marks what is uniquely human about humans, emerges over the course of an individual's life span. Carl Jung, for instance, believes that some aspects of religiousness may be inherited and that there exists an unconscious need to hunt for and find a *deity* (divine being). Elkind (in Steyn, 2008: 4) is another researcher who points out that humans have a profound and inherent need to use a kind of spiritual explanation for understanding ourselves, the world and the universe. Finally, Tillich (in Vaughan, 2002: 16) defines spirituality as the domain of ultimate concern, stating that everyone is spiritual because everyone has ultimate concerns. Spirituality exists in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere, within religious traditions and independently of tradition (Vaughan, 2002: 16). And so, Berryman (in Hyde, 2010: 3) postulates that religious education provides a collective language enabling young ones to better voice their spirituality.

Rossiter (2010: 6) refers to spirituality, as an intermediary composition that is closely related to faith, and that it can be helpful when dealing more directly with pedagogics. Neuman (2011: 44) describes the concept of faith in the following manner: "Faith is an overarching, all-encompassing term, which includes within its bounds the definitions of religion and spirituality." Therefore, Fowler's theory is not limited to any particular belief-system; faith, Fowler suggests, can be religious or non-religious (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438). Faith can be interpreted as an approach of "knowing and seeing the world" as well as a matter of "universal human interest"

(Neuman, 2011: 45). The notion of a ‘basic human spirituality’ and ‘human faith’ as described by Fowler (1981), proves a significant overlap; it is interesting to note that the subtitle to Fowler’s book on faith development is “The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning” (Rossiter, 2010: 6).

2.3.1 Stages of Faith

The earliest studies exploring children’s spiritual and/or religious experiences came out of the Religious Experience Research Unit from Sir Alister Hardy (1965) who claimed that religious experience was a central feature of people’s lives. Respondents to Hardy’s research describe experiences from their childhood that were of significance in their lives (in Grajczonek, 2010: 11). Dr James W. Fowler (1974) saw a need for a theory that expounds on faith development; thus, he proposed a theory grounded on the foundations established by other developmental theorists like Lawrence Kohlberg, Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson and so the Stages of Faith originated (Neuman, 2011: 46). Fowler constructed this developmental stage theory to display the manner in which faith develops during an individual’s lifespan; Fowler’s constructs aid the individual in coping with life’s existential questions (Gross, 2010: 65). In the 1970’s and 1980’s, Fowler’s theory on faith development was pioneered as a framework for understanding the evolution of how human beings conceptualise God, or a Higher Being; the theory has become a formative influence in the schools of thought pertaining to religious- and spiritual development (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 34). In comparison to other developmental theorists, Fowler’s theory has fewer limitations; “there are minimums before which certain stages cannot occur, but there are no maximums” (Neuman, 2011: 46). In other words, there are no assurances that higher stages will be accomplished. Fowler contends that his stage theory can be related people from various religious groups such as Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhist monks and even to the “civil religion” of a Veteran’s organisation (Neuman, 2011: 46). He maintains that faith gives coherence and direction to our lives and enables us to face the inevitable difficulties of our existential condition; he points out that factors such as biological maturation, emotional and cognitive development, and cultural influences must be taken into account to understand faith development (Vaughan, 2002: 25).

Fowler's stages of faith include Primal Faith, Intuitive-Projective Faith, Mythic Literal Faith, Synthetic- Conventional Faith, Individuative-Reflective Faith, Conjunctive Faith and Universalizing Faith (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 36–42). With the exemption of Primal Faith, only the stages relevant to the FP child, namely Intuitive Projective Faith and Mythic Literal Faith will be investigated further. Even though Primal Faith does not pertain to the FP child, it will be included since it forms the basis of all further faith development.

2.3.1.1 Primal Faith (0-3 years)

Fowler (Gollnick, 2005: 72) describes this period of early childhood as a pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual disposition towards the conditions of life (in Gollnick, 2005: 72). Faith development begins, according to Fowler, when there is a “convergence of thought and language,” whatsoever precedes this can be categorised under Undifferentiated Faith (in Neuman, 2011: 46) or Primal Faith. This is the time when a baby attaches itself to the parent/caregiver and the quality of this connectedness determines the child's future relationships; it is also during this stage that basic trust develops (Steyn, 2008: 4). According to Grajczonek (2010: 13), Fowler claims that significant aspects for our lives of faith “occur in utero” and “in the very first months of our lives” and goes on to explain that this primal faith forms ahead of language through the ritual of care; it is a pivotal time when trust is established and a “rudimentary faith” enables infants to overcome separation anxiety. Basic trust forms when an infant believes that his/her needs will be met by powerful others or primary caretakers (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438). Object relation theorists opine that this is the period during which the self is beginning to form into a cohesive whole (Gollnick, 2005: 72). During this first stage of faith, more physical and neurological growth occurs than during any other life stage: the brain attains 70% of its full adult weight and its neurons sprout millions of dendrites. By 3 months infants are able to concentrate on visual and auditory stimuli for 3 to 5 seconds (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 36, 37). Infants can hold up their heads by 4 months and by 5 months they can apply distinguishing arm and leg movements; at 9 months, babies have the ability to gesture intentionally for desired objects (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 37).

This critical stage develops and establishes the foundation on which faith is later built (Grajczonek, 2010: 13). In other words, the connection between infants and their

caregivers holds important implications for the child's future relationships (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 37). It is crucial that infants form healthy attachments in the first year of their lives; experiences combining to form a trusting dispositions include actions, such as body contact and attention; feeding and nurture; and the development of interpersonal accord in the infant's relations with caregivers (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 37). Consequently, faith development is based on this foundation; should the child not feel secure and should he/she not develop sufficient trust in his fellow human beings, it will be very difficult to transfer trust to a divine being (Steyn, 2008: 4). After the first successful attachment to the primary caregiver, the infant can generalise this ability to connect emotionally to significant others; inadequate caregiving, abuse and neglect adversely affect this very vital process (Steyn, 2008: 4). This phase within the child's faith expansion revolves around construction of sound relationships which includes establishing a basis upon which trust, hope and love can flourish; these are fundamental role players in faith maturation (Neuman, 2011: 46).

2.3.1.2 Intuitive-Projective Faith (4 – 7 years)

The birth of imagination is a gift of this new phase called Intuitive-Projective Faith (Fowler, 1981: 134); the child receives the ability to grasp the experience-world in powerful images when presented in stories. These stories speak to the child's intuitive understandings of our ultimate conditions of existence (Fowler, 1981: 134). Pertaining to the child's other developmental milestones, it is important to be aware that this stage of faith intertwines with the maturation of various aspects, such as gross motor, fine motor, and cognitive development; for example, the nervous system's neurons are migrating to form more complex connections (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 37). At this stage children form mental images about their experiences and feelings (Gollnick, 2005: 72). Children begin to shape their first sense of self-awareness (Steyn, 2008: 4). The self-aware, egocentric child also becomes aware of death in this stage of faith (Fowler, 1981: 133); or, put differently, death becomes a conscious focus as a source of danger and mystery (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 37).

Spiritual growth, as stated by Vaughan (2002: 27) can be practiced by activities, such as cultivating a sensitivity to the inner realms of experience, practising journaling (or drawings in the case of the FP child), and music and movement; these practices contribute toward spiritual intelligence. These activities offer support for another

strong theme emerging in this stage, namely meaning-making in its most basic form. It is a time when young children, yearn for meaning and tend to make meaning by intuition and imitation (Grajczonek, 2010: 13). They try to attain a procedure to make sense of their feelings, impressions and the imagery that accompanies their daily lives, children try to attain a process to understand the mystery that surrounds their existence (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). In this phase young ones display an ineptness in the differentiation between reality and imagination and the comprehension of cause and effect (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438). Fowler describes these imaginative processes as unrestrained and uninhibited by logical thought. Moreover, the child's imagination is not yet controlled by reliable logical operations and as a result it responds to "story, symbol, dream, and experience" (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). Fowler (1981: 133) further states that this fantasy-filled phase can influence the child enduringly; the deeds and examples of visible faith attained by observing their parents or caretakers, has lasting effects on children. Piaget (in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 7) describes how preoperational children, in their fantasy play, use their recent acquired and developing imagination and skills to apply symbols which aid them in making sense of their immediate surroundings, this includes what they are taught by parents and other socialisation agents, about God.

The Intuitive-Projective child's conception of God is based on the way in which society has ingrained it into them through fantasy, stories and dramatic representation (Steyn, 2008: 4). Therefore, "constructions of faith are drawn to symbols and images of visible power and size" (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). Bettelheim (in Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38) explains that children value fairy-tale stories representing the powers of good and evil, as it permits them to symbolise and acknowledge intimidating urges and impulses that both intrigues and disturbs. Likewise, children may vicariously, identify with these triumphs of good over evil in a way that only these stories can provide. All of the abovementioned authors writing on Intuitive-Projective faith, mention that it is imagination, fantasy, stories, drama and fairy tales that mainly feature in this stage of spiritual maturation. It is important to note that these can be powerful tools in the hands of a FP teacher, thus facilitating the child's spiritual growth. Importantly, it contributes to language-acquisition and invents long-lasting faith images (Grajczonek, 2010: 13).

2.3.1.3 Mythic-Literal Faith (ages 7-11 years)

According to Fowler (1981: 149) the Mythic-Literal is the stage in which a person begins to take on the beliefs and observances practiced by his or her community. A more rational view of the universe is now developed, as children in this phase are able to apply concrete operations (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438) and distinguish reality from make-believe (Steyn, 2008: 4).

The background of maturation in other developmental areas, such as the child's physical and mental development is as follows. The brain's has attained 90% of its adult weight (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). Physically, complexity and sophistication are observed in the fine motor-adaptive skills and small-muscle control which permits elementary school children to tie their own shoe laces and snap their fingers; these are skills that were absent in previous development stages (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). Cognitively, concrete operational thinking (a Piagetian term to be mentioned later in this chapter), enables more stable forms of interpretation and shaping of experiences and meanings, a challenge that the child experienced in the previous developmental phase (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). In addition, "cause-and-effect relationships", object classification, story-telling and taking the perspective of others are now comprehensible for children in this phase (Neuman, 2011: 46).

As for spiritual or faith development, religious thinking is literal and realistic; God and angels are thought of as real, concrete persons who help, protect and so on (Steyn, 2008: 4). In other words, beliefs are made with literal interpretations, as are moral rules and attitudes (Fowler, 1981: 149). Both Goldman and Fowler (in Grajczonek, 2010: 13-14) suggest a three-stage developmental model (of which two of these stages relate to the Foundation Phase). This is an intuitive stage in which children see religious identity as being "bestowed by God or parents; prayers are conceptualised as recipes for gratifying personal desires; and interpretations of beliefs are unsystematic, fragmentary and often inconsistent" (Grajczonek, 2010: 13,14). Even if prayers are conceptualised as a recipe to gratify personal desires, Vaughan (2002: 26) states that activities such as prayer, or even deep-thinking, can be defined broadly as activities concerned with relating to the sacred and therefore cultivating spiritual growth.

At around the age of seven during this stage, religious thinking enters a concrete period; children associate religious identity with particular forms of behaviour, kinship or dress, and prayer with specific concrete activities (Grajczonek, 2010: 13-14). God is not constructed in especially personal terms, neither are “internal emotions” and “interpersonal sensitivities” attributed to God; therefore, to make sense of things, children in this stage structure a very extreme environment which is based on “simple fairness and moral exchanges” (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38-39). God is often constructed as compassionate and having a strict sense of reciprocity in dealings with people (Neuman, 2011: 46). Children in this phase believe that God is fair and that people get what they deserve (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438). For example, the child believes that when he/she experiences things directly, such as faith having an interpersonal attribute - a dog being sick for instance - the child prays and the dog gets better. The child now believes that God exists and answers prayers (Steyn, 2008: 4). On the other hand, the child can lose faith in his/her belief when experiencing disappointment; for example, parents getting divorced despite the child’s prayers (Steyn, 2008: 4). Furthermore, children may understand God by attributing human characteristics to this higher power, for example by understanding the divine as kind-hearted, but strict (Neuman, 2011: 46).

Stories, drama and myth are the primary areas in which ideas are experienced (Steyn, 2008: 4); or, in this phase children are affected deeply and powerfully by symbolic and dramatic materials and can describe in an endlessly detailed narrative what has occurred (Fowler, 1981: 149). Therefore, pertaining to the aspect of formulating meaning, the mythic-literal child uses narrative. “In this respect, this stage provides a permanent contribution to meaning-making” (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 39). Meaning is both carried and “trapped” in the narrative as stepping-back from the narrative to formulate thoughtful meanings is not yet part of the child’s capacity (Fowler, 1981: 149). In practice, the mythic-literal stage begins to disappear with the discovery that “bad things happen to good people” which can make the child give up his or her belief in a God temporarily, or give it up for good (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 39). According to Steyn (Steyn, 2008: 4) it is very important that religious education be linked to general life skills, such as teaching the child that life is not necessarily fair, that bad things happen to good people, and that God does not always answer prayers the way we expect them to be answered. This stage is an important one in faith development. It

initiates and develops the beginnings of reflection on the feelings and ideas of faith (Fowler, 2004: 39) (see also Steyn, 2008: 4). The following figure depicts the three stages pertaining to the FP child.



Figure 2.3: Fowler’s stages of Faith (Huitt & Robbins, 2003: 5).

Huitt and Robbins (2003: 5) explain the figure as follows: Undifferentiated faith or primal faith is the stage during infancy where the infant is beginning to interact with the adult and learn about social, built and natural environments. Intuitive-projective faith begins around the age of 3-7 years and involves the imagination of the inner child, which is fantasy-filled and free of logic. In this last stage pertaining to the FP child, the acknowledgement of authority indicates a low functioning of self-awareness and an increase of focus on the relationships of others. The world in this phase is viewed in terms of opposites, such as good or bad. The increase of logical thinking brings this stage to a close. As cognitive development increases with the development of concrete operational thinking, the child has the potential to progress to the next stage

Interestingly, the majority of theories on faith development are underpinned by Piaget's (1969) Cognitive Development theory (Bridges & Moore, 2002: 4). Correspondingly, the ideas of Fowler's (1981) faith development theory and Elkind's (1964; 1970) religious development will be mentioned, along with the following Piagetian stages to reiterate where the child's spirituality comes into play, during the periods of development.

2.3.2 Cognitive development theory

Piaget believed that the development of a child occurs through the continuous transformation and alteration of thinking and thought processes (Ojose, 2008: 26). In the domain of cognition, Piaget's Cognitive Development theory (1969) has been tremendously influential, suggesting a predictable sequence of stages for cognitive development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Cartwright, 2001: 214). The pre-operational and concrete-operational stages are relevant to this study.

Piaget's theory is based on the belief that children actively construct their knowledge of the world, incorporating new information into existing knowledge schemes through assimilation (Rathus, 2003: 206). Piaget labelled children's conceptions of the world as "schemes" and hypothesised that children attempt to assimilate or adapt new events into existing schemes; however when assimilation does not allow for this, children accommodate new events by modifying their existing schemes (Rathus, 2003: 206). In other words, these schemes are expanded through the process of accommodation by relying on the pre-existing scheme and adding new-found knowledge to it. The scheme becomes altered and the outcome is a greater equilibrium among the pieces of knowledge that make up the child's understanding (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 272). For example, infants in the sensorimotor stage process information that is directly available to them through their sensory experiences and actions on objects in the world around them (Cartwright, 2001: 214). As these infants pass into the preoperational stage, they add the additional feature of symbolic mental representation, a skill that allows them to transcend their previous understanding of the world by enabling them to think about objects without having to directly experience them through sensory or motor means (Cartwright, 2001: 214).

Siegler, DeLoache and Eisenberg (2011: 131) maintain that Piaget depicts development as involving three main processes, namely assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. He maintains that children progress through the stages of cognitive development in a consistent sequence in which no stage is skipped.

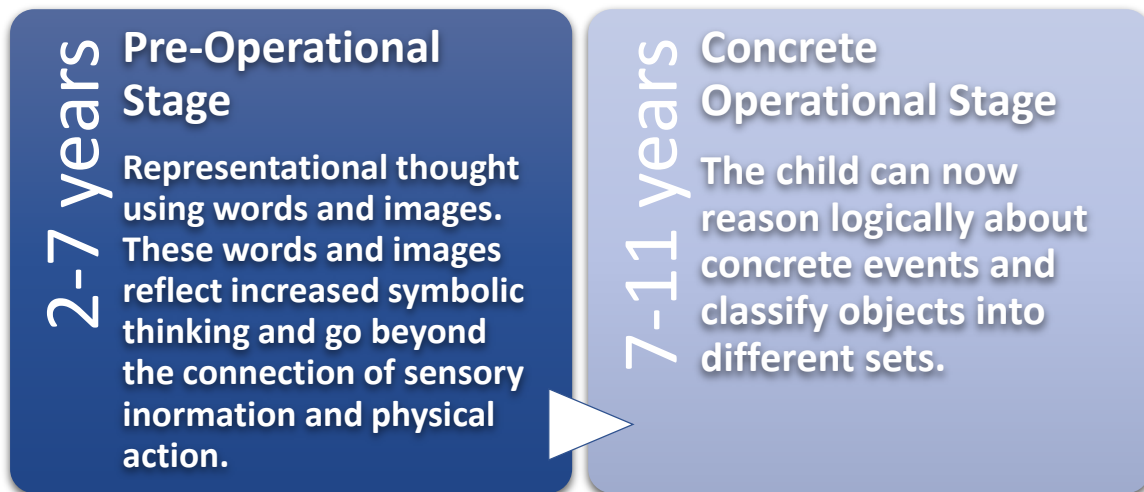


Figure 2.4: Piaget's Cognitive Development theory (Santrock, 2010: 27).

Below follows the explanation and discussion of Figure 2.4., Piaget's Pre-Operational and Concrete Operational stages. These are the only stages depicted and discussed in the following section, as these stages apply to the FP child.

2.3.2.1 The preoperational stage (age 2-7)

It is important to remember that each developmental stage consists of a period of months or years when a certain or specific type development takes place (Ojose, 2008: 26). In the preoperational stage, children develop the ability to represent their experiences in language and mental imagery; now, they can remember experiences for longer periods of time and form more sophisticated concepts (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 131). The major achievement of this stage is expansion in the use of a child's symbolic thought (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 256). Thus, semiotic function is central to this second developmental phase and focuses on the child's ability to use symbols, objects or words to represent or stand for something (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 275). In addition, semiotic function permits the child to think about past and future events and to employ language accordingly (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 275). Aspects from Fowler's Intuitive-Projective stage also relate to Piaget's semiotic

function, for example when children in Fowler's stage are able to relate to stories representing the powers of good and evil (Bettelheim in Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38).

Children form stable concepts and begin to reason in the preoperational phase; however, the word 'preoperational' emphasises that the child does not yet perform operations; it is only the beginning of the ability to reconstruct thought (Santrock, 2010: 283). Therefore, preoperational thought can be characterised as subjective and illogical (Cartwright, 2001: 214). Egocentrism, the inability to separate their perspective from those of others, the inability to solve conservation tasks and the lack of centration where the child focuses on only one aspect of a problem, are challenges that the preoperational child faces and is not yet capable of doing (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 275).

With regard to the spiritual aspect of development that runs throughout and is parallel to this Piagetian stage, preoperational children start to utilise signs and symbols to demonstrate objects they encounter in their daily lives (Elkind in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 5). They are also able to apply "categorical thinking," however their skill to comprehend what distinguishes the various categories from one another, or that individuals and objects can form part of more than one category at a time, is still lacking. Elkind (in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 5) uses the following example to explain his statement: "Young children cannot understand that an individual can be Catholic and American at the same time; children may know the name of their denomination, but they have little understanding of what distinguishes one denomination from another."

2.3.2.2 The concrete operational stage (age 7-11)

In this stage, children can perform concrete operations and can reason logically, as long as they can apply their reasoning to specific or concrete examples (Santrock, 2010: 283). They can think logically because they can take multiple aspects of a situation into account (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 266). In other words, children begin to reason rationally about concrete features of the world (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 139). For example, the child's thought is more logical in the concrete operational stage when concrete features are physically present; the reason for this shift in functioning is that the child is now capable of performing operations and mental actions, such as reversibility (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 276). An example of such

concrete features would be a child using concrete counters to solve a mathematical problem.

Additionally, the concrete operational mind shows an understanding of the laws of conservation; for example, the child is aware of the principle that objects can have several properties or dimensions at the same time, such as tall objects also being heavy, light or coloured with shape and width (Rathus, 2003: 423). Regarding RE in FP, Elkind (in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 5) states that Piaget's concrete operational stage represents a greater understanding of religiosity. For the child, thinking about religion is based on the behaviour they observe, rather than on their thoughts and emotions. For example, children may be able to distinguish between denominations and their varied religious activities, but will find it hard to distinguish between the varied religious beliefs that underlie different activities (Elkind in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 5). Therefore, religious traditions accompanied by activities are more comprehensible than the mindfulness of the variants of specific religious beliefs.

Similarly, when children have to explain prayer, they focus on the rituals and activities that accompany prayer, instead of on the emotions, musings and convictions that their older counterparts are able to express (Elkind in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 6). Children in the concrete operational phase thus have logical, but not abstract thinking (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 266). Fowler's Mythic-Literal stage coincides with the concrete operational stage as this stage "initiates and develops the beginning of reflection on the feelings and ideas of faith" (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 39).

2.3.3 Erikson's theory on psychosocial development

Child psychiatrist, Erik Erikson's (1902-1994) stages of psychosocial development (1982) shift focus of development from the Piaget's learning and cognition to what Bukatko and Daehler (2004: 27) believe to be a substantially greater focus on emotions and personality. Erikson proposes eight stages of human development in his psychosocial stage theory (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 347). Erikson (1982) maintains that within the span of a lifetime, individuals advance through a series of eight developmental stages, each characterised by a unique psychological issue or crisis (Santrock, 2010: 24). The degree of resolution (or unresolution) of each stage forms the characteristics of individual personality and impacts the degree of resolution

(or unresolution) of later stages (Sacco, 2013: 140). In other words, the more successfully the individual resolves his or her crisis, the healthier their development will be (Santrock, 2010: 24), or as Bukatko and Daehler (2004: 24) explain, the triumph of earlier stages will set the groundwork for the negotiation of later stages. Examples of these developmental tasks will be discussed below in their different stages applied to the FP child.

According to Sacco (2013: 140) the stages of Erikson's psychosocial development theory are: "Trust vs mistrust, Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs Guilt, Industry vs Inferiority, Identity vs Identity confusion, Intimacy vs Isolation, Generativity vs Stagnation, and Ego integrity vs Despair." These stages relates to the following ages, namely: "early infancy (1-1½), toddler (1 ½-3), early childhood (3-6), middle childhood (6-12), adolescence (12-18), young adulthood (19-40), middle adulthood (40-65), and older adulthood (65+)."

The Department of Basic Education states that learner-ages in FP may vary in some instances, but that learners-ages range from 5-9 years old in this phase of schooling (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 2). Therefore, Initiative vs Guilt (3-6) and Industry vs Inferiority (6-puberty) will be expounded on, for the aims and purpose of this study.

2.3.3.1 Initiative vs Guilt

In this stage, children aged 3 to 6 (Sacco, 2013: 140) are largely masters of their bodies, therefore they can ride tricycles, run, cut and hit; accordingly children can initiate motor activities of various sorts on their own and no longer merely respond to or imitate the actions of their peers (Elkind, 1970: 10). Erikson states that in every stage a new wonder of vigorous unfolding presents itself and brings along with it new hope and new responsibility (Erikson, 1987: 229). In this stage of Erikson's psychosocial development theory the wonder of initiative in opposition to guilt, presents itself as primary crisis (Santrock, 2010: 24). Fowler's stage of Intuitive-projective faith corresponds with this stage of Erikson's theory, as emotions, such as "shame, guilt, pride and self-confidence" are being formed (Bridges & Moore, 2002: 7). Like Freud, Erikson sees the time between ages 4 and 6 years as a period during

which children come to identify with and learn from their parents (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 348). Erikson argues that the social dimension that appears at this stage has initiative at one of its poles and guilt at the other; whether the child will leave this stage with his/her sense of initiative, far outbalancing his/her sense of guilt, depends to a considerable extent upon how parents respond to his/her self-initiated activities (Elkind, 1970: 10). Erikson believes that the child experiences a sense of guilt when failing to uphold his/her parents' standards; the challenge for the child is to achieve balance between initiative and guilt (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 348). Children who are given much freedom and opportunity to initiate motor play, such as running, bike riding, sliding, skating, tussling and wrestling have their sense of initiative reinforced; the same occurs when parents answer their children's questions and do not deride or inhibit fantasy or play activity (Elkind, 1970: 11). Pertaining to the child's spiritual development as one of the main foci of this study, this phase of Erikson's development theory ties in with Fowler and Dell's (2006: 38) statement that the child experiences opposing emotions of "power and powerlessness" in this phase of spiritual development. These act as positioning feelings which lead children to ponder on existential concerns, to ask questions concerning their security, safety and the power of caregivers whom they rely on for protection (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 38). Consistent with Erikson's descriptions, Fowler (in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 7) suggests that the foundations on which faith is later built is established during the early phases of a child's emotional development.

2.3.3.2 Industry vs Inferiority

This fourth stage of development covers Grades 1, 2 and 3 of the FP child. In all cultures, this stage provides children with systematic instruction, which is another phrase for schooling (Erikson, 1987: 233). This stage lasts from age 6 to puberty (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 349). During this phase the child becomes capable of deductive reasoning, and of playing and learning by rules (Elkind, 1970: 11). It is not until this period that children can really play marbles, checkers and other "take turn" games that require obedience to rules. Erikson argues that the psychosocial dimension that emerges during this period has a sense of industry at one extreme and a sense of inferiority at the other (in Elkind, 1970: 11).

Instead of using his/her initiative, the child now learns to win recognition by producing things (Erikson, 1987: 233). Children direct their energy into mastering knowledge and intellectual skills (Santrock, 2010: 25). Thus, the fundamentals of technology are developed and the child becomes skilled in utilising this as tools (Erikson, 1987: 233). At no other time is the child more enthusiastic about learning than at the end of early childhood's period of expansive imagination (Santrock, 2010: 25). In other words, the child is developmentally ready to build, construct and question the composition of objects. The danger in this phase lies in the sense of inadequacy and inferiority (Erikson, 1987: 233); successful experiences give the child a sense of competence, but failure can lead to excessive feelings of uselessness (Siegler, DeLoache & Eisenberg, 2011: 348).

The third stage of faith development is the stage of mythic-literal faith that coincides with this phase called Industry vs Inferiority. These feelings of success and uselessness corresponds with the child's spiritual development at this stage. Fowler and Dell (2006: 39) state that the child in this phase of his/her spiritual development, "believes that goodness is rewarded and badness is punished." In addition, the limitations of an excessive reliance upon reciprocity can result in factors, such as over-controlling perfectionism or for that matter "works righteousness". School-age children apply literal thought which influences their understanding of religiosity and of God (Bridges & Moore, 2002: 8). Whether the child develops a sense of industry or inferiority no longer depends solely on the caretaking efforts of the parents but on the actions and offices of other social institutions, such as schools and teachers. The reason for this is the child's increasing social interaction (Elkind, 1970: 11).

Figure 2.5 displays the two stages of psychosocial development relating to FP child, namely Initiative versus Guilt and Industry versus Inferiority.

Initiative versus Guilt <i>(3 - 6 years)</i>	Industry versus Inferiority <i>(6 years – puberty)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive Mode: Intrusion (to go after) • Significant Events and Outcomes: The child begins to make plans, set goals and persist in physical and social exchanges as to gain purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive Mode: to build things and relationship • Significant Events and Outcomes: The child performs “work” in the form of becoming educated and attain a sense of achievement.

Figure 2.5: Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development (Bukatko & Daeler, 2004: 26)

In Figure 2.5 Erikson posits that the child in the stage called Initiative versus Guilt initiates various sorts of activities on his/her own and no longer merely responds to or imitates the actions of other children (Elkind, 1970: 10). That is why the adaptive mode in this stage is “to go after” as seen in Figure 2.5. Erikson (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 26) argues that the psychosocial dimension that emerges during the period of Industry vs Inferiority has a sense of industry at one extreme and a sense of inferiority at the other. The term industry aptly captures the dominant theme of this period during which the concern with how things are made, how they work, and what they do predominates (Elkind, 1970; Van Deventer, 2009). As noted in the figure above, this age between 6 years and puberty has construction (in a literal sense) as well as building relationships as its adaptive mode.

2.3.4 Moral development

It is believed that development comes about with the emergence of the “moral emotion” namely: guilt, shame, and empathy. This said, other investigators focus on the underpinnings of conscience when explaining the emergence of moral development (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 431). Over a century ago, William

James demonstrated the interdependence between moral and spiritual development, arguing that “authentic religious experience should be evidenced in mature moral functioning” (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 224). Even though James maintains that religious experience coincides with moral maturity, “the field of moral psychology has generally disregarded or distorted the significance of religion and spirituality in moral functioning” (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 224). Lawrence Kohlberg’s work (1969, 1981, 1984) significantly influenced the study of moral development; however, he continued with his viewpoint that moral and religious domains (within psychology and education) were independent of each other (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 224). Eventually, Kohlberg (1981) altered his perspective toward spirituality and religiosity by proposing another stage to his theory, namely the quasi-mystical moral stage 7; this stage was held to secure his previous stage of moral development. Despite this bold shift, “scholarly interest on the even more illusory stage 7 waned completely” as there was ongoing difficulty in presenting empirical evidence for this stage (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 225). Nonetheless, the relationship between morality and spirituality and the role religion plays within character/moral education, remains uncertain (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 225). This is a surprising fact, providing the common, interrelationships that are shared between morality, spirituality and religiosity. An example of this is the fact that moral guidelines are central to religious teachings (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 225). In addition, “morality, properly understood has both interpersonal and intrapsychic aspects” (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 225). Therefore, current evidence is emerging and proving the significance of religion and spirituality within moral development and functioning (Walker & Reimer, 2006: 225).

Today it is increasingly recognised that moral development has both psychosocial and cognitive roots (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 431). Carol Gilligan (in Rathus, 2003: 564) so firmly believed in Kohlberg’s contribution to the school of moral development that she stated that Kohlberg had “almost single-handedly established moral development as a central concern of developmental psychology”. Muthukrishna and Govender (2011: 1) agree with this and states that Kohlberg’s model on moral development has taken control of the field for the past 30 years.

Kohlberg suggests that there are six stages of moral development and argues that these stages are universal; Kohlberg was censured for the aforementioned statement

by critics who thought his theory to be culturally biased, as his approach was missing or misconstruing some important moral concepts in particular cultures (Santrock, 2010: 431, 433). Huebner and Garrod provide an example pertaining to this criticism, namely a 14-year-old boy in Nepal who is thought to be the sixth holiest Buddhist in the world - in a study of 20 adolescent male Buddhist monks in Nepal, the issue of justice, a basic theme in Kohlberg's theory, was not a central focus in the monks' moral views. In addition, the monks' concerns about the prevention of suffering and the importance of compassion are not addressed in Kohlberg's theory (Huebner & Garrod in Santrock, 2010: 433). The reason for mentioning this specific criticism at this stage, is that Kohlberg held that these levels and stages occur in a sequence and are age-related. He states that before age 9, children can only be part of level 1 (in Santrock, 2010: 432).

However, for the purpose of this study and its focus on the spiritual development of the child, I will also include Level 2 of Kohlberg's moral development in this discussion. The thought behind this selection is that similar to the case of the holiest Buddhist in Nepal, children growing up in spiritual surroundings may likewise have their central focus not specifically correlated with Kohlberg's basic themes in each stage. Kohlberg's theory on moral reasoning has contributed greatly to the field. Subsequently, the individual's ability to consider issues of "fairness and justice" (Muthukrishna & Govender, 2011: 1) will be examined, next.

The Pre-conventional level and its sub-stages, as well as the Conventional level will be therefore be discussed, next.

2.3.4.1 Pre-conventional Level (up to the age of 9)

This level includes children between the age of 4 and 10 (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 437). In this phase children base their moral judgements on the consequences of their behaviour (Rathus, 2003: 565). Kohlberg's Pre-conventional stage resembles the child's spiritual development in Fowler's Mythic-Literal stage, where the child believes in equal exchange or reciprocity (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 39). This aforementioned form of religious judgment parallels this level's Pre-conventional moral reasoning where laws and rules must be followed, mainly to evade punishment (Bridges & Moore, 2002: 10) . Children in this period are ultimately responsive to

cultural rules and labels of good and bad and right or wrong, but these labels are interpreted either in terms of the physical, or self-indulgent consequences of their actions, or in terms of the physical power of those who articulate the rules in their lives (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55).

2.3.4.2 Sub-stage 1: Heteronomous morality (from birth to 9 years)

In this first sub-stage, moral thinking is tied to punishment; for example, children think that they must obey because they fear punishment for disobedience (Santrock, 2010: 430). Children ask themselves “What will happen to me?” (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 437). Individuals at this level, therefore, act under external controls; they either obey rules to avoid punishment or reap rewards, or they act out of self-interest (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 438). In addition, children at this level think that the physical consequences of actions determine its goodness or badness, regardless of the human meaning or value of the action itself (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55). Children think of what is right as that which authority discloses as correct; doing the right thing is obeying authority and avoiding punishment (de Freitas, Kovaleski, Boing & de Oliveira, 2006). Therefore, teachers may play an important role in the socialisation of what their learners believe to be acceptable conduct or misconduct. For example, if teachers value the practice of showing respect toward others and if they reprimand acts of disrespect, their learners will come to know respect as right conduct and disrespect as wrong conduct. Additionally, students will try to avoid demeaning their peers to avoid punishment.

Coinciding with the child’s moral development in this stage, is his/her spiritual development; the child makes sense of things by constructing an environment that revolves around “fairness” and “moral reciprocity” (Fowler & Dell, 2006: 39).

2.3.4.3 Sub-stage 2: Individualism, instrumental purpose, and exchange

This is the second sub-stage of pre-conventional reasoning. The reasoning in this phase is: “You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 437). They reason that pursuing their own interest is the right thing to do, but they let others do the same (Santrock, 2010: 431). Right action, therefore, consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one’s own needs and occasionally the needs of others (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55). In other words, good behaviour allows people to satisfy

their own needs and, perhaps, the needs of others (Rathus, 2003: 565). Children in this phase think that what is right involves an equal exchange; they reason that if they are nice to others, others will be nice to them in return (Santrock, 2010: 431). Thus, elements of fairness, reciprocity and of mutual sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical, pragmatic way (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55). Ultimately, since everything in this stage is relative, one is free to pursue one's own interests, although it is often useful to make deals and exchange favours (de Freitas et al., 2006). Because stage 2 still falls under the Pre-conventional level, spirituality in this second sub-stage continues to revolve around fairness and giving in return for something.

2.3.4.4 The Conventional Level (9-13 years)

Right and wrong are judged by conformity to convention or what is socially acceptable to family, religious and societal standards (Rathus, 2003: 565). In this second level of Kohlberg's theory, children apply certain standards that are set by others, such as parents or the government (Santrock, 2010: 431). Similarly, in this sub-stage of the child's spiritual development, the child accepts and internalises, the stories, beliefs and observances that symbolise belonging to his or her community (Fowler, 1981: 149). Thus, maintaining the expectations of the child's family, group or nation is perceived as valuable, regardless of the obvious consequences (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55). To state it differently, corresponding to the norms of the majority and maintaining social order becomes central to the child's reasoning (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 447). Ultimately, the attitude of these next two sub-stages are attitudes of conformity and loyalty, as well as identifying with the persons involved in it (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55). This level has the following sub-stages:

2.3.4.5 Stage 3: Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity

In this third sub-stage, children ask themselves: "Am I a good boy/girl?" (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 437). Kohlberg (in Bridges & Moore, 2002: 8) similarly suggests that this is the age children mirror the desire to be considered "good" in the eyes of parents and other socialisation agents. Children and adolescents often adopt their parents' moral standards during this period, seeking to be thought of by their parents as "good" (Santrock, 2010: 431). Furthermore, it is good to meet the needs and expectations of others and it is normal to do what the majority does (Rathus, 2003:

565). Decisions also focus on the role of sympathy; on the importance of doing what will make someone else feel good or better (Rathus, 2003: 565). That is why it is known as the “good boy” or “nice girl” stage. Good behaviour is seen as that which pleases, helps or is approved of by others (Kohlberg & Richard Hersh, 1977: 54) Individuals value trust, caring and loyalty to others as a basis of moral judgements (Santrock, 2010: 431). There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority behaviour, in this stage (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55).

This level in moral development correlates with Fowler’s Mythic-Literal stage of spiritual development when children take on beliefs and observances that symbolise belonging to his or her community (Fowler, 1981: 149). Behaviour is frequently judged by intention (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977: 55).

The following figure presents an outline of Kohlberg’s levels and stages of moral development that relates to the FP child.

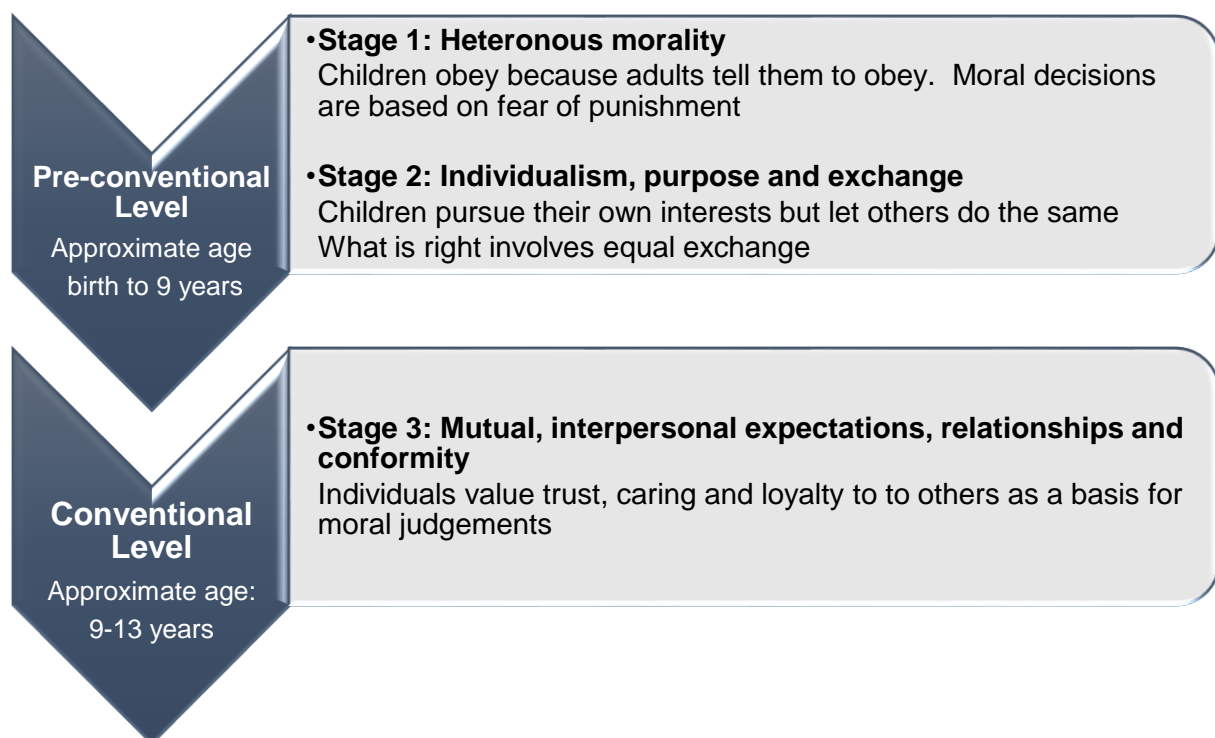


Figure 2.6: Kohlberg’s Levels and Stages of Moral Development (Santrock, 2010:431)

This figure therefore suggests that sub-stage 1 of the Pre-conventional level, has as its main focus children's avoidance of reproach or punishment (Kohlberg & Richard Hersh, 1977: 54). In other words, children do as they are told. Whereas in sub-stage 2, the central theme is children's understanding of appropriate conduct, which they consider to be fair exchange or fair trade-off (Kohlberg & Richard Hersh, 1977: 54). On the other hand, the Conventional level's overarching theme is to interact with people and to conform to a specific group; therefore meeting the expectations of the family or group the child is part of, is considered most important (Kohlberg & Richard Hersh, 1977: 54).

I conclude this brief discussion on the different child development theories with Figure 2.6. Since this chapter focuses on the spiritual and holistic development of the child which is included in the bigger picture of holistic development, it should be noted that the different development theories that have been discussed above, work together to see the child as a whole. Thus, the following table provides a summary of the expected characteristics in each age, combining the theorists discussed in this chapter, in order to see the child's development as a whole.

Table 2.1: Brief Summary of Expected Characteristics of a Person in Each Age, Combining Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler (in Neuman, 2011: 47)

Brief list of expected characteristics of characters in each age, combining Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg and Fowler		
Pre-stage:	Stage 1	Stage 2
Primal Faith/ Undifferentiated Faith	Intuitive- Projective Faith	Mythic-Literal Faith
Age: 0-2	Age 3-7	Age 7-12
Typical age 0–2 years: Reflexive behaviour (P) ; Trust vs. mistrust; self is good, world is good (E) ; no morality—does what pleases child (K) ; love, courage, hope (F)	Typical age 3–7 years: Egocentric, magical, perception dominated (P) ; Control of self/body, wilfulness (E) ; learning rules, right, wrong and punishment, reciprocity (K) ; stories, fantasy and reality not distinguished, fluid thoughts; symbols important; God surrounds like air (F)	Typical age 7–12 years: Logical, systematic, concrete thinking (P) ; competence, master skills, work/ play with peers (E) ; morality— not disturb conscience; social sensitive, show respect/duty, obeys rules (K) ; fantasy confined to play, God as anthropomorphic, deals fairly and reciprocally with people, symbols literal (F) Persistent Stage 2 age 12–adult: Abstract thinking, analytical, (P) ; peers paramount, faith in self (E) ; majority rules, exception if violate welfare of person; laws for mutual good, cooperation (K) ; God as anthropomorphic, deals fairly and reciprocally with people, symbols literal, sense of trapped in narrative, cannot reflect on it (F)
Note: P = Piaget; E = Erikson; K = Kohlberg; F = Fowler.		

Neuman (2011: 47) describes Table 2.1 as a multifaceted maturation-table, which at cursory glance, can observe what “behaviours, thoughts, and religious and/or spiritual beliefs” could be anticipated at the various ages of a child’s growth. This table provides a firm basis for child assessment.

Now that the recognised child development theories as well as the models regarding wholeness have been discussed in more depth, there is still a need to understand the profile of the FP child (ages 5-9) in a deeper way. The following sub-section will therefore focus on the profile of the FP child.

2.4 THE PROFILE OF THE FP CHILD

Growth and development are interrelated, ongoing processes in childhood (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 2) and, as with any aspect of working with young children, teachers should understand the typical sequences of developmental indicators so that appropriate expectations are in place (Watts & Young, 2007: 15). Learners in the Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3) can range between 5 and 9 years of age (Department of Basic Education, 2012: 2). Therefore, these ages will be taken into account when examining the FP child’s profile.

2.4.1 Age 5

Kyle and Carman (2013: 9) suggest that many tasks that began during the toddler years are mastered and perfected in the pre-school years. Physically, five-year-olds’ motor activities seem more poised and their movements more restrained and precise than ever before (Essa, 2006: 38). Children have gross motor skills that include balancing on one foot for 10 seconds or longer, good swinging and climbing abilities and the possibility of learning to swim (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 11). At this age they show more interest in fine motor activities and have gained many skills in cutting, gluing, drawing and in the beginning of writing (Essa, 2006: 38). In fact, Watts and Young (2007: 18) state that children are able to cut with scissors along a straight line (Watts & Young, 2007: 18). Fine motor abilities at this age also cover copying triangles and using clothes pins to transfer objects, and writing their own names (Gerber, Wilks & Erdie-Lalena, in press: 272). Regarding self-help, 5-year-olds are able to dress and undress without assistance, tie their shoe laces, and eat with a knife and fork, as well as mostly caring for their own toileting needs (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 11). At this age,

children can express ideas and questions clearly and with fluency and have a vocabulary consisting of approximately 2,500–3,000 words (see Watts & Young, 2007: 17; Marotz, 2012: 17). Emotionally, children can be easily offended; they desire praise from others, and fears are common during this age period (Watts & Young, 2007: 19). These emotions overlap with the age of six that will be discussed next.

2.4.2 Ages 6 to 8

Six-year-olds show physically well-developed and refined gross-motor skills (Essa, 2006: 39). Children are able to jump rope, hop, skip and ride a bicycle at the age of six (Watts & Young, 2007: 18). Fine motor abilities include writing their first and last names, drawing diamonds, forming letters with down-going and counter-clockwise strokes, and they can create and write short sentences (Gerber, Wilks & Erdie-Lalena, in press: 272). Brittain and Hunt (2005: 44) affirm that the child has the ability to begin reading and by the end of this period, children make the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Between six and eight, children display improved eye-hand coordination and more precision when attempting fine-motor activities (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 14). They show greater independence from adults and make fewer requests for help (Marotz, 2012: 17; Watts & Young, 2007: 18). Marotz (2012: 17) confirms that children show increased interest in books and enjoy conversation more than previously. In terms of their cognition, Essa (2006: 39) validates improved thinking and greater systematic reasoning in six- to eight-year-olds; they display the ability to take in the viewpoint of others. During the years of seven and eight, increased interest in exploring moral consciousness commences (Watts & Young, 2007: 18). These authors furthermore state that emotionally, seven- and eight-year-olds can be adversely affected by criticism and may even avoid participating to avoid failure all together (Watts & Young, 2007: 20). They also refer to the fact that children in this age group dislike being teased but have an increased need to argue (Watts & Young, 2007: 20). These emotions continue to the age of nine, which will be discussed next.

2.4.3 Ages 9 to 11

Ages eight to eleven are included in the group that experiences a time of slow progressive physical growth, whereas their social and developmental growth are accelerated (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 12). Exercise or a lack thereof affects both the mental and physical health of children in middle-childhood (Papalia, Gross & Feldman,

2003: 157). However, children that do take part in sport work to master physical activities at this age (Watts & Young, 2007: 19). Nine-year-old boys can run 16.5 feet per second and throw a small ball 70 feet (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 157). By 10, children can judge and intercept the pathways of small balls from a distance and girls can run 17 feet per second (Papalia, Gross & Feldman, 2003: 157). This age group shows physically well-developed and refined gross-motor skills (Essa, 2006: 39). It is important to take into consideration that the development of endurance can be a problem at the age of eleven (or older) due to uneven growth spurts (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 17). Middle-school aged children use logic to reason and problem-solve (Marotz, 2012: 17). They show increased, accelerated language skills, expanding vocabulary, and the commencement of using more complex grammar forms (Kyle & Carman, 2013: 14). Marotz (2012: 17) describes the child in middle-school as energetic, enjoying team activities and individual projects, or academic challenges and with the ability to enjoy eating at any time of the day.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The literature consulted indicates that a child should be developed holistically; when one of the domains of development is neglected, the overall wellness of the child is compromised. Therefore, the objective of this chapter was to create an awareness of the accepted, recognised child development theories, and to demonstrate the important purpose that each of these theories serves in the overall development of the child. Since the aim of this study is to determine how teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in the Foundation Phase, this chapter, furthermore offered theoretical insights into the spiritual development of the young child based on models that include the spiritual as part of holistic development. Without the comprehension of the child's need to develop in a holistic manner, teachers, caregivers and policy makers are ill equipped to execute their role properly.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Proceeding from the aim of Chapter 2, that aimed to develop an awareness of the recognised child development theories, as well as the theoretical insights regarding the spiritual development of the young child, Chapter 3 deals with the research design and methods which were utilised to investigate how teachers perceived and implemented Religious Education in the Foundation Phase. In addition, it covers how the aforementioned aspects, influenced the spiritual development of the child. This chapter starts with the research design where the interpretivist paradigm of my qualitative study is explained in detail. It is followed by a discussion on the qualitative approach where a multiple case study was utilised to gather data in order to answer the research questions. The research sites, as well as the selection of my participants is mentioned and motivated. Additionally, data collection and methods of analysis is fully explained, followed by an exposition of the maintenance of the trustworthiness of my research. Ethical measures are also elucidated.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be seen as the “general strategy for solving a research problem” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 76). It is not a blueprint that is drawn up in advance and set in stone; rather, it is a plan that follows an ongoing set of principles that guide decision-making throughout a qualitative study (Luttrell, 2010: 4). The following section covers the concept of paradigms; the interpretivist paradigm; and the qualitative approach, as well as the multiple case study as part of the research plan.

3.2.1 Paradigm

Paradigms serve as lenses for organising principles by which reality is interpreted (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a: 48). In other words, paradigms determine how the researcher views a phenomenon. A research paradigm describes models of research that reflect a general agreement on the nature of the world and how to investigate it (Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 18). Researchers, such as Heppner and Heppner (in Morgan & Sklar,

2013a: 73) state that the main philosophical tenets of the qualitative approach are interpretivism, constructivism, phenomenology, the humanistic philosophies and postmodernism. This study was viewed through the lens of the interpretivist paradigm.

Interpretivism has its roots in hermeneutics and can be understood as the study of the theory and practice of interpretation (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a: 58). Guba and Lincoln (in Green, 2010: 68) assert that interpretivist knowledge is grounded knowledge, not developed from armchair speculations or elegant deductive reasoning but both discovered and justified from the field-based, inductive methodology of interpretive inquiry. The interpretivist attempts to show how choices are made by participants in social situations within the process of interaction (Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 21). According to Atkins and Wallace (2012: 22), the interpretivist paradigm is a more typical approach for small-scale educational research. It was therefore appropriate in my study as I conducted four focus group interviews and attempted to understand teachers' perceptions and their implementation of RE in FP.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2010a: 59, 60) the following notions set the basis for interpretivism:

- Human life can be understood from introspection and reflection; in studying a phenomenon, research methods are used that enables the researcher to grasp how others feel about, understand, encounter and communicate within their social environment. This first notion applied to my study as I aspired to examine the intricacies of teachers' feelings, attitudes and experiences toward RE in FP and investigated how they implemented this subject to interact with their learners; correspondingly, I investigated what prohibited them not to.
- Socialising within a community is a human creation and specific to humanity; interpretivists assume that by investigating people in their natural, social setting, the uniqueness of a particular situation and the situation's meaning can be better comprehended. This second notion related to my study, as every school with which I interacted had a distinctive culture and its own challenges. Therefore, I as researcher, was able to examine and comprehend each institution's interpretation in a deeper manner.

- The human mind is an intentional source and supplier of meaning: by uncovering how meanings are constructed, better insights into these meanings are gained and therefore, the comprehension of the whole is improved. By using follow-up questions to teachers' answers, I was able to learn more about their meaning-making concerning the subject of RE and their implementation thereof.
- Human's draw-up constructs of the world around them which affect their behaviour; therefore, the expansion of our concepts and realisations of the social world, enriches our "theoretical and conceptual framework". By undertaking four focus group discussions with teachers at schools comprised of various contextual backgrounds, this practical experience of fieldwork (through examining various concepts and realisations of the participants) supplemented the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study.
- Human intelligence and social life are in close association with and cannot be separated from one another; humans are only able to form concepts about and comprehend things that they have experienced or have been subjected to. To conceive the world therefore, as external and interdependent from our own knowledge and understanding, is to ignore the subjectivity of our own endeavours.
- One positive asset of qualitative research is the "richness and depth" of investigation and the final account it produces (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a: 60). As researcher, I experienced the richness and depth to which Nieuwenhuis is referring. By visiting these different schools, by listening to teachers' different points of view and by re-listening to focus group discussions numerous times when transcribing the questions and answers, I started comprehending in greater depth, their explanations.

The following figure (Figure 3.1) exhibits and explains Interpretivism in a diagrammatic manner.

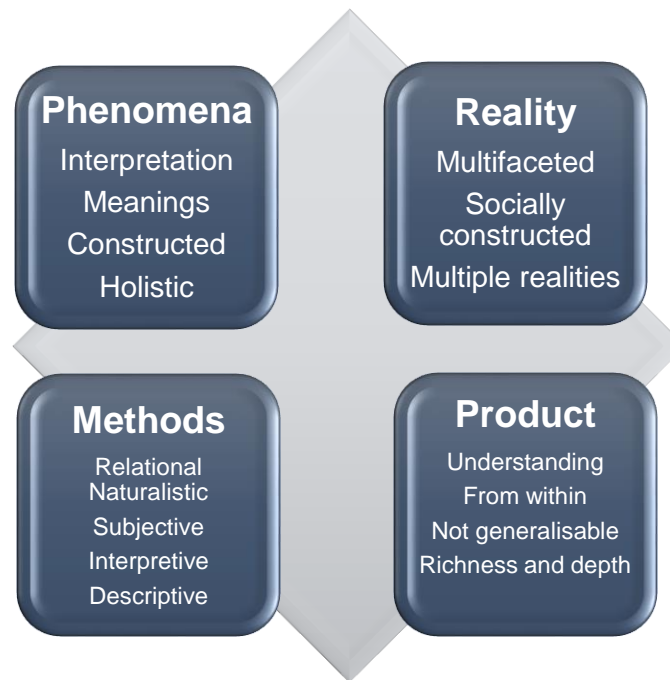


Figure 3.1: Representation of Interpretivism (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a: 61)

The reality-square and phenomena-square in the above figure portrays the variant aspects of interpretivism. The interpretivist researcher seeks to understand and portray the participant’s perceptions and understandings of a particular situation or event (Wallace & Atkins, 2012: 22). This can be seen in the product-square of the above figure. Interpretivists prefer more naturalistic forms of data collection, such as interviews and observations which allow the situation to be as “normal” as possible; this includes detailed descriptions to give “feeling” for the environment (Wallace & Atkins, 2012: 22). This is portrayed in the methods-square in the above figure. As a whole, interpretive researchers become the instrument through which the data is collected and analysed (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a: 60). When the exploration of the perceptions of community members regarding the social challenges in a community is needed, the interpretivist paradigm is used as it gives insights into the experiences and perceptions of a study’s participants (Ferreira, 2013: 34). This was also true for my study as I examined the outlook of FP teachers on RE to better understand their experiences with the policy and practice thereof.

3.2.2 A qualitative approach

Since the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions and implementation of RE in FP, I chose to make use of the qualitative approach which enabled me to understand individuals' perceptions of the world (Bell & Waters, 2014: 9). Gouldner and Dalton (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 139) argue that data from the qualitative approach are usually grouped into themes and categories and each is assigned a name. The abovementioned authors explain that themes (within qualitative data) either emerge from a careful examination of the data or they are derived from the literature on a given topic. All qualitative research approaches share the following similarities: firstly, phenomena is investigated in its "natural setting"; and secondly, these approaches attempt to capture and examine the phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 141). This study's research also took place in a natural setting as the research sites involved staff rooms and classrooms. In addition, I tried to capture the complexities of teachers' experiences that corresponded with their perceptions of RE and how they implement this subject in FP. Theron and Malindi (2013: 98) agree that qualitative research seldom takes place in contrived or artificial settings; instead, qualitative researchers go into natural environments where participants are, to collect the data. Accordingly, I, visited schools and interviewed groups of FP teachers in their staff rooms or classrooms. Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 97) maintain that qualitative research is most likely to be seen in studies of "complex human situations." For example, it is effective in thoroughly analysing people's viewpoints about a certain issues, as is the case of this particular study.

In the following figure (Figure 3.2) the key characteristics of qualitative research are rendered, as is my application thereof. Since the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions and implementation of RE in FP, I chose to make use of the qualitative approach as it enabled me to look at the participants' feelings, perceptions, ideas, beliefs, thoughts and actions in an attempt to generate an understanding of the impact these have on various factors, such as children's holistic development.

The characteristics portrayed in Figure 3.2 are seen throughout this research study and clearly indicate that a case study design was best suited for this particular research.

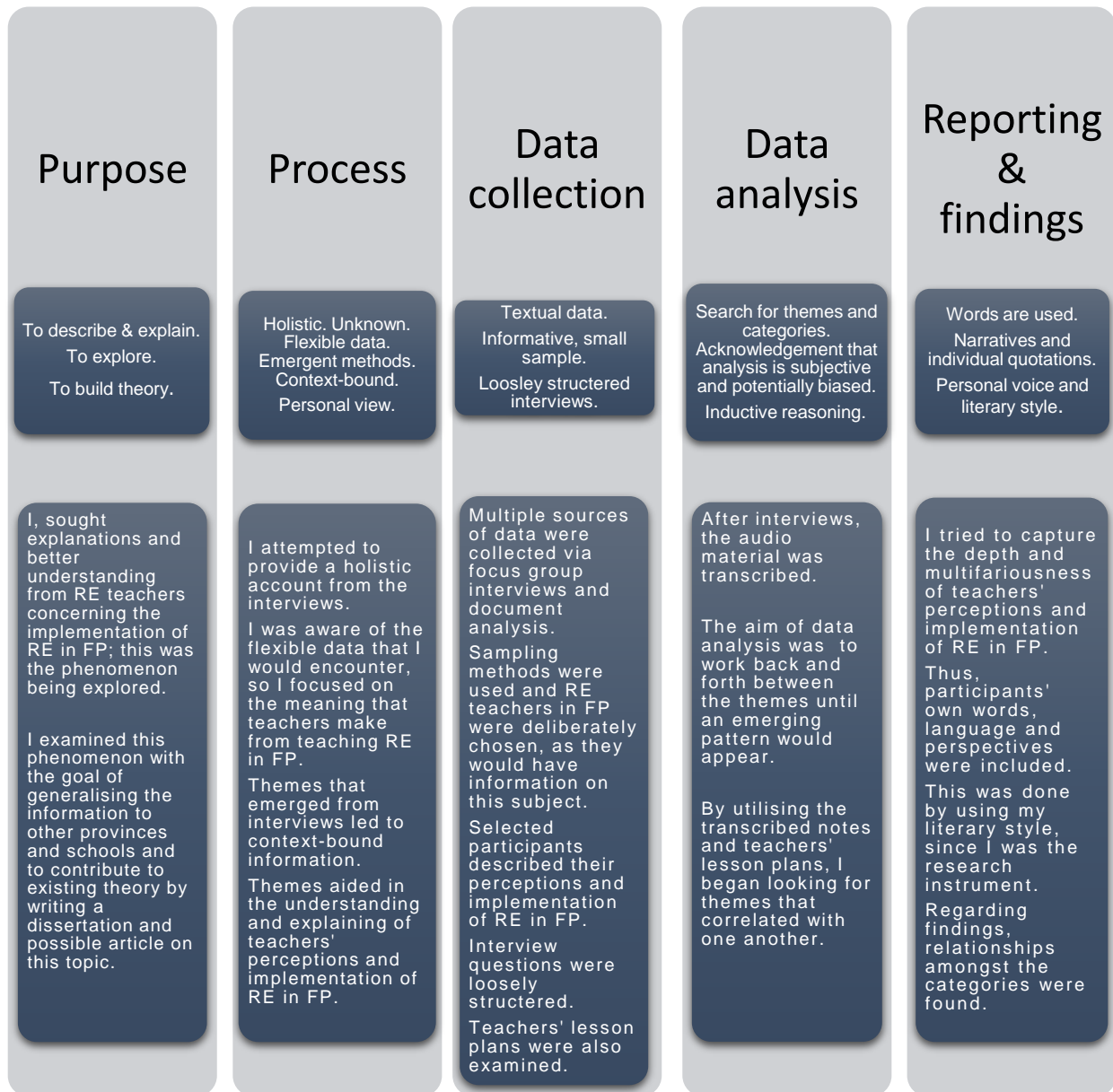


Figure 3.2: Distinguishing characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 96)

The above figure illustrates the purpose of qualitative research; its process; the manner of data collection and analysis; and the way the data were reported. Ultimately, the aim of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth description of a specific phenomenon (Creswell in Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 73).

3.2.3 Multiple case study

The purpose of a case study is to understand the case within its original environment and to acknowledge its intricacies (Seabi, 2013: 83). In other words, it concentrates on the “in-depth understanding of the entity, issue or theme” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 371). To view a study through an interpretivist angle and utilise case study to gather information, the researcher should have an all-inclusive or collective understanding of the way participants associate with each other and the ways they make sense of the phenomenon being investigated (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 75). Burton and Barlett (2009: 63) explain that the case study approach is not a method as such, but a research strategy where the researcher aims to study a case in depth, and where an understanding can be developed within a range of settings. Atkins and Wallace (2012: 108) claim that a case study provides the flexibility to explore a variety of contexts and situations, such as multiple cases, comparing policy implementations in a number of schools, or searching for common factors in attitudes and values in particular groups. Their description clarifies why a case study was specifically suited to this particular study as its focus ranged from policies of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). As in the case of this study, when various cases combine to form part of a single study, it may be labelled a “collective, multiple or multisite case study” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 371).

In the role of an interpretivist researcher, I made use of multiple case studies to explore and understand the many factors that influence teachers’ perceptions and their implementation of RE in FP. In addition, this study explored a variety of contexts and situations as four schools with different backgrounds and perspective were used: a private school; an inner-city school; a public school in a township; and a rural school situated in an area outside of Bloemfontein. Hence, multiple case study was employed.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

The following section details methods used during sampling, data collection, and the data analysis process. The researcher’s role will be attended to first.

3.3.1 The role of the researcher

Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 79) asserts that contrary to typical quantitative research techniques where objectivity is the goal, qualitative studies accept researcher subjectivity as something that cannot be eliminated and see the researcher as the “research instrument” in the data gathering process. As a qualitative researcher, I made use of focus group interviews and document analysis to gather data, it was my responsibility to take on different roles, such as interviewer and moderator, as well as the examiner of documents. Litoselliti (2003: 68–81) and Burton and Bartlett (2009: 87–91) provided me with the following skills, responsibilities and roles of an interviewer conducting focus group interviews:

I, as researcher, took on the following roles and responsibilities:

- Reminding the school of the focus group interview one day in advance.
- Clarifying important rules before the interview, such as the fact that participants were allowed to speak freely, that their opinions were important, that there were no right or wrong answers, that I was interested in both positive and negative comments and that participants were not to be concerned about building consensus or being on the right track.
- Drawing attention to Dictaphone recording and explaining the reasons for recording the discussion.
- Ensuring participants that their contributions would be anonymous.
- Creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, starting with easy or routine opening questions that would put participants at ease.
- Dealing with dominant participants early on in the discussion, and asking the quiet participants their opinion, as well as valuing their answers.
- Using eye contact to encourage shy individuals.
- Briefly summarising what participants had said at various intervals, to prove I was listening and to check that I had noted the response correctly.
- Keeping the discussion flowing.
- Ensuring that all key topics on the agenda were covered.
- Closing the focus group by thanking all participants.
- Checking that the Dictaphone worked properly before and after the interview.

- Listening to the Dictaphone within days as to better capture context and what was said.
- Remembering and transferring the Dictaphone recordings taken from the interviews, onto the computer.
- Finally, analysing the interview transcripts.

3.3.2 Participants and Research sites

This section describes in detail the different research sites that I visited and what steps were taken to select this study's participants.

3.3.2.1 The selection of participants

The selection of participants via the process of sampling, is simply the selection of fragments or pieces of populace to study; it is to choose participants with intent and decisiveness because they hold the essential qualities and information necessitated by the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 79). This is why Rule and Vaughn (2011: 64) state: “the researcher therefore has to choose people who can shed the most light, or different lights on a case.” Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 154) and Litoselli (2003: 34) emphasise that the identification of a sample depends on the research question. Likewise, Creswell (in Morgan & Sklar, 2013a: 73) avers that sampling should be related to the research question, the methodology used in the study, and the purpose of the study. Researchers utilising case study are concerned with samples that allow for complete, “in-depth” and truthful versions of the specific case or cases (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 64). McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 352) state “the logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy and the availability of information-rich cases” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 352). Similarly, these aspects were taken into consideration when inviting FP teachers to take part in the research of this study. In addition, I considered that these participants would be the holders of perspectives on RE and the implementers of this subject in FP which was the ultimate focus of this particular study. Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 90) states that purposeful sampling is vital to the success of the focus group interview. Thus, to conduct focus group interviews, groups are usually kept relatively small (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 156). My participants consisted of four, relatively small groups of FP teachers who taught RE as part of Life Skills in FP.

3.3.2.2 The research sites

McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 350) maintain that a study's research criteria should determine the selection of suitable sites for research; for example, if a study's research questions revolves around teacher's decision-making, the designated sights should be chosen accurately to ensure that these perspectives can be examined there. The research sites I chose were four different schools in the Motheo district of Bloemfontein. These schools had children from different backgrounds and the focus group interviews consisted of teachers from various backgrounds to ensure that a greater variety of viewpoints were represented. The reason for choosing these groups and sites was to see what contextual factors influenced teachers' perceptions and their implementation of RE in FP.

The following table provides more information on this study's research sites; the number of participants; the language used in the focus group interviews; and the time it took to complete the interviews.

Table 3.1: Information on research site and focus groups

RESEARCH SITES: 4 primary schools in Motheo district were used	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	LANGUAGE OF EACH FOCUS GROUP	POPULATION GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS	DURATION OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS
School A	12 participants	Language of discussion was mostly English; Afrikaans was used by some participants to express themselves better	Coloured 2 White 10	30 minutes
School B	2 participants	The language of discussion was English.	Black 2	23 minutes
School C	11 participants	The language of discussion was English.	Black 11	34 minutes
School D	4 participants	Language of discussion was mostly English; Afrikaans was used by some participants to express themselves better	White 4	22 minutes

The participants were FP teachers and were selected based on the following criteria: teachers had to be familiar with CAPS; they needed to be Foundation Phase teachers and they needed to understand English to take part in the focus group interviews.

Group 1

The first focus group consisted of 12 FP teachers from an inner-city school in Bloemfontein. This multi-cultural, public school was situated in Navalsig, about 4 kilometres from Bloemfontein's industrial district. In comparison to the other schools, this school's location had a high crime rate according to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2015). Group 1 was considered a dangerous area concerning setting.

This inner-city school was a public school and therefore had to adhere to government policy by following CAPS as the required curriculum assigned by the state. There were over 500 FP learners in this school that consisted of five Gr 1 classes and 4 Gr 2 and Gr 3 classes.

Group 2

The second focus group consisted of two FP teachers, the only FP teachers in the school. I decided to interview them together in a focus group setting, as to avoid them feeling exposed. A further motivation was that interaction amongst interviewees were valued and encouraged and that through the group interaction, richer insights on the topic would be revealed (see section 1.7.2.3 and 3.3.3.1). One of the teachers taught Gr 1 and the other taught a combined class of Gr 2s and Gr 3s. This school was set in a rural area outside Bloemfontein. The area of Driehoek was located about 17 kilometres from Bloemfontein and mostly consisted of smallholdings. In comparison to the other schools' locations, this area had the highest crime rate (SAPS, 2015). Driehoek therefore, could be classified as the most dangerous area of the four locations, according to the SAPS (2015). This was a public school and therefore it adhered to government policy. Because the school functioned as a public school, it followed CAPS as the required curriculum assigned by the state. Some staff members believed that this school functioned more like a farm school because of its size. On the day I visited the school had no water or electricity.

Group 3

The third focus group consisted of 11 participating FP teachers teaching in a township school outside of Bloemfontein. Batho Township could be considered one of the largest black townships in the Free State. In comparison to the other schools, this was the second most dangerous area with regard to murder and assault; however, burglaries in this area were lower than in Navalsig (Group 1) or in Driehoek (Group 2). This school was much poorer in terms of resources, the school building and funds. Since it was a public school, it had to adhere to government policy by following CAPS as the required curriculum assigned by the state. Pertaining to the school's size, the school consisted of over 300 FP learners. Each grade (Gr 1-3) consisted of 2 classes, with the exception of Gr. R which comprised 4 different classes.

Group 4

The fourth focus group consisted of 4 FP teachers. They taught FP in an independent school in Bloemfontein. This school was situated near Groenvlei, a newer, more affluent expansion of the city. The crime rate (pertaining to dangerous criminal activity) was the lowest in this area; however, burglaries in Groenvlei were quite high (SAPS, 2015). Even though the school had 6 FP classes, only four participants were able to participate in the focus group interview. Group 4 was an independent school, therefore South Africa's government solely prescribed that the independent schools achieve the minimum outcomes of RE - the DoE (2003a: 8) declared that prerequisites for "Religious Instruction and its observances" would not be stipulated by the policy on Religion and Education. To this end, the school functioned on a set of values informed by Christianity. The school's curriculum comprised CAPS, as well as an enriched curriculum, supplemented by more than the required learning material assigned by the state. The school consisted of over 130 FP learners. The school had 2 classes of each in Gr 1, 2 and 3.

3.3.3 Data collection

Data can be collected through various methods. To collect my data, I made use of focus group interviews, as well as the analysis of documents. Using more than one method of data collection allowed me to compare and cross-check my findings; this method is otherwise known as methodological triangulation (Wallace & Atkins, 2012: 111).

3.3.3.1 Focus group interviews

It was noteworthy to take heed of Litoselliti's (2003: 25-26) "common pitfalls" when conducting focus group interviews, such as the size and number of groups; the coverage of issues during the discussion; and the degree of structure. For example, groups that are too large will not necessarily offer a broader representation and can result in less detailed or diverse accounts. In addition, flexibility in a group allows for the list of topics to be revised which may affect the pre-planned structure and approach of the interview (Litoselliti, 2003: 25-26).

Rule and Vaughn (2011: 66) state that focus group interviews typically engage 6-12 participants; in other words smaller groups are ideal for this type of data collection method. In the case of my study, two of my focus groups were smaller groups that consisted of two and four participants, whilst the other focus groups consisted of 11 and 12 participants. Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 90) opines that focus group interviews are based on the assumption that group interaction will assist in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experiences and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information. In other words, the purpose of a focus group interview (as their name indicates) is to focus on a particular issue, with the intention that participants will interact with one another; will be willing to listen to all views, so as to perhaps reach consensus on some topics; to disagree on others; and finally, to thoroughly interrogate to the issue being discussed (Bell & Waters, 2014: 182, 183). In my study, groups waited for the speaker to finish before sharing their opinion on the questions. Teachers were honest about their strengths and vulnerabilities concerning the implementation of RE in schools.

Furthermore, disagreement is promoted during focus group interviews and variation concerning group dynamics contribute to greater generation of data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 87). Focus group interviews are known for providing insight into multiple views, as well as on the dynamics of interaction within the group context, such as consensus, disagreement, and the power of differences amongst participants (Litosseliti, 2003: 16). Since my participants came from varied cultural backgrounds, there were differences in their viewpoints, but also many agreed-upon remarks. Focus group interviews are useful for revealing, through interaction, the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings of participants in ways which would not be feasible using other methods, such as individual interviews or observations (Gibbs in Litosseliti, 2003: 16). In the case of this study, the group interviews were beneficial as participants' opinions triggered each other to share deeper meanings concerning their values, beliefs and their implementation of RE in FP.

Seabi (2013: 90) recommends focus group interviews as a data gathering method that is useful when the researcher does not know what all the issues surrounding a specific topic may be. The researcher needs to listen to the responses of interview questions carefully, and has to be attentive, so that new emerging ideas and questions related

to the problem being studied can be identified and explored (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 87). In the case of my study, I had to think on my feet when asking follow-up questions to identify new, emerging lines related to the problem.

For the purposes of this study, focus group interviews were used in order to explore the perspectives and implementation of RE in FP. I made use of four semi-structured, focus group interviews and interviewed four groups of FP teachers. I prepared my focus group interview schedules according to a set of predetermined questions that can be viewed in Appendix C. In addition, follow-up questions were posed to participants when they touched on issues that I had not anticipated. I also based these interviews questions on the key aspects of my study, in order to ensure successful interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 88). These aspects are indicated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Key aspects to successful interviewing (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b: 88) and their application in this study

Keys to successful interviewing	How I implemented it in my study
Finding qualified participants to provide data	I made use of listed and credible schools on the website of the Department of Education (Free State) in the Motheo district to ensure participants and their schools cooperated with the Department of Education and were acquainted with the expectations of the CAPS. I made electronic and telephonic contact with schools to ensure that FP teachers would be open to my invitation of research participation.
Stating the aim of the interview	Before the interview, I stated to participants that the aim of this research was to investigate teachers' perceptions and implementation of RE in FP. I thanked participants for taking part in the study and told them that without their participation I would not be able to investigate the phenomenon, and would therefore not be able to reach the goals that the research set out to meet.
Ensuring rich and saturated data	During the various focus group interviews and at the end of the interviews, I ensured that enough rich and descriptive data on the phenomenon under investigation were gathered. I used probing techniques to clarify answers for richer data. Additionally, after receiving many of the same answers from teachers across all four focus groups, I knew that data saturation was accomplished.
Ensuring good questioning strategies	Interview questions were structured to be clear and neutral. To avoid making the interview too long, the number of questions were kept to a minimum; however, probing questions were used to get a better understanding of participants' perspectives.
Asking the correct type of questions	I asked various questions, namely questions on: experience, behaviour, opinion, value, feeling and knowledge.
Being a good listener	In order to be a good listener I, reminded myself that I was there to listen and not to dominate the conversation. I did not judge or criticise any of my participants and aimed to understand their perspectives.

Observing non-verbal communication Throughout the interview process, participants' non-verbal communication was observed in order to gather more data. Eye contact and valuing and positive body language were used to motivate their participation.

All four of the focus group interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone, despite the fact that Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 155) warn researchers to be aware of background noises that may make tape-recorded interviews only partially-audible; in addition, they inform researchers that electronic recordings may make participants uncomfortable. I recorded the interview with the permission of participants, as advised by Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 88). I requested a quiet room from the principal to avoid background noise being recorded, and participants were given the assurance that after the data were retrieved, the recorded interviews, as well as the transcribed versions would be safeguarded.

3.3.3.2 Document Analysis

Research designs, like a case study, can use document analysis as a data collection technique (Seabi, 2013: 91). Researchers conducting qualitative research usually gather their data from numerous sources, such as people, objects, text materials and electronic records (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 154). Rule and Vaughn (2011: 67) claim that document analysis can be the inauguration of data collection in a case study, especially if the research design includes additional methods, such as interviews, as in the case of this study (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 67). Utilising documents has several strengths: they are economical; they enable the researcher to study past events and issues retrospectively; and they are relatively quickly and easily accessible (Seabi, 2013: 92). Before the actual analysis began, I gathered teachers' lesson plans (of which I needed to copy some, and take photos of others), thereafter I assembled these into a case file before I started with the process of data analysis (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 67). I made use of the FP teachers' lesson plans to analyse how teachers implemented teaching RE in FP.

3.3.3.3 Data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher and (2014: 353) declare: "qualitative phases of data collection and analysis are interwoven and occur in overlapping cycles". However,

they argue that qualitative data analysis is predominantly an “inductive process” where information is firstly arranged into categories and further scrutinised for correlation amongst the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 395). Nieuwenhuis (2010c: 99) defines qualitative data analysis as a range of approaches, processes and procedures in which researchers extort a form of understanding or interpretation from the collected data of people or situations investigated. The researcher begins with a large body of information and should, through inductive reasoning, sort and categorise the data, gradually honing it to a small set of abstract, underlying themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). To put it more practically, Gouldner and Dalton (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 139) explain that qualitative data are usually grouped into themes or categories and are assigned a name, such as eye colour or political affiliation. Creswell (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160) has described a data analysis spiral, that Leedy and Ormrod argue is equally applicable to a wide variety of qualitative studies. I used Creswell’s (2007) data analysis spiral (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 153) to aid me in data analysis. The main focus of this process was on organisation, perusal, classification and synthesis as analysis tools.

The following figure (Figure 3.5) depicts the data analysis procedure that is evident throughout Chapter 4.

To put it briefly, my focus group interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone. Thereafter, questions and answers from the Dictaphone recording were transcribed. Thus, organisation was done by taking the gathered notes and data and transferring them onto the computer. Thereafter the data was perused in search of themes and categories that formed part of data classification. Finally, the data was synthesised. I was constantly aware of the fact that data analysis is an ongoing process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 395).

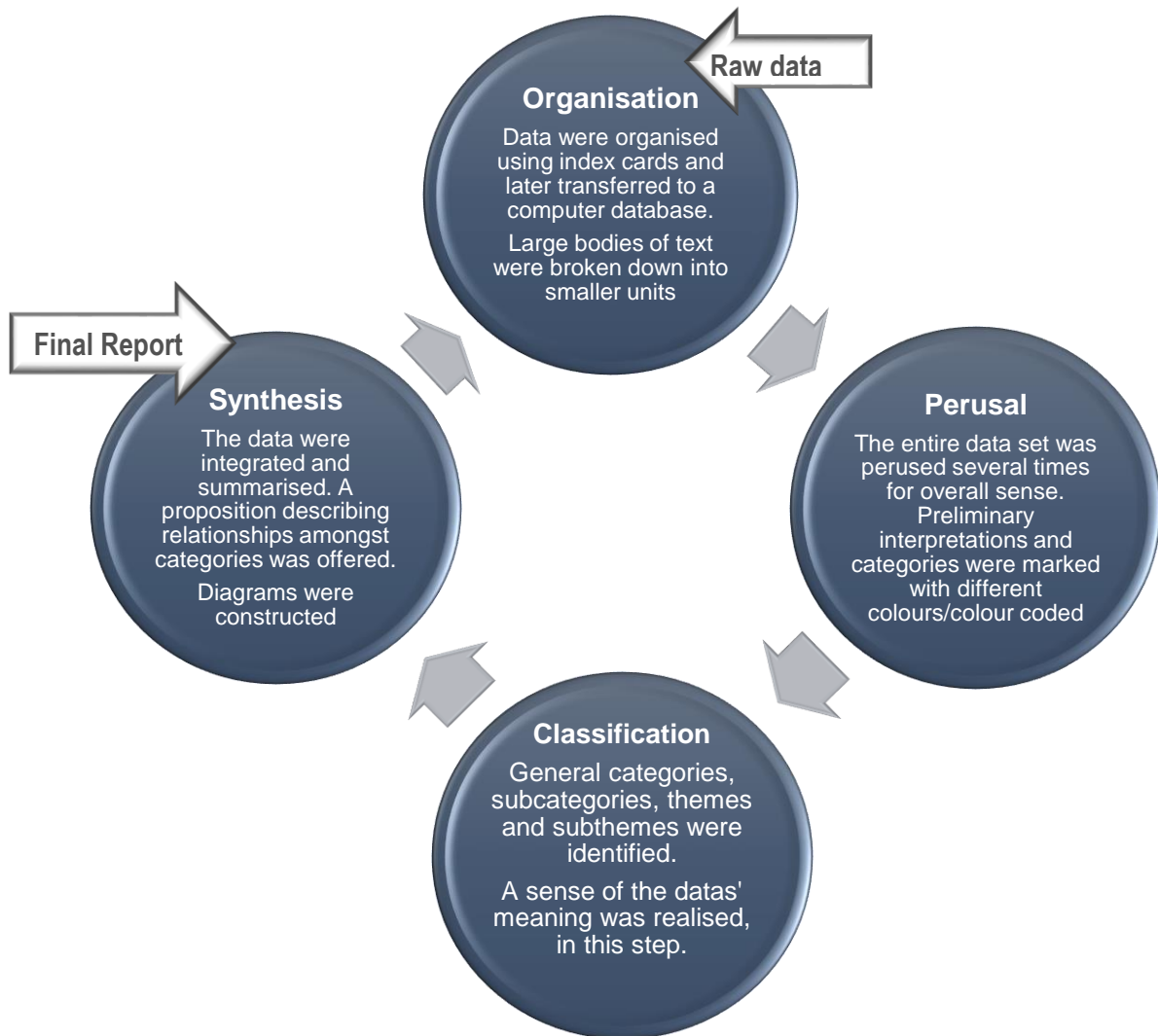


Figure 3.3: Creswell’s Data Analysis Spiral (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 153)

An initial and integral phase of analysis is arranging and organising sizeable quantities of data and thereafter separating it into “a few workable units” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 397). Nieuwenhuis (2010c: 104), as well as Atkins and Wallace (2012: 86) warn that the kinds of qualitative data collected from fieldwork, as well as analysing the data tend to be lengthy and require intensive meaning, understanding and reading. I therefore read and reread the transcriptions several times to ensure that it was understood in depth.

Bell and Waters (2014: 251) advise that data should be chronicled as soon as possible. Because of the aforementioned warning, I immediately started organising the data after the interviews. Thereafter, I proceeded with the process of transcribing the recorded interviews from the dictaphone.

Transcription refers to the procedure where recorded interviews are adapted in written form to enable analysis; these transcriptions require a great deal of time and resources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 398). All Dictaphone transcriptions were done on the computer and stored accordingly.

The next step was to read through and peruse the data numerous times to acquire an overall sense of the gathered data. Creswell (in Leedy and Ormrod, 2014: 160) maintain that one should peruse the data several times to obtain a complete sense of the meaning. During this process, colour coded notes of possible categories or initial impressions should be made to simplify and aid this step in data analysis. Similarly, I perused the transcribed data and underlined the possible emerging themes and categories in various colours. McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 399) suggest reading no less than two datasets and noting ideas about the data whilst reading. This procedure gave me an overall impression of the data segments' appearance or overarching themes.

The next step was the classification of the categories and identifying themes; by doing this a greater sense of the data's meaning were attained, as Creswell described it would be (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). During this stage of data analysis, I discovered the importance of going back and forth through the data to clarify the meanings of perspectives. Data categories signify the beginning of induction by the researcher; thereafter, the "recursive process" allows for the researcher to continuously compare the application of a category which eventually leads to pattern formation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 405). The process is usually a circular one of returning to the data to validate information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 405). Bell and Waters (2014: 253) affirm that it is not enough to only describe the data, but that all data require interpretation.

Therefore, after the classification of the data, data were summarised and specific relationships among the categories of teachers' perspectives and the implementation of RE could be described (Creswell in Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 160). This was the phase of synthesis in the data analysis spiral. During this last step of data analysis, I, the researcher, could offer an interpretation of the findings.

3.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Nieuwenhuis (2010b: 80) raises the important question of how a researcher can ensure trustworthiness as valid. Trustworthiness influenced the way in which my data were collected, sorted and classified (Perakyla in Di Fabio & Maree, 140). According to Nieuwenhuis (2010c: 113) trustworthiness is of utmost importance in qualitative research and that assessing trustworthiness is the acid test of a researcher's data analysis, findings and conclusions. Guba (in Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107) proposes trustworthiness as a substitute for reliability and validity (found in qualitative research); in this case trustworthiness promotes principles, such as "scholarly rigour, transparency and professional ethics" in the interest of qualitative research, so as to gain trust and fidelity within the research community. While the terms reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative research the terms credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability are the essential criteria for quality (Golafshani, 2003: 601). These terms form part of trustworthiness in qualitative research and they encompass the trustworthiness of this study.

3.4.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (in Whitemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001: 530) identify credibility as an overriding goal of qualitative research, reflecting the relativistic nature of truth claims in the interpretivist tradition. The concept of credibility, offered by Guba (in Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107), refers to the extent to which a case study has recorded the fullness and essence of the case reality. Credibility is thus a substitution for "internal validity" which, in quantitative research, reflects the extent to which a study hones in on what it set out to achieve. In addition, credibility can be linked to the objectivity of a study; the rationality of conclusions that were drawn and the appropriate application of methodology used for the research's investigation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 96). Rule and Vaughn (2011: 108) state that "thick descriptions" of a case study weighs in on the quality and trustworthiness of the research and promotes its credibility. "Thick descriptions" is a term devised by anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973) to describe vivid, thorough and well-specified data (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 86, 87).

To ensure the credibility of my study, multi-method strategies were used: I used focus group interviews as a central data collection method; however, teachers' lesson plans were analysed as part of the document analysis, so that the cross-validation of data could be applied to ensure the credibility of my study. Richardson (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 142) postulates that multi-method strategies, therefore permit the crystallisation of data. In addition, member checking was used: I checked informally with participants for accuracy during data collection and used this method during the focus group interviews by rephrasing and probing the research topics with the goal of obtaining the more complete and subtle meanings of participants' experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 354, 355). As researcher, I ensured keeping in touch with the participants, to follow up on the research findings. Furthermore, data were mechanically recorded: a Dictaphone was utilised during the four different focus group interviews to provide the accuracy of participants' answers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 355).

3.4.2 Dependability

Guba (in Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107) sees dependability as an alternative for reliability which allows for the research findings to be repeated within diverse environments; however, qualitative research's dependability eradicates positivist views of replication and instead focusses on "methodological rigour and coherence", with the objective to produce acceptable qualitative research findings. The key to qualitative research, in opposition to quantitative research, is to learn from the informants; this is unlike the relatively controlled experimental environment of the quantitative field setting, and where dependability is foregrounded (Krefting, 1991: 216). As briefly touched on in chapter one, dependability therefore refers to the constancy and regularity of the research process, the approaches used over time, and the eventual influence on the degree of control in the study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140).

As researcher, I attempted to learn from my participants and to understand their viewpoints as a way of carrying out dependability in this study. Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter one, I attempted to monitor the quality of the recording and transcription of the data, documentation and methods of interviews to aid in the study's dependability (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140).

3.4.3 Confirmability

Sandelowski (in Krefting, 1991: 216) states that the fourth criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability; the freedom from bias in the research procedures and results. Confirmability, is defined by Guba and Lincoln (in Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107) as “a way of addressing concerns about the researcher’s influence and bias on the study.” This concept is a response to the ideal of objectivity in quantitative research. By providing a detailed description of the research process, including the restraints, the researcher’s disposition and the ethical requirements it helps to safeguard the case study’s confirmability (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107). In other words, the steps taken to facilitate data gathering, analysis and processing should be clearly described and the conclusions reported in detail and linked to the data (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 141). Stating the limitations and problems experienced during collecting and analysing of data upfront, aids the readers in understanding how conclusions were drawn (Nieuwenhuis, 2010c: 115). I believe that these statements also contributed towards the confirmability of my research findings.

Maree and Van der Westhuizen (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 140) describe crystallisation as the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. These authors (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 141) opine that crystallisation is another way of achieving quality assurance in qualitative data. Richardson (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013: 142) prefers the use of crystallisation instead of triangulation in qualitative research, as he suggests crystallisation provides the researcher with more ways of interpreting his/her observation. Finally, by utilising four focus group interviews, as well as documents, the use of different data collection methods were ensured, this increased the trustworthiness of my study.

3.4.4 Transferability

There has been an ongoing debate on the question of generalisability in case study research; however, the value given to finding “recurrent patterns” is not the purpose of a case study. Case study research, is suitable for the purpose of in-depth, holistically situated understandings of a phenomenon (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 105). Nieuwenhuis (2010c: 115) asserts that the goal of qualitative research is not to generalise findings across a population, but rather to seek insight into the participants’ perspectives, experiences, attitudes and behaviour. Transferability has emerged in qualitative

research discourse as an alternative for generalisability or external validity used in quantitative research (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 107). It refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups; it is the ability to generalise or transfer the findings to a larger population (Krefting, 1991: 216).

I believe that my research contains valuable findings that could be tried in other FP classrooms in the different provinces of South Africa, where teachers have to implement RE in FP. The reason is that I sought insight from my research participants on their perspectives, experiences and the implementation of RE in FP. The research findings are therefore, transferable.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

“Ethical relationships and practices are also key aspects of the research quality; conducting research in an ethically sound manner not only enhances the quality of research, but contributes to its trustworthiness” (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 111). McMillan and Schumacher (2014: 23) state that the emphasis of educational research is placed on human beings and therefore researchers are ethically responsible for safeguarding participants’ rights. In other words, it was my duty to adhere to ethical guidelines as stipulated by my institution in order to protect my participants. In adhering to these guidelines, the first steps I, as the researcher used, was to apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (Maree, 2013: 225). Once my ethics application was approved, I could proceed with the research process. Ferreira (2013: 38) explains that ethical strategies should continue throughout the study to ensure that the research being conducted is done in an ethical manner.

3.5.1 Informed consent and voluntary action

It is expected of the researcher to seek the consent of those involved in the research (Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 32). “Any participation in a study should be strictly voluntary” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 107). Aspects, such as the required participation time as well as the “noninterfering” and “non-judgemental” role that research encompass, should be communicated to participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 363). Researchers also need to keep in mind that consent should be given by the respondent (see Appendix B) to use the data gathered from them for a particular research project; this

does not mean that the researcher can automatically use the data in other research projects without asking further permission (Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 33).

- I started with this process of informed consent by gaining permission from the principals of the schools I used to conduct research (see Appendix A). During email correspondence with principals (excluding the rural school which did not have an email address, in which case telephonic communication was utilised), I identified the extent of time that the focus groups would take, the potential impact it would have and the possible outcomes of the research. Additionally, the letters of informed consent to principals, as well as the letters that participants had to complete to participate in the focus group interviews (see Appendices A & B), were attached to my email correspondence when contacting the various schools. Arrangements were made with the principal of the rural school to read the letters on the day that interviews would be undertaken; in this school's case the contents of my study and research questions were explained telephonically.
- An ethical clearance letter from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee (see Appendix D) and the permission letter granted to me by the Department of Education in the Free State (without which ethical clearance would not be permitted), were endorsed by the necessary official parties.
- All FP teachers in FP at the four different schools were invited to take part in the study; however, teachers had the choice to participate or not.
- After introducing myself, I discussed the purpose of the study with the participants, as well as the procedures that would follow.
- I began with a statement about the reason for conducting the research, and that it would form part of the dissertation requirement. Thereafter, I used a non-technical explanation of the purpose of the study and the procedures to be followed (Elias & Theron, 2013: 153). For example, that participants would have to answer questions; that their opinions were important; that I was interested in both positive and negative comments; and that participants did not need to be anxious about building consensus or being on the right track (Litoselliti, 2003: 68–81) (see also Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 87–91).
- I clearly stated the intended amount of time that the interview would take (Elias & Theron, 2013: 154).

- I also explained to teachers their rights: participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the interview at any time as mentioned above (Maree, 2010: 300). They were reminded that neither their names, nor the school's name nor the planner of a lesson would be named in the study and that their identities would be protected.

Teachers read through the letter of informed consent (see Appendices A and B) and all participants signed the letters of informed consent before the focus group interviews could proceed.

Finally, the Role of the Researcher (see point 3.3.1) provides a detailed and holistic discussion with participants, covering other points, such as drawing attention to the recording, and ensuring participants that their contribution would be anonymous and so forth.

3.5.2 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Ethic requirements pertaining to research emanate from three principles, namely autonomy (by fully informing participants of their right to participation or withdrawal from the research); non-maleficence (by being aware of maltreatment and avoiding this practice); and beneficence (by aiming to contribute positively to the public) (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 112). When these aforementioned principles becomes the manner in which research practice is directed, it ensures participant's privacy, confidentiality and autonomy which means gaining informed consent (as mentioned in 3.5.1) and avoiding the deception to secure participation (Rule & Vaughn, 2011: 112). Leedy and Ormrod (2014: 109) state: "Any research study involving human beings should respect a participant's right to privacy". Usually, confidentiality relating to any information given and the privacy of the respondents is guaranteed by the researcher through the promise of anonymity (Burton & Bartlett, 2009: 33). Even though strict anonymity cannot be possible during focus groups (see 1.9.3) most researchers can give participants the reassurance of confidentiality and describe to them the intended use of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 363). It is the responsibility of the researcher to convey to participants the power they possess during the research process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014: 363). Anonymity and confidentiality issues should be clarified with participants beforehand (Morgan & Sklar, 2013b: 122).

- The participants' information and responses shared during the focus group interviews were kept private and the results were presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect the identities of the participants. I assured my participants that their identities would not be revealed and would be kept confidential; that the information that they share would be kept anonymous; and that they could request insight into the reporting of the findings at any time. I informed them that pseudonyms would be used to refer to them when stating the findings of the research.
- I made sure, during the research process, that I conducted the research according to the Ethics and Research Statement provided by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria.
- I was aware of participants' right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity and therefore informed them several times of these facts; I ensured that all participants were aware of their rights before interviews commenced.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to give a detailed description of the research methodology applied to explore teachers' perceptions and implementation of RE in FP. With the intention to gain an "in-depth" understanding of these perceptions and ways of implementation, I followed a qualitative research approach and conducted a multiple case study using focus group interviews. Purposive sampling in selecting primary schools situated in the Motheo district was employed. To ensure a variety of perspectives, I selected my participants from inner-city, private, rural and township schools and conducted focus groups accordingly. I applied triangulation by also studying and analysing documents in the form of the teachers' lessons plans. A detailed discussion of the analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology that was followed in order to investigate the perceptions of teachers and how they implement RE in the FP. It described how participants were selected and it provided information on the various focus groups.

Chapter 4 provides this study's data analysis and the research findings, as well as an interpretation of the data. The research duration and fieldwork extended over two months. The participation of FP teachers supported the research in order to answer the research questions for this study. Participants' lesson plans added richer insight into to the way they implement RE in FP.

Subsequently, reference to the various focus groups, the procedure of data analysis, the research findings and the synthesis thereof provide themes and categories that emerged from the empirical research.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUPS

Chapter 3 (see section 3.3.2) offers more general information concerning each focus group, the participants and research sites. With the aim to protect the anonymity of the participants, their names and the name of the schools where they are employed, are not used in the research. Participants are referred to as teachers *of group 1, 2, 3 and 4*. Therefore, participant responses are provided based on the groups of which they formed part and the specific interview questions that were posed to them.

4.2.1 Group 1 (Inner-city, public school)

Pertaining to the average age of the teachers, approximately two-thirds of them were above 30, with ages ranging from the mid-twenties to early fifties. The population of FP teachers in this school was predominantly white. Teachers in this first group were genuinely interested in the study topic. As soon as they became used to the focus

group set-up and recording method, they answered research questions willingly and openly. One young teacher, when asked about her practice of the implementation of RE, seemed shy and chose not to answer the question. She turned to an older teacher as if expecting her to answer the question. I sought out another, very pensive teacher, who had not answered any questions and asked her about her implementation of the subject of RE and she subsequently gave meaningful answers. Overall, group 1 seemed sincere in their contributions to the focus group and shed a unique light on their perspectives and implementation of RE, as well as their implementation of faith-based exercises. One teacher commented that most of the teachers taking part in the focus group were Christian.

4.2.2 Group 2 (Rural, public school)

This group of teachers' average age were late thirties. The population of this rural school consisted of black learners and black staff only. Observations from this study's second focus group were that one participant in this rural school, had to carry the responsibility of accommodating the learning of both Grades 2 and 3 learners in one class. Overall, group 2 was openly honest about the fact that they spent no time on Life Skills which included the subject of RE; they felt pressurised by the Department of Education to perform in mathematics and language. Various important follow-up questions were asked to clarify those two teachers' answers to the interview questions. Seeing that that group consisted of only two teachers, there was an unperturbed atmosphere during the interview as there was ample time to listen to each teacher's opinion. The average age of those two teachers, was the late thirties and both mentioned how they had benefited from religious education when they were at school. They also read the Bible to their learners as a means of maintaining class discipline; it can be assumed that these teachers were Christians.

4.2.3 Group 3 (Public school within a township)

Pertaining to the average age of those teachers, about two-thirds of the group were above 30, with age ranges from the mid-twenties to the mid-fifties. The population of that school consisted of black learners with a predominantly black staff. The main observations from that first focus group were that teachers were overtly passionate about the topic of religion in schools and very keen to answer questions and share their opinions. Many teachers in that group shared their perspectives and commented

candidly on their feelings of dismay concerning the changes that were made to the RE policy. Again, one young teacher, when asked about her practice of the implementation of RE, chose not to answer the question; she seemed unsure as to what was expected from this subject's implementation. All teachers' perspectives were invited and even sought out, to ensure that rich data were attained during the interview. In addition, an important follow-up question was asked to clarify whether this group's teachers understood the difference between religious education and RE that schools have taught post 1994. Overall, group 3 made enthusiastic contributions to this study, as the problematic circumstances, such as crime, child-neglect and substance-abuse in the township, seemed to affect many teachers' perspectives on this topic. The greater percentage of those teachers read the Bible and sang hymns in their classes; therefore, it could be assumed that they were Christians.

4.2.4 Group 4 (Independent school)

Four of the FP teachers taking part in the focus group were white, with teacher ages ranging from the late twenties to the forties. I visited teachers in that independent school on the penultimate day of their third semester. Not all the FP teachers were able to take part as they were engaged in teacher-parent meetings. That school was the only school that was different from the other 3, as it functioned independently from the state and therefore had a specific religious ethos. It was by law allowed to do morning rings, where educators opened with Bible verses and hymn singing and assembly openings as part of weekly planning. Overall, group 4, in sharing their various perspectives, felt at ease with their differences in opinion pertaining to the research questions. Those teachers expressed relief at being able to work at a school where they were allowed by law to speak about their faith.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

I made use of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix C) in order to gain data from the participants. Questions pertaining to FP teachers' perceptions, feelings and implementation of RE were asked (see Appendix C). Follow-up questions, concerning their replies were elicited to obtain clarification on the meanings of their answers (see Appendix E).

Those focus group interviews were recorded with a dictaphone and transcribed after the meetings. The following steps in data analysis were followed (see section 3.1.1 and section 3.3.4):

- i. I, the researcher, listened to the interviews on the Dictaphone (a couple of times) after the meeting with the FP teachers.
- ii. Thereafter, the different interviews were transcribed. I checked that the notes I had made during the interviews corresponded with the transcriptions. After the interviews had been put in writing, they were saved onto a computer database. Additionally, printed copies of the interviews were made to facilitate easier categorisation.
- iii. I perused the transcribed interviews several times in order to obtain a comprehensive idea of the collected data.
- iv. Notes were made on ideas and topics, after which similar topics were grouped together. I used colour pens and underlined teachers' sentences (which could be grouped together under the same category or idea) with the same colour.
- v. Text segments were coded using words, phrases and colour.
- vi. General themes and subthemes were identified; at that point an overall sense of the data meaning was attained.
- vii. The data with their themes were integrated and summarised. The themes that emerged from the data will be presented later in this chapter and will be interpreted with reference to the literature on Religion Education and child spirituality found in the Chapter 2 theoretical framework of the different child development theories and holistic models of Hettler (see section 2.1) and Winiarski (see section 2.2).

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings and themes that emerged during the analysis of data will be provided based on interview questions posed to the participants during the focus group interviews. As with the interview questions, all the probing and follow-up questions posed by the researcher are placed in bold and in the colour blue, as to better facilitate the flow of the questions and answers. Follow-up questions will be found among the participants' answers, when clarification on their answers was necessary.

4.4.1 Question 1

Firstly, how do you perceive, view or feel about the subject of RE?

When the above interview question was posed to participants, various understandings of the subject emerged. Most of the teachers understood RE as a multi-religious subject; however, some of their answers referred to religious/faith education.

4.4.1.1 Group 1

One participant from the inner-city school felt that RE gave teachers and learners the opportunity to about one another's religions.

We have just completed a project and it is very important. So, I just feel if we give equal acknowledgement to everyone and give everyone a chance, we learn from each other. I, for example, know nothing about the Muslim religion, and one should work with that kind of thing and ask learners about it. Just as long as everyone feels comfortable with it.

4.4.1.2 Group 2

Both participants from the rural school agreed that RE was a morally important subject, but those teachers disclosed that they did not spend much time on Life Skills or specifically RE, as they felt too much pressure put on them to perform in other learning areas.

Morally, I think it is important. To be honest we don't plan for Life Skills because we are concentrating more on maths and language, because the department is on us.

4.4.1.3 Group 3

The participant from Batho township also believed to have a background of RE helped to build morality and humanity.

Yes, I think it's very important for children to have a background of religious [sic] or religion, because it builds up their morals; it builds up their humanity. It's very important to start from the Foundation Phase learners.

4.4.1.4 Group 4

A participant from the independent school firstly clarified the role of RE within Life Skills and then proceeded to answer the question. Her answer correlated with answers from group 2, even though the participant thought that RE was important, she neglected it.

I think under Life Skills (we are supposed) ...as part of RE, but it's more to give learners an idea of different religions that exists. I actually neglect it, but do think it is important that children is exposed to that in school, so that they also know how to be tolerant toward other religions in society. There is a place for it; we just don't do enough of it.

4.4.2 Question 2

How do you implement the subject of RE in your classes?

When teachers shared how they implemented RE, various perceptions of the subject's implementation, emerged. Some perceptions of implementation were related to RE and others to faith, or the previous dispensation's religious education. Some teachers shared their problems with implementation of the subject, while others expressed their frustration with the changed RE policy. Various perspectives were indicated at the beginning of each group's answers.

4.4.2.1 Group 1

One participant referred to her own ignorance as the reason why she neglected the subject in her class:

I don't like to do it, but I have nothing against any religion; it is just because I don't know a lot about it. So, I'm afraid that I will provide incorrect information.

Another participant stressed the importance of values and morals:

What is important is that we want to educate the learners in values; our assembly is not always a Bible story, but utilises something to tell them this is good values; this is how we love each other, how we are generous, have respect; general values, we deal with that a lot.

Another participant mentioned the implementation of faith-based exercises when answering the question:

In Gr. 2 we also have a weekly, open-air lesson, but if you want to do something every day then it is your own choice.

4.4.2.2 Group 2

One participant answered the question, but her answer pertained to faith-based exercises that were meant to support her in maintaining learner discipline.

Usually I read them a story from the Bible and I tell them what's going on and what should we do and what are they supposed to do; their behaviour should be there and they must really be in this way. So, every time when I quote from the Bible, I see the learners' behaviour change.

I probed further by asking: **So do you mean when you say you see their behaviour change...** (the teacher answered before the question was completed).

Ja, more especially the rules, or they disobey the rules in my class; I just quote from the Bible. I tell them the stories of Samuel or David, but I see a little bit of change from there, then.

The second participant from the same rural school also used faith-based exercises to maintain learner behaviour.

In my class, I sometimes read the Bible to them, or one of them read the Bible and briefly explain what the verses are saying and they interpret it to the way we are living now, but it's not every day; sometimes we talk about religion.

I probed further by asking: **And what is that way?**

Maybe sometimes you want to reprimand them when they've done something, so you quote something from the Bible that is going to work with what you are trying to tell them.

Do you think there's another way to teach learners discipline?

The teacher believed that Biblical stories have a greater impact on learners when addressing behaviour.

Yes, there is, but not as much as it would happen if there was religion in it. Because I think that when you are talking about the stories in the Bible, I don't know, but according to me, when I was told that stories when I was a child it had a certain effect.

It was like something that is real. So you have to behave like those people you are talking about in the Bible. So I think that is why religion, when it is not there, I think they do listen, but not so much.

So which difference do you see now?

The children of today, they don't have respect; they are doing everything they want. I think religion is the one that was paving us. Ja, everything that we did, we knew about God, this is right, this is wrong. Now they are not doing that. We are not talking about religion every day like we used to. In our time, every morning the Bible will be read; we would talk about religion, what it means. There were also lessons in the classroom about religion. Constantly, it was reminding us of how a person should behave, but now it's not happening.

How do you feel about the fact that our country is now a multi-religious country and the fact that the government wants us to educate learners in more than one religion? Is it easy for you to educate learners in various religions? Why or why not?

The participant from the disadvantaged, rural school had the following to say:

For us it's not a problem because we don't have many religions in our school; we only have Christians in our school. We don't usually talk about other religions unless we talk about those holidays when you have to say this is the holiday of the Hindus (or what) just to let them know; but we don't go into deeper detail and explain what is going on in that religion because they don't understand.

4.4.2.3 Group 3

A lot of the township teachers answers referred to the topic of faith-based exercises, religious practice and their disheartened perception of the changed RE policy's effects on learners.

One teacher implemented faith-based exercises in her classroom:

What we usually do every day in class is: we let the child sing hymns and then right after we read them a story from the Bible; these children stories, stories about parables, stories Jesus taught to his disciples or the people about. And then what I

again do, you can read a verse from the Bible and then we explain or ask them questions to answer.

Another teacher at that same school (worried about the learners' unstable home-life and their parents' lack of parenting) also implemented faith-based exercises:

We usually do it in the morning so that we can teach other children. They, some of them, don't know anything about God - at home their parents do not attend the churches so at school we help them to know God and how to pray.

I read the policy on religion and education that says that we, as teachers, are not allowed to teach the Bible any more at school when implementing RE. Why do you still believe it is important to carry on teaching the Bible, even though you know that the policy has changed?

This teacher voiced her frustration with the fact that they as teachers were not part of the decision and change in policy. She was also concerned about parent neglect of her learners and she felt that religious education benefited her when she was a learner and still at school.

It's true, Me., it's just unfortunate that we were not part of the policy-making, but we were; we felt very much furious when coming to this, because as much as (she names another participant) has just said: fortunately, our parents had parental skills. So unfortunately, for this one don't have parental skills. So maybe the parents at home don't have the impact or effect that the religious education had. It was good, it moulded us; we are what we are because of that. Because now, our former teachers taught us to live according to memory verses; when you do something then they would refer to the memory verses and they were chosen to mould us.

What is a memory verse?

Here she urged policy-makers to re-think their decision:

Memory verses: you can take any piece or text from the Bible and then we memorise that; it was sort of a recite. So that every time in the morning for about 5 minutes we would be reciting that. So we did those verses in our head from as young as we were. So I want to maintain that it is unfortunate that our government's policy makers didn't even consult with us. For them, they were saying that the constitution is saying that

everyone has a right, so they wanted to take the various beliefs into account like Christian and Rastafarians. So they wanted to do away with that segregation of those beliefs; so maybe that's the effects of everything. Otherwise, I want to say that if there is a small chance that the policy makers could review the decisions that they have taken; now I want to believe that they've realised what they have done. Everything is out of control. They can't even handle what is now going on.

And you believe all of this is happening because there is no Bible studying at school any more?

Exactly, exactly...we agree on that a 101%.

An older teacher (close to retirement) answered that the learners' negative behaviour had escalated since cancelling the previous dispensation's religious education:

In the classrooms or what, there are no more religious subjects here at schools because the government has just abolished it. And as the colleagues says, our children are really out of hands because there is nothing that is guided or that is good for them. Today we have Satanism at schools, children are smoking daggas at schools, and children are not to be punished, so there is nothing that you can do with these children. We are really out of hands because since religious education has been cancelled at schools.

4.4.2.4 Group 4

Similar to group 1, a participant mentioned her ignorance concerning religions and expressed her need for better training.

We as teachers also need to be better trained, do self-study, to know more about the Muslim faith, because I do not know what it involves.

Another younger participant, found parents' remarks challenging:

I'm not uncomfortable I must say, but the problem is the parents. That's the issue, now when you start talking about, for instance, this and this and that, the Christian parents get upset and vice versa, whichever religion. So it's a lot of the times the parents. You fear what they are gonna come and say, 'cause the children take everything home.

4.4.3 Question 3

Finally, do you think that learners' spirituality is being developed in the classroom?

Most participants felt that learners' spirituality was not being developed at school. Here is why:

4.4.3.1 Group 1

Most participants in group 1 shook their heads whilst the question on spiritual development was posed to them. Most of group 1 felt that the child's spirituality was not being developed at schools; however, the following teacher shared a different perspective.

She had a more diverse perspective and felt that a teacher's spirituality would have an effect on the learner:

I think in our school like we say, we open every morning and everything and most of us believe in God and that's how we perceive it and that's how we open every morning. But it's not to say that because in our school we do it, in other schools it also happens. For instance, a township school might not even have a Bible, so how would they get anything across, unless they know what's happening. So that's why I say... not every school does do it; some schools have a higher spiritual background as the rest and other schools not.

And where do you think your school fits within that?

To be honest, most of the teachers who teach here are Christians and therefore we live according to the Bible and that's how we perceive it, so that's why we are bringing it easier over to the kids.

She also answered that she used the Bible to teach values and character:

You know, I use values a lot and as something happens on the playground or in class, then I speak about it and link it to a Bible story; for example, responsibility and then I use a Bible story pertaining to it. Or of self-control or something in that line.

I probed further by asking: **So, you use the Bible as a type of hands-on, emergent teaching method?**

Yes, and what they can do when something like that happens. And then I tell them, if something happens, stand back to calm yourself, and if you can't calm yourself, pray. And if you prayed once and it didn't work, pray again and pray every day until it becomes a habit. Do this so that you can know what to do when you end up in a situation where you might overreact, for example.

Another teacher interjected, saying that she felt there was no time for spiritual development:

Sorry, can I say something: it's not like in the old days, we had more time for Bible, more time to do the Bible stories, more time to repeat the stories. Nowadays, we don't have that much time.

4.4.3.2 Group 2

One participant felt worried and expressed that there was no time for learners to develop spiritually at school:

Because there is no time for religion. There's no time for children to experience religion at church or in school. So if a child is not going to church at home, spiritually the child does not grow. And at school also, they are not talking about religion; where is he going to get religion?

4.4.3.3 Group 3

Teachers from the school in the township felt that learners nowadays are spiritually void and one participant mentioned that that went against her training - that of teaching the child in totality:

The environment where we are and the environment at home, the parents do not care about churches. So the child comes from home being empty because at home their life is horrible.

I think, there is nothing to add on the spirit of the child; he is empty spiritually, so if we can teach religious education, then the children will be filled inside. I was just saying, like myself and the older teachers as we were being trained, it says that when you teach a child you teach the child in totality. How could you exclude other part; are you

doing your job well when you do it like that? Because it is a completed totality; you don't just focus on this.

Another teacher concurred with her colleague and shared more insight regarding the theory of learners' holistic development:

Thank you Me, I want to concur with her, there. The inner self is the relationship with the inner part of the body and the outside. So it's true that maybe if we are focusing on the other aspects, but denying other aspects to be developed still, there's no totality in the individual. So we really need to focus on all the aspects that makes a person a whole as an individual. Because now with the spiritual development, the learner needs to have that silent moment to think who is he, who is she, "What am I?", "What is it that I need?" Just to have that silent moment where you have a time to speak to his/her inner self. Especially, when coming to decision making still needs someone inside to say: "Is it something that I'm doing right or wrong?" Those decision-making skills are also going to be affected seriously when coming to the well-being of the individual.

4.4.3.4 Group 4

Even there, a teacher teaching at an independent school (where morning Bible readings are part of the curriculum), believed that the time allocation at schools was too little to support a child's faith or spiritual development.

I don't think so; I think the time allocation is simply too little. I personally, would like to spend more time on this. We can't think that we are able to strengthen a child's faith in that short amount of time.

This subsection concludes the information on the interview questions that were posed to participants during the focus group interviews. All four focus group-interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants and were transcribed for data analysis.

4.4.4 Document Analysis

Since document analysis was another data-collection instrument used for this study (see section 3.3.3.2), teachers' lesson plans were analysed to not only draw data from people, but also from other sources, such as text material - in this case lesson plans.

4.4.4.1 Group 1

Teachers of the inner-city school interviewed, planned for Life Skills, as well as what they called Life Orientation, in their lesson plans. Under Life Skills teachers planned for the various subjects, such as Beginning Knowledge; Personal and Social Well-being; Creative Arts; and Physical Education (see section 1.2). Their lesson plans reflected that teachers followed the Life Skills curriculum as required by CAPS. That inner-city school also had a heading within their planning called: Life Orientation; there they planned for faith-based exercises. Some teachers' planning reflected faith-based exercises on a daily basis, where they covered a specific book of the Bible with their learners, whilst other teachers covered specific Bible stories, such as Jonah and the Whale, for instance. In addition, participants provided me with examples of the content they used as part of their faith-based instruction. The school utilised an exercise book which each learner is provided with. The book consisted of various language, art- and fine-motor activities, such as colouring-in, drawing, connect-the-dot, language and writing exercises. All of these exercises consisted of faith-based and moral lessons that were interwoven with the exercises. The book consisted of 36 activities and each grade covered 12 activities from this book, apart from other faith-based exercises they implemented.

4.4.4.2 Group 2

Even though two FP teachers from the rural school acknowledged that they did not have time to implement Life Skills in their classes, the teacher teaching both grades 2 and 3 provided me with planned lessons on Life Skills, dated March 2014 - however, the focus group interview was undertaken in August 2015. The lesson plan reflected planning for Life Skills in the year of 2014, but it showed no indication of the implementation of RE or spiritual development. Another lesson, dated April 2015 reflected planning for Beginning Knowledge and Social well-being on the topic of *Family*, but there was no sign of planning to implement RE.

4.4.4.3 Group 3

One Gr R teacher of a township school provided me with her lesson plans on RE. She planned appropriately for RE, with her lessons reflecting the discussion on the Macufe Music Festival and other cultural festivals happening in the Free State during the third term of school. Her planning reflected a discussion on Human Rights Day, Freedom

Day, Heritage Day and Christmas, all during the same particular week. That was the only teacher in a group of ten participants who provided me with lesson plans when I asked teachers for examples of their planning. That particular lesson reflected evidence of planning for the subject of RE.

4.4.4.4 Group 4

A participant in the independent school provided an example of her lesson planning that reflected the various subjects within Life Skills and that they were taken into consideration during the day. The lesson plan did not specify exactly what was covered during that particular time slot. The lesson plans demonstrated that that independent school had a time slot for Bible, Personal and Social Well-being between 7:30 and 8:00 in the mornings. All participants had that time slot available for Bible, Personal and Social Well-being. That particular lesson plan did not specify the content that was covered during that period.

4.5 SYNTHESIS OF KEY FINDINGS

In the following subsections, the synthesis of the key findings of my research are discussed.

4.5.1 Group 1

Participants in group 1, who did not respond to questions on their perceptions towards RE based instruction, on religious points of view, agreed that RE was an important subject in which to facilitate the learning and understanding of various religions. However, some participants in that group felt uninformed about other religions and therefore stated that they were incapable of teaching that subject appropriately. In addition to the implementation of RE, that school also implemented faith-based exercises through morning assemblies and morning rings. Teachers explained that those assemblies and rings were used as a method of teaching learners values. Most of the participants from the inner-city school agreed that the spiritual aspect of learners was not being developed as part of Life Skills; the reason generally given to support their view was that there was too little time. One teacher in the group, however, shared that she encouraged learners to pray; she utilised that tool to teach learners how to cope in challenging circumstances. Teachers felt that the spiritual context and its application in their school might be more supplementary than in other schools. Even

so, it was evident that teachers saw a deficiency in the growth of the learners' spirituality at school. The teachers planned for RE within Life Skills, as well as for Life Orientation where they practised faith-based exercises in class.

Consequently, Group 1 had a positive perception of RE; nevertheless, they mostly found the implementation of RE challenging. One reason for that was a lack of knowledge of other religions. One FP class were encouraged to pray as means of coping. Teachers who shared their lesson plans reflected planning for Life Skills, as well as faith-based exercises. Finally, the group agreed that there was little development of the child's spirituality at school.

4.5.2 Group 2

Participants in group 2, both agreed that RE played an important role in the moral development of learners. Therefore, those participants perceived RE as a valuable subject. However, those two teachers found the implementation of RE challenging, explaining that learners from that rural school did not understand the background and context of other religions, which again complicated the implementation of RE. In addition, teachers experienced a great deal of pressure from the Department of Education to perform in subjects, such as mathematics or languages. Consequently, teachers from that group disclosed that little time was spent on Life Skills in their classes. Therefore, participants did not plan for Life Skills and it became a neglected learning area in that rural school. Teachers there provided me with examples of lesson plans of the previous year, and one week's Life Skills planning for 2015, which reflected that there was planning done for Life Skills, but it showed no indication of the implementation of RE or spiritual development.

Even though group 2 did not implement Life Skills in their classes, faith-based exercises through the use of Bible texts and stories were utilised as a tool to manage learner behaviour. Teachers felt that it grounded learners' characters and provided them with behavioural guidelines. Both teachers at that rural school felt that they saw learners behaving better when the previous Religious Education syllabus had still been part of the school curriculum. Both participants agreed that the spiritual aspect of learners was not being developed as part of Life Skills; they said that there was not enough time during the day for that. In conclusion, the teachers in the rural school

agreed that RE played an important role in the development of learners' morals. They experienced challenges in educating learners to comprehend the different religions, since those learners had no frame of reference of life, outside of their own.

Similar to previous groups, teachers of that group implemented faith-based exercises as part of classwork to manage learners' behaviour. The group felt that learners behaved better when religious education was still a part of the school curriculum. Finally, teachers in that group too, agreed that there was not enough time allocated for the child's spiritual development at school, which coincided with the little evidence of lesson planning for Life Skills and RE.

4.5.3 Group 3

A participant from the group teaching at Batho Township, viewed both RE and religious education as important learning areas in educating learners in humanity and morality. One Gr R teacher in this group provided me with her lesson planning that reflected planning for RE. However, most participants answering the question of their perception of RE reverted their answers to the implementation of religious education and faith-based practices. Similar responses were communicated when the question pertaining to their implementation of RE was posed to participants. The school implemented faith-based exercises through Bible reading, hymn singing and making faith implementation a part of daily school life. Teachers communicated that they implemented those exercises for various reasons, namely: out of concern for the learner's home life; because of a lack of parental skills - teachers experienced parents as absent from home and not laying a spiritual foundation for their children; and finally, teachers implemented those exercises, so as to provide guidance for learner behaviour. A couple of teachers in the group drew a direct correlation between school circumstances today, negative learner behaviour and the exclusion of RE at schools. Teachers voiced their discontent regarding the changed RE policy. It was clear that they felt unsupported by the subject of RE as a replacement for the previous religious education syllabus. Again, participants from group 3 were in accord that the spiritual aspect of learners was not being developed at school. In addition, a pair of teachers referred to their teacher training and communicated their unhappiness about the abandonment of educating the child's inner-self at schools. They affirmed that

nurturing a learner's spiritual intelligence (by listening to his/her inner voice) should play an important role in his/her holistic development.

In conclusion, teachers of that school located in Batho Township, agreed that RE played an important role in the development of learners' humanity and morality. Group 3 too, implemented faith-based exercises; teachers said that they were supporting learners in what neither the school curriculum, nor parents nor caretakers were providing at home. Unlike the other schools, this group of teachers mentioned the topic of educating the learner's spiritual intelligence and inner-self. Participants concluded that learners were not being developed in a holistic manner. This teachers' discontent with the changed RE policy and their concern for the child's growth as a whole, were themes that impacted significantly. Finally, teachers felt strongly about the direct correlation between negative learner behaviour and the exclusion of RE at schools. Teachers in the township school felt that the effect of that exclusion was even worse for learners residing in township circumstances.

4.5.4 Group 4

Some of the teachers teaching at the independent school perceived RE as playing an important role in educating tolerance towards other learners. One teacher's lesson plan reflected the time slots allocated to Life Skills and RE. However, another participant mentioned that RE was neglected in her class. A participant mentioned that she experienced problems with the implementation of RE at school, because of lack of personal instruction and the need for more information concerning other religions. Parents' opposing reaction to the subject of RE was another theme that emerged from the focus group. The independent school implemented faith-based assemblies, morning rings and singing. One participant's lesson plan reflected that that period commenced early in the morning and teachers were allocated 30 minutes for Bible, Personal and Social Well-being. Another teacher replied that she believed the implementation of faith-based exercises made a difference in learners' characters, when they were reminded of those values and stories on a daily basis. All participants from group 4 agreed that the spiritual aspect of learners was not being developed sufficiently at school; the reason they provided was that there was little time for the development of the child's spirituality.

In conclusion, teachers of the independent school agreed that RE played an important role in educating tolerance towards fellow learners, even though it was, at times, neglected in their classes. The independent school (as part of their ethos) implemented faith-based gatherings in the form of assemblies and morning rings. Even though that school allowed time for more spiritual and faith-based activities, teachers still communicated that there was insufficient time for developing the child's spiritual aspect.

The lesson plans displayed that that independent school had a time slot for Bible, Personal and Social Well-being between 7:30 and 8:00 in the mornings and all participants had that time slot available for those activities. A particular lesson plan did not specify the content that was covered during this period.

4.6 DATA INTERPRETATION ACCORDING TO THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Inductive data analysis (see section 3.3.4) allowed the identification of distinctive themes, as well as their categories, as seen in Table 4.1. Those themes featured prominently after conducting data analysis (see section 4.4). Since four focus groups were held at schools with different backgrounds, I was able to gather a wider perspective on teachers' views and experiences relating to RE. The themes and their categories will be discussed next, based on Table 4.1 as seen below.

Table 4.1 Data themes and categories

Themes	Categories
Positive teacher perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers considered RE important for facilitating morality and tolerance amongst learners • RE provided a basis for educating both learners and teachers about other religions
Implementation challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge concerning other religions • Need for more teacher instruction on implementing RE • Time
Rule of faith-based exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To lay a spiritual foundation • To build character • To maintain class discipline • To teach coping skills
Spiritual development of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers agreed on the lack of spiritual development of learners at schools • Lack of time to develop learner spirituality
Non-provision of religious education in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration • Negative learner behaviour

The above table (4.1.) will be discussed in detail in the subsection, below.

4.6.1 Positive teacher perceptions

Interviews with the teachers provided considerable insight into their perceptions of the subject that is RE. Teachers firstly perceived RE as a subject that facilitated tolerance and morality (2.4.1) amongst learners. In addition, teachers believed that: Firstly, the subject built learners' awareness of humanity and secondly, provided the foundation for learners' deeper building block for character development and emotional growth (see sections 4.3.1 and 2.4). With reference to topics of morality and religion within the subject of RE, William James (see section 2.3.4) stated that authentic religious experience should be evidenced in mature moral functioning (see section 2.4). Consequently, the subject of RE was perceived as important and an enabler of educating tolerance and morals amongst learners and teachers (see section 4.3.1). In

theory, it could be said that teaching RE could foster a more accepting and tolerant society.

4.6.2 Implementation challenges

Participants found the implementation of RE challenging for the following reasons: firstly, participants commented on their own lack of knowledge as a hindrance to implementing the subject (see sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.4). Teachers expressed their need for more instruction on implementing RE (see sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.4). Some participants disclosed that they did not have the time to teach Life Skills at all as they experienced pressure from the Department of Education to do well in other learning areas, such as mathematics and languages; thus, RE was not implemented at all, and Life Skills as a learning area was therefore neglected (see section 4.4.2). The non-implementation of Life Skills and RE within Life Skills area compromised the provision of learners with a holistic education and development, which CAPS defined as part of the basis of the learning areas of Life Skills (see sections 2.1 and 2.2.1). Parents' disapproval of their children's learning about religions other than their own, was another problematic aspect of the implementation of RE (see section 4.4.4). It was evident therefore, that the subject of RE presented various challenges to teachers and that teachers could be better supported in terms time allocation, information and instruction on the implementation of RE.

4.6.3 Faith-based exercises

Many teachers implemented forms of faith-based exercises, such as Bible stories, texts on faith taken from the Bible, hymn singing, prayer and morning rings. The activities were, however, implemented apart from whether teachers applied RE or not (see 4.4.1- 4.4.4). Teachers offered various reasons for implementing faith-based exercises as part of their daily or weekly classroom routine.

Firstly, teachers practised these faith-based exercises in order to lay a spiritual foundation for learners. Teachers expressed their concern for learners' lack of home life and receiving little parental guidance and experienced parents as absent and not nurturing spirituality in their children (see section 4.4.3 and 2.3.1.1). It is important to note that Rudolf Steiner who started the Waldorf school movement and Maria Montessori, the founder of the Montessori school, believed in the cultivation of the

“soul-life” or the spiritual development of children (see section 2.2). The participants interviewed said that they were supporting learners in what neither the school curriculum, nor parents nor caretakers were providing learners with at home (4.4.3).

A second reason why teachers implemented those faith-based exercises was that they perceived them as building learners’ characters (see sections 4.4.2 and 2.3). One participant stated that the implementation of faith-based exercises made a difference in learners’ character, when they were reminded of the values and stories on a daily basis (see section 4.4.4). Another teacher believed that faith-based rings and assemblies were used as a method of teaching learners values (see sections 4.4.1 and 2.4). In addition, teachers perceived the faith-based exercises as another tool to maintain class discipline. For example, Bible verses and stories were utilised as a tool to manage learner behaviour; teachers felt that they provided learners with behavioural direction (see section 4.4.2) or guidance for learner behaviour.

Finally, teachers used faith-based exercises to teach learners coping skills. For example, the skills encouraged learners to pray and, in turn, taught learners how to cope in challenging circumstances (see sections 4.4.1 and 2.2.2).

4.6.4 Spiritual development of learners

When analysing the topic of the spiritual development of learners at schools, two perspectives arose from participants. Firstly, most teachers across all four focus groups, agreed on the lack of the spiritual development of learners at schools; secondly, participants communicated the lack of time to develop learner spirituality (see sections 4.4.1- 4.4.4). Even though spiritual development had countless benefits (see section 1.5.4), it was evident that teachers saw a deficiency in the growth of the learners’ spirituality at school (see sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.3). Participants communicated that there was not enough leeway provided for the child’s spiritual development at schools (4.4.2), thus negating the view that all cultures had a basic concept of an ultimate, transcendent, divine power (see section 2.3), especially in South African society (see section 1.5.3).

Moreover, a pair of teachers at the township school communicated their discord concerning the abandonment of educating the child’s inner-self at school (see section

4.4.3). They affirmed that educating learners' spiritual intelligence (by listening to his/her inner voice) should play an important role in holistic development (see sections 4.4.3, 2.2. and 2.2.2). The participants concluded that part of the child's spirituality was not being developed, even though it was part of their teacher training. Finally, the category in relation to spiritual development was that most participants communicated and agreed on the fact that there was a lack of time to develop the child's spirituality in the classroom (see 4.4.1 - 4.4.4).

4.6.5 Non-provision of religious education at schools

Pertaining to the non-provision of the previous religious education at schools, teachers felt frustrated that religious education was not part of the school curriculum any longer (4.3.2.3). In addition, teachers experienced disappointment regarding the fact that they were not consulted in whether religion education should remain a part of the school curriculum or not (4.3.2.3). Teachers felt that a spiritual foundation was laid at home during their own childhood, which they found was not the case for a great number of children, today (4.3.2.3). To this end, many teachers expressed a feeling of unreserved exasperation.

Secondly, teachers drew a direct correlation between negative learner behaviour and the non-provision of religious education at schools (see sections 4.4.1- 4.4.3; 4.3.2.2 and 4.3.2.3). One participant in her early thirties felt that the constant reminder of her own religious education during her school career was a continuous internal compass to direct her positive behaviour and helped her to get where she was today (from moving on to college after school and currently working as a teacher). Therefore, spiritual development influenced intellectual confidence and academic performance in a positive manner (see section 1.5.4). The same teacher painted a different story of the learners whom she was teaching nowadays and she experienced it in their disrespectful attitudes and a reckless approach towards life (see section 4.3.2.2). It is evident that participants were experiencing a change in the behaviour of learners that they perceived as a consequence of the non-provision of religious education (this non-provision detracts from learners' developmental milestones and holistic development). Thus, participants drew a connection between negative learner behaviour and the non-provision of religious education at schools.

In conclusion, a visual representation (see Figure 4.1) summarises how this themes and categories of this study pertaining to teachers' perception of RE in FP affected themselves and the learners in their class:

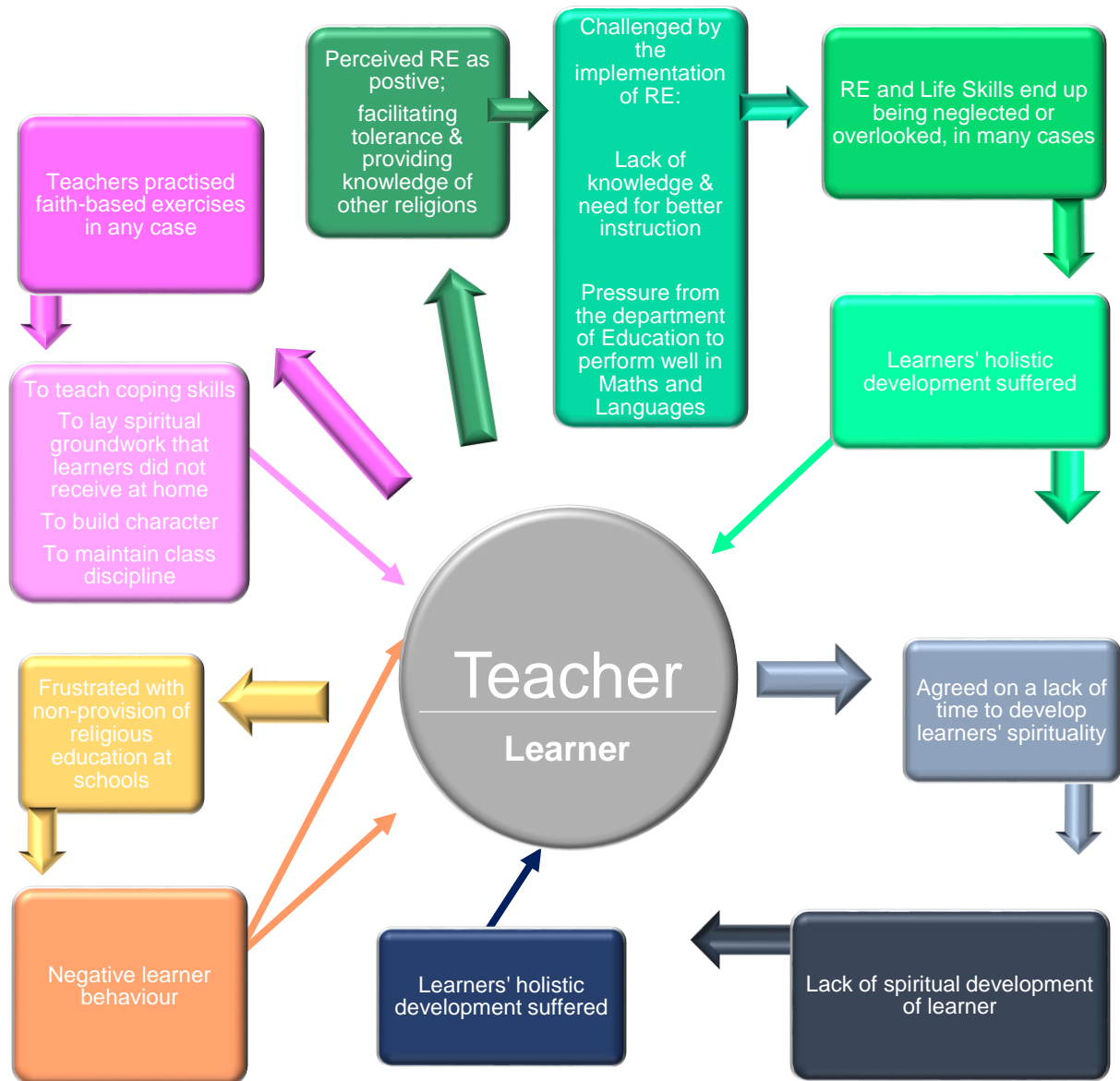


Figure 4.1: A visual presentation of how the themes and categories affected the teacher and learner

In short, Figure 4.1 illustrates and provides an overall view of the study themes and categories emerging from the key findings provided by participants' insights. The colour codes in this figure namely, green (teachers' perceptions and implementation

of RE); blue (lack of time to develop learner spirituality); orange (frustration with non-provision of religious education); and pink (the practice of faith-based exercises) represent the main themes and categories of the study (see section 4.5 and Table 4.1). The arrows in this figure provide a visual depiction of the origin of either the teacher's feelings, perceptions or practices, as well as the themes influencing either the teacher, or the learner, or both parties involved.

Teachers' responses mostly reflected that the subject of RE was perceived as valuable in facilitating morality and tolerance; this said, the various challenges pertaining to the implementation of RE influenced the subject undesirably, in that it ended up being neglected and overlooked by teachers. In turn, the holistic development of learners was influenced. This is one correlation drawn between the conceptual framework (concerning the spiritual and holistic development of the child) and "observable data" that emerged from the research investigation (see section 1.6). Pertaining to learner spirituality, teachers agreed that there was very little or no time to develop that aspect of the child. In turn, there was little or no development of the learner's spirituality, which affected his holistic development, once again. This is another correlation that was drawn between the underlying theories and "observable data" of this study (see section 1.6).

Many of the participants felt frustrated because of the non-provision of the previous dispensation's religious education in schools. Some teachers drew direct links between the absence of religious education and negative learner behaviour. Negative learner behaviour, therefore, influenced teachers as well as the learners.

Finally, most participants implemented faith-based exercises in class (during their own time), as they were concerned about the learners' lack home life which where parents were simply "absent". Thus, parents' laying a spiritual foundation for their children and building their character on what should be a good foundation, was non-existent. Other reasons were to teach learners coping skills or to maintain class discipline. Teachers perceived the implementation as positive to learners' development.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of Chapter 4 remains to present the research findings according to the research questions that were used as a guideline for the focus groups and later on for data analysis. Research data were organised via themes and categories that emerged during the thematic analysis of the transcribed group interviews. The participants' experiences regarding their perceptions and implementation of RE, as well as their opinions on the child's spiritual development were examined (see research questions, section 1.3.).

The data interpretation process provided the necessary information regarding teachers' perceptions and the implementation of RE. In closing, the abovementioned research findings pointed towards a correlation between the empirical findings and the research theory. Participants indicated a lack in attention to learner-spirituality and faith, and consequently a gap within the holistic foundation that Life Skills should provide (see sections 2.2 and 2.3.1). In this way, the theory correlates and confirms the research findings. In Chapter 5 the conclusions and the research-based recommendations are provided.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the research data were organised via themes and categories that emerged during the thematic analysis of the transcribed group interviews. After the data was interpreted, conclusions were drawn from both the theory, research and research questions that guided the study, and were ultimately answered.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to summarise the perspectives that were derived from the literature review, as well from the empirical research findings, to provide research conclusions and finally supply research recommendations.

5.2 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this next section, a summary of the key findings of the literature that was consulted, as well as the main findings from my empirical study, are presented.

5.2.1 Summary of the key literature findings

Pertaining to the literature that informed this study, the following models and theories were examined. Hettler's (1967) model on the Six Dimensions of Wellness emphasises that a human being's wellness is a multidimensional state of being and that these include the dimensions of occupation, physicality, emotion, intellect, and the social, as well as the spiritual dimension. This model associated with my study as the spiritual dimension recognises our search for meaning and purpose, because it includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and finally, it preserves tolerating the beliefs of others, rather than closing our minds and becoming intolerant (see section 2.2.1).

Winiarski's Bio-Psycho-Socio-Spiritual Model (1997) also focuses on holistic development. This model proposes that human health is affected on the micro level (namely, the body and its physiology) and on the macro level, such as our culture and our surroundings. Engel, who first developed the Biopsychosocial model (1980)

argues that a human being is a body, with a psyche, and set within a social framework. However, Engel does not take the human being's spirituality into account. Subsequently, Winiarski modified Engel's model to include the spiritual. He asserts that people are holistic beings with bio-, psycho-, social and spiritual qualities, believing that every aspect of life has biomedical, psychological, social and spiritual components that interplay (see section 2.2.2). This is another model that recognises the importance of spirituality within a person's holistic development, as it postulates in this research study.

Moving on from holistic models to child development theories, Fowler's Stages of Faith (1979 and 1981) was also discussed in this study's literature review. Fowler's stage theory sets a framework for understanding the evolution of how human beings conceptualise God, or a Higher Being and this author's theoretical work is used both in circles of religious and spiritual development. Fowler contends that his stages can apply to Jews, Christians, Muslims, Zens, Buddhists and the "civil religion" of a veteran's organisation. His theory plays an important role in my study as it proves that faith and/or spirituality gives coherence and direction to our lives and enables us to face the difficulties of our existential condition, when dealing with biological maturation, emotional and cognitive development, as well as cultural influences (see section 2.3.1).

With reference to a human being's existential condition pertaining to cognitive, emotional and cultural aspects, the next three child development theories relating to this attribute of being human, is reviewed briefly.

Piaget's cognitive theory (1969), is based on the belief that children actively construct their knowledge of the world, incorporating new information into existing knowledge schemes through a progression called assimilation. These schemes are expanded through a process of accommodation when the child relies on the pre-existing scheme and adds new-found knowledge to it. The scheme becomes altered and the outcome is a greater equilibrium among the pieces of knowledge, thus widening the child's understanding. Therefore, Piaget is best known for describing cognitive development by three main processes, namely: assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. Children progress through the stages of cognitive development in a consistent

manner, with no stage being omitted. The preoperational, and concrete operational stages were applied to this study and helped to shed some light on the children's cognitive constructs of God or a Higher Being at this age; for example, semiotic function being applied to comprehend the constructs of good and evil within stories. Or, children may undergo greater levels of comprehending religion and religious beliefs in the "operational stage" of cognitive development (see section 2.3.2).

Finally, Kohlberg's Moral development (1981) suggests six stages in the growth of morality. The Pre-conventional level with its sub-stages and the Conventional level with one sub-stage relates to the FP child's spiritual development in this phase of his/her life. Kohlberg explains his Pre-conventional level by stating that children firstly respond to cultural rules which are based on good or bad behaviour, and that this is the lowest level of moral reasoning. This level relates to the child's spirituality, as children believe in reward and punishment. In Kohlberg's next sub-stage (see section 2.3.4), children believe in equal exchange and therefore, it is understandable that their spiritual reasoning revolves around fairness and reciprocity.

The Conventional level involves maintaining the expectations of the child's family, group or nation. Ultimately, the attitude of these next two sub-stages (that form part of the Conventional Level), are attitudes of conformity and loyalty, as well as identifying with the persons involved in them. This resembles the child's spiritual development where Fowler's Mythic-Literal stage explains that children take on beliefs and observances that symbolise belonging to his or her community (see section 2.4).

The literature review highlights the fact that spirituality benefits the development of the whole child on various planes and promotes coping skills, identity (see section 2.1); intellectual confidence; academic performance; physical and psychological health; and cultivates empathy and self-esteem (see section 2.3). For FP learners, being spiritually grounded, sets the foundation for a well-integrated moral and civic identity and, in turn, produces adults who contribute in an integrative manner to self, family and community (see section 2.3).

Another aspect in the literature review is the correlation between the examined models of holistic development and the assertion of the National Curriculum Statement on Life

Skills being central to the holistic development of the child (see section 2.2.1). Spirituality should have an essential role to play within child development and in the FP classroom (see section 2.1 and 2.3). However, only 2 of 60 hours per term is allocated for RE (which falls under Personal and Social Well-being in FP). RE is to be implemented as a subject with a civic function, not a religious function (see section 2.2.1 and section 1.1), in contrast to the systemic approaches and holistic models studied in the literature review.

The literature that was reviewed provided ample insight into the child's cognitive, emotional, spiritual, moral and holistic development. In addition, it provided insight into the policies of the Department of Education concerning Life Skills, RE and the non-provision of religious education. Consequently, the child development theories in the literature review, as well as the holistic models, acknowledge the spiritual aspect as part of humankind and demonstrate child development as multi-dimensional. It has been proved in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives (see Chapter 2) that the specific aspects of the child's development, for example personality and emotion, explained in Erikson's stage theory (see section 2.3.3), or the child's cognitive development, as in the case of Piaget's cognitive theory (see section 2.3.2), are two of many aspects making up the whole child. It is vital that children are developed spiritually, as this facet ties in with every other part of their healthy development.

5.2.2 A short overview of the empirical research findings of this study

This study consisted of four focus groups in the Motheo district; these schools had contextual variants, which made for richer data analysis. Interviews with participants, the writing of field notes whilst recording the interviews with a Dictaphone, teachers' lesson plans, as well as re-listening to group interviews on the Dictaphone multiple times, allowed me to garner sufficient data. Through inductive data analysis and interpretation, the following findings are made:

5.2.2.1 Positive teacher perceptions

Teachers felt that the subject of RE was beneficial and most teachers viewed it as important to learners. They believe RE could educate both teacher and learner in understanding other religions besides their own stance on life. In addition, participants thought that RE could cultivate morality and tolerance in learners. Consequently, the

subject of RE was perceived as an integral enabler of cultivating tolerance and acceptance (see section 4.5.1).

5.2.2.2 Implementation challenges

With regard to the implementation of RE, one participant disliked the subject because of her own lack of knowledge on the various religions; however, other teachers who felt positively towards RE also expressed their lack of knowledge, but communicated a need for more instruction on how to implement that area of Life Skills correctly (see section 4.5.2). Parents' remarks and disapproval of their children's learning about other religions posed another challenge and therefore inhibited teachers from teaching that area competently. In addition, a lack of teaching time caused Life Skills to be neglected in class, which meant that RE was not implemented at all (see section 4.5.2). This non-implementation of Life Skills that included the non-implementation of RE removed the provision of the holistic education that CAPS defined as part of the basis of the subject of Life Skills.

5.2.2.3 Faith-based exercises

Teachers across all four focus groups improvised by implementing faith-based exercises, such as Bible stories, verses of faith, hymn singing, prayer and morning rings; teachers implemented the exercises, regardless of teaching RE or not. Teachers felt those exercises supported learners in what neither the school curriculum, nor parents nor caretakers provided learners with at home (see section 4.5.3). Another reason participants implemented faith-based exercises was to build learners' characters, to instil values in learners and to maintain class discipline. Finally, the exercises were utilised to teach learners coping skills when facing challenging circumstances (see section 4.5.3).

5.2.2.4 Spiritual development of learners

Teachers across all four focus groups, agreed on a basic lack of the spiritual development of learners in schools. As an aside, but nevertheless pertaining to spiritual development, two teachers in the township school stated that educating learners' spiritual intelligence (by making them aware of the inner-voice), should play an important role in holistic development (see section 4.5.4). Those participants admitted that that part of the child's spirituality was not being developed, even though

they felt that it was part of their teacher training (see section 4.4.3). Finally, the other theme which discussions revealed, concerning spiritual development was that most participants agreed on the fact that there was a definite lack of time allocated to develop the child's spirituality in the classroom (4.5.4). Thus, a lack of spiritual development in learners could be partly ascribed to the reasons found in the empirical research, but also attributed to a gap emerging from the curriculum.

5.2.2.5 Non-provision of religious education in schools

Firstly, teachers felt frustrated that the previous dispensation's religious education was not part of the school curriculum any longer and they seemed to perceive it as a matter of disregard that they had not been consulted on whether religious education should remain part of the curriculum or not (see sections 4.3.2.3 and 4.5.5). Secondly, both teachers from the township school and the rural school, drew a direct correlation between negative learner behaviour and the non-provision of the previous dispensation's religious education in schools at schools (see section 4.3.2.3). A participant from the township school drew a comparison between herself and her learners, commenting that the presence of religious education that had a positive effect on her life, was showing in the absence of religious education and the lack of guidance that she experienced in her learners' (see sections 4.3.2.2 and 4.5.5). That detracts from learners' developmental milestones and holistic development. Consequently, this non-provision of religious education created frustration amongst the participants, who drew a connection between negative learner behaviour and the absence of this subject

5.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In this section the research questions (see section 1.3) will be answered, in order to draw the final conclusions of this study. The secondary questions will be answered first as they lead up to answering the main question of the study:

5.3.1 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the theoretical insights regarding the spiritual development of the young child?

Chapter 2 emphasises that the child's spiritual development is of great importance as it contributes to his/her holistic development. Hettler's model on wellness (see section 2.2.1) and Winiarski's holistic model (see section 2.2.2) include the spiritual domain,

thus promoting the view of the individual as being wholly developed. The CAPS curriculum states that Life Skills as a subject “is central to the holistic development of learners” (see section 2.2.1). Thus, young learners need to develop their whole person, with the spiritual aspect intact.

The literature also consistently reports on the benefits of spiritual development (see section 2.2) and mention is made of enhanced emotional (see section 2.1), intellectual and cognitive well-being (see section 2.3). Furthermore, it is evident that spirituality impacts other domains of being human as well. Adults who benefit from practising their faith, may contribute progressively to the self, family and community; these types of adults are desperately needed in this fairly new South African democracy (see section 2.3).

In conclusion, if a child is neglected in terms of his/her spiritual development, he/she is being neglected in a holistic manner. The theoretical insights into the child’s spiritual development confirm that spirituality has an essential role to play in child development and within the FP classroom (see sections 2.1 and 2.3). In fact, if CAPS (see section 2.2.1) is truly central to holistic development, spirituality should be an everyday part of the South African FP classroom.

5.3.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What are the perceptions of teachers with regard to Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?

Pertaining to teachers’ perceptions of RE, most teachers viewed the subject as integral. RE had the potential to educate both teacher and learner in understanding other religions besides their own stance on life (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.5.1). Participants recognised the potential of this subject as a tool that facilitated morality and tolerance in learners (see section 4.5.1). Consequently, teachers perceived RE as important to learner morality.

5.3.3 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How do teachers implement the policy of Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?

To return to the policy on Religion and Education, some researchers have found this policy to contradict itself as it asserts that RE will not endorse any religion in particular, but implicitly endorses religion as “phenomenon”, or as an imperative component of

being human, and in schools (see section 1.5.3). It therefore makes sense that numerous participants found the implementation of the RE policy challenging. Many teachers communicated their lack of knowledge and a need for more instruction on how to implement the changed policy (see sections 4.4.1, 4.4.4 and 4.5.2). Referring to the instruction of RE, this policy requires teachers to use RE as a tool that transmits knowledge and values pertaining to all religions, so that individuals realise they are part of the same community and so learn to create their own identity in harmony with identities different from their own (see section 1.4.3). This is no mean task and teachers were communicating this as much, when they expressed their inexperience with the implementation of RE. In addition, difficult parents were another problem that surfaced during the group discussions (see sections 4.4.4 and 4.5.2). A lack of teaching time resulted in Life Skills and RE not being implemented at all (see sections 4.4.2 and 4.5.2).

Roux (see section 1.5.3) mentions that there is still a reluctance to implement the policy on RE even though it has been approved (see section 1.5.4). This is true for the participants taking part in my research; the above findings are evidence as to why they are reluctant or not at all implementing this policy.

In addition to the above implementation challenges, the RE policy is not implemented as stipulated because teachers (with ages ranging from the mid-twenties to late fifties), continued to implement faith-based exercises which went against the new RE policy (see section 1.5.4) in which the subject's task should be academic and not devotional (see section 1.1). Teachers had various reasons for implementing those exercises (see section 4.5.3) and one of those was to maintain learner behaviour.

Ultimately, it is evident that teachers were improvising as they experienced an inattention to learner spirituality in the school curriculum. In this regard, teachers were observing the effect of another assertion in this same policy that provided for the implementation of learner knowledge about religion, but disregarded the need for the development of learner spirituality.

5.3.4 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What guidelines can be formulated for teaching Religion Education in Foundation Phase?

It is important that teachers be mindful of the worth of RE and that facilitating morality and tolerance in learners (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.5.1), should be prioritised just as mathematics and languages are prioritised, in some cases. A country full of learners being taught mathematics and languages (see section 4.4.2), but lacking the ability to tolerate and accept one another, can expect bleak future prospects. The proper implementation of RE is vital for FP learners and their growth in tolerance and acceptance of their peers and later on, their fellow countrymen.

Numerous participants found the implementation of RE challenging. Teachers needed to communicate their lack of knowledge concerning RE to their Head of Department so that more instruction and support could be provided for the implementation of this subject. Teachers needed skills (acquired by proper training) and support to deal with parents' remarks regarding their disapproval of RE (see section 4.5.2). The lack of teaching time that caused the neglect of Life Skills and RE ought to be addressed, as that was yet another factor pointing to the lack of focus within the subject (see section 4.5.2). Finally, the CAPS statement expressing holistic development being central to Life Skills (see section 2.2.1) should be applied with greater depth; if it is not, learners end will end up suffering an incomplete development.

5.3.5 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: How do teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in the Foundation Phase?

According to the NCS, Life Skills in Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) comprises the following four study areas: "Beginning Knowledge; Personal and Social Well-being; Creative Arts; and Physical Education" (see section 1.2). The subject of RE within FP falls under Personal and Social Well-Being, of which 20 of the 60 hours per term is allocated to Personal and Social Well-being. Within this, 2 hours of the 20 hours is allocated to RE (see section 1.3). The aforementioned information is displayed in Figure 5.1.

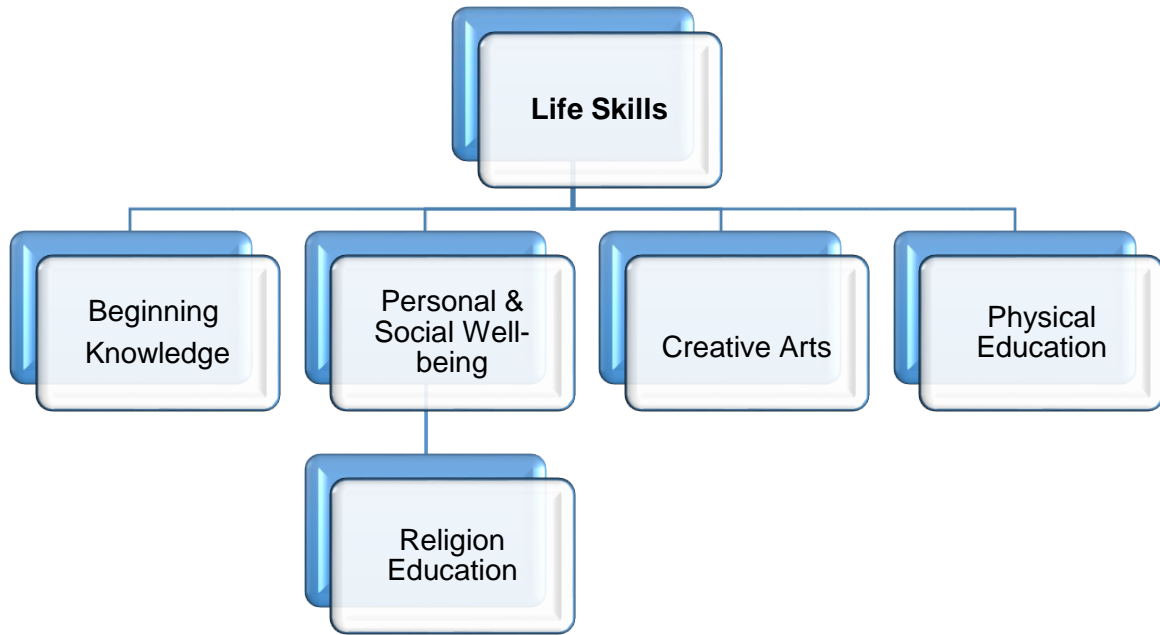


Figure 5.1: Represents the place of the subject of RE within the Life Skills learning area in FP (information obtained from the National Curriculum Statement, 2011).

Therefore, RE is part of Personal & Social Well-being, which falls within the learning area of Life Skills. In the Foundation Phase, RE falls under the learning area of Life Skills (see section 1.3).

Thus, the focus on the first leg of the primary research question is that participants perceived RE as a subject with the potential to cultivate morality and acceptance amongst learners (see section 4.5.1). In addition, the policy on Religion and Education determines RE to be purely academic and not devotional (see section 1.1), which leaves little space for the child's spiritual development in this area of Life Skills.

The second leg of the primary research question is answered with various challenges in teacher experience. Concerning the implementation of RE, a lack of knowledge of other religions (see section 4.5.2) were one of the main themes in this research. Teachers had a need for more instruction on this subject (see section 4.5.2), and the participants communicated a lack of time to teach Religion Education (see section 4.5.2). Parents' disapproval of RE (4.5.2) was another problem teachers faced when

implementing RE. The above findings are evidence why this subject is not properly implemented, thus causing a ripple-effect for learner development.

The following recommendations could guide parents, teachers and educational institutions in the support of teachers regarding the implementation of RE. Hopefully, it may provide more solutions to the neglect of the child's spiritual development within the FP classroom.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the findings of my research, the following recommendations are made for Departments of Education, its policy makers, teachers, and researchers who wish to research this topic further.

5.4.1 Recommendation 1: Provision for training of teachers in Religion Education

More support, knowledge and training, and learning material for teachers need to be provided by the Department of Education, to train teachers in the implementation of RE. I recommend that the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development (TED) in South Africa, creates training opportunities for FP teachers in Religion Education. Currently, training is provided for what they label "priority subject areas" that is Literacy and Numeracy. I recommend that TED accommodate the training of teachers within Life Skills, with specific training in the appropriate implementation of RE. Consequently, RE will be implemented properly and will in practice (not only in theory) reach its aim of cultivating morality and tolerance.

5.4.2 Recommendation 2: Clear guidelines on the subject of RE should be provided

Many teachers are still unsure of how to approach the subject of RE. I recommend that there be clear and practical guidelines provided for teachers teaching RE lessons in FP. These practical guidelines, focusing on RE lessons will boost teachers' confidence during the implementation of RE and will finally address the neglect and or uncertainty that relate to the application of this subject.

5.4.3 Recommendation 3: Child spirituality should be addressed at school level

I recommend that the neglect of child spirituality at school level should be addressed by creating a policy to accommodate learner spirituality. I recommend that CAPS fulfil the responsibility to provide holistically for learner development and act on the current negligence of learners' spirituality as part of Life Skills. There is a special place for the development of child spirituality and it is yet to be addressed in our school system. I recommend that policy makers take researchers, such as Fowler, Montessori, Elkind, Steiner, Bone and Forbes's knowledge (see section 2.3) into account when creating a subject that accommodates child spirituality at schools. This type of subject has the potential to cultivate a greater number of well-adjusted, contributing and caring members of society.

5.4.4 Recommendation 4: Increasing the time spent on Religion Education and Spiritual Development

In order for the child to be developed holistically, more time should be allocated by policy makers to teach the subject of RE, as well as the suggested subject on spiritual development. It is recommended that at least one hour per week is spent on RE and 30 minutes per day on the spiritual development of young FP learners. The adjustment of allocated time to these subjects will encourage schools (that are not already trying to bridge this gap in their own way), to follow suit and apply the adjustment in time allocation with more seriousness. By doing so, an appropriate amount of time will be spent on developing morality and spirituality in learners and, in turn, cater for the current gaps in the holistic development of the child.

5.4.5 Recommendation 5: Taking responsibility for subject knowledge

Teachers who experience a lack of knowledge in certain learning areas have a professional responsibility to learn more about subjects of which they know little. Even though it is firstly the responsibility of the Department of Education to train teachers properly, teachers are encouraged to do self-study and to cease neglecting subjects because of their paucity of knowledge. In this case, RE is valuable to a child's moral growth and their self-study will bear fruit in furthering the moral growth of their learners.

The following recommendations are made for further research:

5.4.6 Recommendation 6: A need for a quantitative survey on this research topic

Focus groups proved to be of value when gathering data on this topic. A quantitative study may provide a wider variety of perspectives. I therefore recommend that a quantitative study on this topic would include quantitative surveys to obtain a wider perspective.

5.4.7 Recommendation 7: Further research should focus on a subject that better accommodates the child's faith and spirituality within Life Skills

Whereas this particular study focused on teachers' perceptions and implementation of RE in FP, I recommend that further research focus on the development of a subject within Life Skills that better accommodates the child's faith and spiritual development. Our country's Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy defines South Africa as a "deeply religious society" with religions providing "highly effective moral codes upon which value systems are based" (see section 1.5.3). In addition, it mentions that there is no strict separation between church and state (see section 1.2). Therefore, I recommend that research into the field of the child's faith and spiritual development may be able to provide ways forward to better accommodate a child's faith and spiritual development within our school curriculum.

5.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this research study was to look at how teachers perceive and implement RE in FP. The empirical research provided evidence of factors that influenced teachers' perceptions, as well as the challenges that affected the implementation of RE. Further examination of previous research and theory shed light on the aspects of the child's spiritual and faith development and how this factor came into play in the FP classroom.

Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of both the perspectives from the literature, as well as those of my empirical research findings. Conclusions after research were

formulated, resulting in recommendations made for the Departments of Education, their policy makers, teachers, and researchers who wish to further research this topic.

This empirical study allowed me to gain insight into the reasons behind teachers' perceptions of RE and the challenges why they did, to an extent, or did not at all, implement RE in FP. My hope is that my recommendations concerning RE will add to better understanding and implementation of this subject, which should play an integral part in our country's new democracy.

Pertaining to the theoretical insights of the child's spirituality as part of his/her holistic development, it was a revelation to me to realise the benefits of spirituality and the negative effect that its absence caused in learners. I am effectively persuaded by the theory and empirical research that there should be a place for spiritual and faith development in the FP classroom. Learning that psychologists, such as Hettler (1967) and Winiarski (1997) (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) came to these conclusions on spirituality as part of holism decades ago, was illuminating. It is however, disheartening that accommodating the development of learner faith and spirituality within a multi-dimensional approach, has not yet been put into practice in our schools.

Ultimately, I trust that this research study will encourage other researchers and policy makers to fill the gap that currently exists in spiritual development within the FP classroom. As a final point, I am hopeful that our new education system will allow for the child's spirituality and faith to be developed, and will create a learning area that accommodates this part of our young ones' holistic development, without letting the fear of our past dispensation's injustices, prevent us from furthering our learners' development in this pursuit.

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APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department Early Childhood
Education
1 April 2015

The Principal

Dear | _____

Requesting consent to do a research project with the grade 1-3 Foundation Phase teachers.

I am a master's student in Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is to do research and my topic of interest is Religion Education as part of Life Skills. As you know, Religion Education is one of the aspects of the Life Skills curriculum, but from my own experience as a former Foundation Phase teacher, I realized that teachers try to avoid Religion Education due to various reasons. As I believe that the spiritual sphere of the child is just as important as the physical, emotional and intellectual spheres, I decided to determine what teachers do to address the spiritual domain of the child.

This is where you and your school can contribute to research in this field. I want to request permission from you as the principal, to grant me an opportunity to come and talk to your Foundation Phase teachers (Gr.1-3) as a group. There will be no right or wrong answers, and their names, nor that of your school will be revealed in any way.

Questions that will be posed to this group of Foundation Phase teachers during the discussion, will be the following:

- How do (you as) teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in Foundation Phase?
- What are your perceptions with regard to Religion Education?
- How do (you as) teachers implement the policy of Religion Education in Foundation Phase?

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions and implementation of Religion Education in Foundation Phase. My study ultimately seeks to provide research based aims and guidelines for teachers teaching Religion Education in Foundation Phase. Although the request of taking part in this focus group interview will be posed to all the Gr.1-3 teachers, participation will be voluntary; teachers may choose whether they would like to partake or not. If they do choose to partake, they will have to sign a letter in which they give informed consent, acknowledging the research topic and expected participation.

Attached please find the letter of informed consent that teachers will need to sign. I want to emphasize that teachers will stay anonymous, and that the name of your school will not be disclosed in my study. I have also obtained permission from Department of Education Free State Province to conduct the study in schools in the Bloemfontein district.

Finally, this empirical work will contribute to my master's thesis as well as an academic article on what should constitute Religion Education within a 'Life Skills' programme. Participating Foundation Phase teachers and principals will have access to the outcome of this study when it is completed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. M.G. Steyn

Supervisor

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby give permission to let Christelene Loots (van Aardt) do her research with Foundation Phase teachers (Gr.1-3) _____ that will form part of research on Religion Education within the Life Skills programme.

The Principal

□

APPENDIX B



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department Early Childhood
Education
September 2015

Dear Foundation Phase teacher _____

Requesting participation in a research project .

I am a master's student in Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. One of the requirements is to do research and my topic of interest is Religion Education as part of Life Skills. As you know, Religion Education is one of the aspects of the Life Skills curriculum, but from my own experience as a former Foundation Phase teacher, I realized that teachers try to avoid Religion Education due to various reasons. As I believe that the spiritual sphere of the child is just as important as the physical, emotional and intellectual parts, I decided to determine what teachers do to address the spiritual domain of the child. This is where you come in. I want to request whether you, together with the other Foundation Phase teachers at your school, will grant me an opportunity to come and talk to you as a group. There will be no right or wrong answers, and your name or that of your school will not be revealed at all. Your principal has been informed of this study and has given his consent. These letters of informed consent must also be signed by you as teachers, before having part in this research study.

Questions that will be posed to you as a group during the discussion, will be the following:

- How do (you as) teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in Foundation Phase?
- What are your perceptions with regard to Religion Education?
- How do (you as) teachers implement the policy of Religion Education in Foundation Phase?

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions and implementation of Religion Education in Foundation Phase. My study ultimately seeks to provide research based aims and guidelines for teachers teaching Religion Education in Foundation Phase. I am following a qualitative research approach so that you, as Foundation Phase teachers may contribute to this topic in the form of a focus group interview. Although the request of taking part in this focus group interview will be posed to all the Gr.1-3 teachers, you as teacher may choose whether you would like to partake or not. If you do choose to partake, signing this letter of informed consent will mean that you acknowledge the research topic and are willing to contribute to this it. We hope that this study will ultimately provide research based aims and guidelines for teachers teaching Religion Education in Foundation Phase.



Finally, this assignment will contribute to my master's thesis as well as an academic article on what should constitute Religion Education within a 'Life Skills' programme. Participating Foundation Phase teachers will have access to the outcome of this study when it is completed.

Yours sincerely
Christelene Loots-van Aardt
krisinkaneel@gmail.com

Dr M.G. Steyn

Supervisor mg.steyn@up.ac.za

Permission for research

I, _____, am willing/not willing

to take part in this focus group interview that will form part of research on Religion Education within the Life Skills programme.

Teacher

Grade ____

APPENDIX C

Interview schedule

The purpose of this interview is to find out how teachers perceive and implement Religion Education in Foundation Phase. In addition, it sought to examine whether the child's spirituality is being developed in school.

The following questions was directed to Foundation Phase teachers taking part in Focus group interviews.

1. How do you (as teachers) perceive or feel about Religion Education?
2. How do you implement the programme and policy of Religion Education in class?
3. Do you think the learners' spirituality is being developed in school?

In addition, various unplanned, probing questions were asked to attain a clearer idea of participant-answers.

APPENDIX D



Ethics Committee

1 September 2015

Dear Ms. Loots,

REFERENCE: EC 15/07/02

Your application was considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the final decision of the Ethics Committee is:

Your application is approved.

This letter serves as notification that you may continue with your fieldwork. Should any changes to the study occur after approval was given, it is your responsibility to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.

Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate**. Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:

1. Integrated Declarations form that you adhered to conditions stipulated in this letter – Form D08

Please Note:

- *Any amendments to this approved protocol need to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.*
- *Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.*
- *Should your research be conducted in schools, please note that you have to submit proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research.*
- *Please note that you need to keep to the protocol you were granted approval on – should your research project be amended, you will need to submit the amendments for review.*
- *The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.*
- *On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number: EC 15/07/02 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.*

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Liesel Ebersöhn', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

APPENDIX E

DATA: TRANSCRIBED AND ARRANGED ACCORDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Focus Group 3: TOWNSHIP SCHOOL

17 September 2015

Location: Batho Township (outside Bloemfontein)

Amount of teachers participating: 11

Amount of learners: over 300 in FP learners in 2015

Before the interview: *I share with the participants their rights and explain the concept of informed consent to them. I make them aware of the Dictaphone recording the interview. I also thank them for taking part in my study and explain the value of research. They sign the permission slips and I inform them about the study's topic. I request that teacher stick a label with their names onto their clothing as to make the conversation more comfortable and to make data transcription more detailed.*

Me: I provide context to the participants on Life Skills and Religion Education and where its place falls within the learning area of Life Skills; I also make them aware of the time allocated to R.E. within Life Skills.

*Me: So my first question that I want to ask you is just (to get) a little bit of background about your school. Oh, I will have to speak like this (bringing the Dictaphone closer to my mouth) because it's noisy here: **Okay, so how many children is there more or less in Foundation Phase.***

Teacher Pu) About 300

Me: About three hundred in Foundation Phase (repeating answer whilst writing field notes). Okay three-hundred children in FP.

*Me: **And how many grades of each class do you have? Grade 1 how many classes?***

Teacher Fe) For Gr. R it's two, 1 is two, 2 is two and 3 is two.

*Me: **And this location is obviously called Batho, near Bloemfontein.***

Teacher Kg) Mmm

Are you also Foundation Phase teachers? (*More teachers entering the staff room as I am about to start with the next question*)

Group of teachers that just came in: Yes ma'am

Me: Okay welcome and thank you for being here. I just need to give you letters to sign, before we go on. You can just sign the consent slip, read what the study is about. *I request that they too write their names on name stickers. I remind the teachers that come in that their identity is protected as is the school. I remind them that this is a safe environment.*

Me: So want to ask you is: **How do you feel about Religion Education in Foundation Phase?**

Me: Providing participants with context: *It's not the old Bible education that we had before 1994 that was pressed upon everyone. It is the new Religion Education. How do you feel about this subject?*

Me: Kg, do you want to say anything?

Teacher Kg) Yes, I think it's very important for children to have a background of religions or religion, because it builds up their morals, it builds up their humanity. It's very important to start from the foundation phase learners.

Me: Thank you, that is a valuable answer. Is there anybody else who wants to add to what Kg said? What do you think?

Teacher Ne) I think it is very crucial for us to cater for children in religion, basically it also helps them to know and possess their position in Christ, regardless of what their religion is, but they must know that there is only one God that we serve. And so when we teach them that, they grow-up knowing who they are, then they won't, be, maybe get involved in certain gang groups, that they were not bound to go in

Me: So you feel that teaching them their position and religion in Christ is protecting them from ..

Teacher Ne) ... (*interjects*) because it helps them against all spirits that are in this Earth that we live upon now.

Me probing: **So, do you do that in your class?**

Teacher Ne) I do that yes, that's why I am saying that.

Me: Okay.

Me: Is there anyone else? Who wants to add to what Mme Ne said?

Teacher Ts puts up her hand.

Me: Yes, Mme Ts. *I tell her that I'll come closer as to better record her answer.*

Teacher Ts) I am not sure about the answer that I want to contribute with because I was busy filling out your register. So would you please ask again? *(This teacher entered the discussion after the interview had already commenced).*

Me: Okay, **how do you feel about Religion Education in Foundation Phase?**

Me: Clarifying the question: **Do you think it's important or maybe you think it's not important? How do you feel about it?**

Teacher Ts) Uhm, implementing the subject is very crucial, I want to agree with my colleagues here. Especially, because it's part of every...even the examples that Jesus Christ displayed amongst his disciples; it's part of our lives now and every answer in our challenges in life, it will be found in the Bible. So, if maybe we don't have any type of or any teachings in religious education we are not gonna have a society which will be having values that are instilled. And also, the discipline also. That every, whatever act that you are doing, it has consequences. So everything that the learner are doing, they must be sure that whatever act they are gonna do, they must know that there are consequences. They might be positive or negative, but they must know in life, there must be values that they grow up with. So, I want to concur with my colleague saying it's very imperative that we are having this part of our curriculum; we must have religious as part of.... so that it will help us. In fact even to be easily disciplined and instil some various values in them; responsibility, patience, sharing, you name them, but we are going to have a society that will be very, very much responsible in taking care of each other. Because the religious education has that effect after every teaching.

Me: PROBING for clarification: **Okay, and do you have children in this school that are not Christian children?**

Teacher Ts) We are not saying no, but maybe 99% of our learners here, we might find that they are Christian, but we can't say 100%.

Me: **Is there anybody else who wants to add to that?** *(More teacher come in to join the focus group interview)*

Me: Okay, I'll just give you *(papers)* who else came in now? Two new teachers, let me just give you these. *(I am referring to the forms of informed consent with the permission slips). I briefly explain the forms to them, indicate with my finger that the study's topic*

is on the form and what they should read. I make them aware of signing the permission slip if they want to contribute to the discussion.

Me: Okay, so most of you agree that you value this subject of religion education in FP.

Teachers: *Nodding*

Me: My next question is: **How do you implement religion education in your class? What do you implement this subject in your class?**

Me: Clarifying question by giving an example: Do you maybe speak to your learners about it every day, or maybe some of you don't do it every day? I just want to know how each of you implement RE in your class.

Me: Si, do you maybe want to say something?

Teacher Si) We use to do dramatization like for instance the birth of the Christ. They must know what is the meaning of Christmas. It was the birth of our king Jesus Christs.

Me: Okay, so dramatization is one of the things that you do. *Somebody else maybe have anything else to say?*

Teacher Me) What we usually, everyday do in class is: we let the child sing hymns, well-known hymns, and then thereafter we can tell them a story from the Bible; these children stories -stories about parables, stories Jesus taught to his disciples or the people about. And then what I again do, you can read a verse from the Bible and then we explain or ask them questions to answer.

Me: Thank you, Me. *I point my Dictaphone to teacher Phe, to see if she is willing to answer a question.*

Teacher Ph) I read to them, we do have the kiddies Bibles here at school, so it is very easy for them because it is interpreted for them. So I do read for them every morning, that kiddies Bible.

Me: The children's Bible, thank you Phe.

Me: Anybody else? How do you implement RE? *(Teacher Ts indicates that she wants to contribute to this questions)*

Teacher Ts) At times you'll find that find that you've got a topic, a topic maybe that you can relate, like maybe during the daily news. If anyone reported that his mother is sick or the grandfather, whoever, so immediately you take it up and you make them aware that ... let's believe that it is only God (even if mama has gone to the hospital) but because now we know that the hand of our mighty God is there to protect and heal the mother, so tomorrow if the mother gets right or get healed, the report will come and then, the feedback we'll share amongst the others saying: even if the mother went

to the hospital, but at least they believe. Because now, we are trying to develop something that the kids doesn't understand. They will only know that because she went to the hospital the doctor made my mother well. So, they must know that even if, within that situation, God was there, was protecting us, giving that doctor the wisdom to get the mother healed. And also maybe at times you'll find the situation where the mother, they are unemployed, and when they fine with the work condition, finding their jobs, you'll relate that also. Make them aware, as much as they are so small they don't understand the Being of God. That we are here because of God, the grace, whatever, so they will need to know. But every time they will say "ma ...we have food at our house, it's the mother who cooks the food" but make them that there is a provider, it's God the Almighty. Now you are building their faith and belief.

Me: Yes, thank you, Ts. *So you also use daily news and bring that in, to implement it?*

Teacher Ts) Ja

Me: Uhm...who have I not asked? Ni, do you want to say something of how you implement Religion Education in your class?

Teacher Ni) Like maybe, Ne and I share the same class, so we do contribute 'cause we share the same class.

Me: Oh okay, Ne didn't say now, but she did say something before about implementation.

Teacher Ni) Eh, that is how I'm saying, because we are sharing the class. I might be doing the repetition of what she had said,

Me: Oh okay, thank you. And who hasn't answered yet? Ler, do you want to share how you implement..?

Teacher Le) No (*shaking her head too*)

Me: You don't want to, that's okay, you don't have to. And Sii do you want to?

Teacher Sii) Yes. We usually do it the morning so that we can teach other children, that. They don't know anything about God, because (some of them) they, at home, they didn't...their parents do not attend the churches so at school we help them to know God and how to pray.

Me: Thank you.

Teacher Sii) Yes.

Teacher Kg) I think, we need to understand that kids are kids and will remain kids and the Bible is the Bible, it will just be like that. It's been there for years and it has never changed, so we need to teach our children right from the Bible. If you want the Bible

to be easier for them, start with the psalms. And what the psalms says...you as a teacher, you put it in action. For example, Me Ts said someone will come and says my mother is sick and all those things, then you refer them to the psalm that they have read. You see psalm 23 or psalm 49 or psalm 51, it says this and this and this. Do you still remember? And then they say “yes”. And then this is what is happening, and when it is happening God is going to take action.

Me: Thank you Me Kg.

Me: *I pose a follow-up question to clarify whether participants understand the difference between the previous dispensation’s religious education and R.E.*

I want to ask you something interesting. I read a policy that said that we are not allowed to teach Bible anymore in school with (*during*) the new Religion Education. I want to ask you why you still believe it is important to carry on teaching Bible, even though you know that the country (policy) tells us that we can’t do it anymore.

Remember you (your identities) are protected; you are free to tell me why you have decided “I am not going to adhere to this policy” and that I will still teach the Bible in my class. Who wants to answer this question?

Teacher Ni) I think, as maybe, as people we have been brought up like that. We have been raised well with our parents, attending Sunday schools, all those things. But in our classes (since ourselves, when I do an introspect) I can’t just let the kids not letting them know about someone, God who is there. So, through, what has been to me as a lie to me, I cannot just deem it right because somebody above says is saying I must not teach it. Because I think without God we are but nothing. So if I cannot impact that to young kids (*she sighs....and stops*).

Me: Thank you. Is there anyone else who wants to add to that?

Teacher Mas) From my past experience, like meme has just said, when I compare learners from the past to learners of today there is a vast difference. The learners of today are so unruly. I always think it’s because of, they are not taught about God. They don’t care. They know nothing about ..Even if you ask them about Christmas, they don’t know the meaning of Christmas. Even if you ask them about Easter, they don’t know. They don’t know simple things that teaches them values, because God is not included in their lives and I think it’s a big mistake to exclude God in whatever you do. These learners are young, there is a scripture that says: Can I, I’m going to say it in my mother tongue...(*she recites it in her mother tongue and then repeats it in English*). “The beginning of wisdom is to fear God.” So, maybe it’s because of.. these

learners are no longer taught about God. That's why they are so unruly, they use drugs, they don't care. They are not afraid of nothing, because they think anything is possible through them.

Me: So that's why you are choosing to teach them Bible even though you know the policy is saying that you are not allowed to?

Teacher Mas) Mmm (*she nods*)

Me: Okay, thank you.

Two teachers put up their hands wanting to contribute as well.

Me: I'm going to go to Ts and then come to you Mme Ni.

Teacher Ts) It's true Mme, it's just unfortunate that we were not part of the policy-making. But we were, we felt very, very much furious when coming to this, because as much as me Ni has just indicated: the issue of.. fortunately our parents had parental skills. So unfortunately for these ones don't have parental skills. So maybe the parents at home don't have the impact or the effect of knowing that the religious education was good. It moulded us, we are what we are because of that. Because now, our former teachers wanted us to live according to memory verses; when you do something then you'll be referred to the memory verse and they were chosen to mould us.

Me: Asking a question to clarify: [What is memory verses?](#)

Teacher Ts) Memory verses: you can take any piece or text from the Bible, then we memorise that; it was sort of a recite. So that every time in the morning (about 5 to 10 minutes) we were reciting that. So we did have those verses in our head from as young as we were. So, I want to maintain that it's unfortunate that our government's policy makers didn't even consult with us. Because now, for them, they were saying that the constitution is saying that everyone has a right. So they were considering the fact that maybe we will be more Christian than Rastafarians; so because now we are various in our beliefs, so they wanted to take that into account. And they wanted to do away with that segregation of those beliefs, so maybe that's the effects of everything. Otherwise, we could have had a better community now if we continued with that. I want say, thumbs up, if there will be that small chance, that the policy makers review the decisions that they have taken; now I want to believe that even themselves, they've realised what they have done. Everything is out of control, they can't even handle what is now going on.

Me: Probing for clarification: And you believe this is happening because there is not Bible in school anymore?

Teacher Ts) Exactly, exactly, we agree on that a 101%.

Me: Mme Ni, you wanted to say one more thing.

Teacher Ni) Eh, just a few thoughts. Even if in our classes, it doesn't mean that there is a special or a specific period that we are now doing religious education, because as we see nowadays like Mas has just said: "kids of today are out of control". So, even when you are teaching certain subjects, and now you find that things, that these kids are now out of control, then you bring a verse from the Bible. You say, you just tell them. Then (since I'm teaching the Gr. R learners) then you'll count them feeling so remorse, or understanding what you are trying to say to them. So I was just saying, it doesn't specifically there is a period meant for religious education, you may find that (as I say when you are teaching something) you may find yourself spending another 10 or 15 minutes telling them about God, to just bring their attention to what you must implement with them as a subject.

Me: Thank you. Mme EI, do you want to say something about Religion Education?

Teacher EI) In the classrooms or at school?

Me: In the classroom.

Teacher EI) We are no more having that religious subjects here at schools, because the government has just abolished it. And, as the colleagues has just said, our children are really out of hands because there is nothing that is guided or that is good for them. Today we have Satanism at schools, children are smoking daggas at schools, and children are not to be punished. So, there's nothing that you can do with these children. They are really out of hands, because since religious education has been cancelled at schools.

Me: Okay. Your colleagues are saying that even though you are not allowed to do that anymore, they are taking matters into their own hands and still teaching the Bible in the class sometimes. Or telling them memory verses or even if they are doing...

Teacher EI) (*she interjects*) I am doing that. There are some memory verses that I taught them.

Me) Probing: And do you feel that has an impact on the learners?

Teacher EI) Mmm (*she nods*), very much.

Me) Probing: What kind of an impact?

Teacher EI) Some of them, they are withdrawing, some of them they are still continuing with that behaviour. But by the time you speak to them you simply see in their eyes that there is something that's changed them.

Me: Okay, we are almost on our last question, thank you everybody. *(I go through the interview schedule to check if I have touched on everything).*

Me: This is my last question I have for you. I am very thankful for your contributions: *Before asking the final question, I provide context on the learning area and aims of Life Skills.*

Me: Now, **do you think the child's spirituality is being developed in school?**

Teachers: No's coming from all the teachers *(teachers shaking their heads).*

Me: *So is that a unanimous no, everyone says no? And why not?*

Teacher Mel) I think there is nothing to add on the spirit of the child, he is empty spiritually. So if we can teach religious education, then the children will be filled inside.

Me: Thank you, Mel.

Teacher Mel) I was just saying, like myself and the older teachers as we were being trained it says that when you teach a child you teach the child in totality. How could you exclude other part; are you doing your job well when you do it like that? Because it is a completed totality, you don't just focus on this. No.

Me: Thank you, Mel.

Teacher Ph) I think it helps when it comes to behavioural problems, so I still think we need to teach the spiritual, the Christian and what not.

Me: *(It was noisy as Ph answered so I repeat her answer to the group).* She says she thinks it even helps when it comes to the behaviour of the children.

Teacher Ph) Mmm, the discipline.

Teacher EI) The environment where we are and the environment at home, the parents do not care about churches. So the child comes from home to school being empty. So, if you speak about the Bible, they just don't care, when you speak about something that is not good for him or for her. Because at home their life is so, it's horrible.

Me: Thank you, Mme EI. Thank you.

Teacher Ts) Thank you Mme, I want to conquer with mme Mel there. The inner self of whoever, there's with the relationship with the inner part of the body and the outside. So, it's true that maybe if we are focussing on the other aspects, but denying the other aspects to be developed, still there's no totality in the individual. So we really need to focus on all the aspects that makes a person a whole. Because now with the spiritual development, the learner needs to have that silent moment where the learner need to think who is he, who is she, *what am I?* What is it that I need? Just to have that silent moment where you have a time to speak to his/her inner self. Especially when coming to the decision making, still needs someone inside to say: *Is it something that I'm doing right or wrong?* So, those decision making skills also is going to be affected seriously, when coming to the well-being of the individual. Thank you.

Me: Thank you Mme Ts. Nobody else? Mme Ne, did you want to say something?

Teacher Ne) (*shakes her head*)

Me: Not, okay. I really appreciate that you spoke to me today, I am very thankful for your contribution; you made a valuable contribution, and if you want, I will bring you the findings of this study.

Teacher Kg) We will appreciate that.

Me: *I then make a request to see teachers' lesson plans of R.E. and I remind them again that their identity and the school's identity is being protected, so they are free to share their lessons plans with me.*

A few teacher say that they don't have that, "our lessons plans don't show that."

Me: Okay, and I will also provide it like that, but if you are just willing to show me anyway, so I can just take a photo to show that there is nothing there, then that is good evidence as well.

Teacher: But I think in Gr.3 in our textbook we have a little bit of different religions. But, that doesn't mean it's enough. Even if you prep for that lesson. It is towards the end of the term and in most cases, at the end of the term, when you have prepared for that chapter on different religions, it's when we are preparing for tests and all those things.

Me: Yes

Teacher Kg: It's an obvious case that Religion is not given a chance, or enough time to be talked about, to be discussed about. Children must know where they belong and who is who and all those things. So they need to change the policy otherwise we are

not going to have peace in ourselves and peace in this children, because these children are now more involved in negative, immoral issues. Lifestyles is not acceptable, but I believe they'll change.

Me: Thank you, Mme Kg. Is there someone else..?

Teacher Mas: I just wanted to add the part of religion in life skills, they don't go deeper, they only tell the learners the name of the religions, like maybe what do the Moslems do, but you don't teach them the morality.

Me: Yes, the deeper side or spiritual practice of religion.

Teacher Mas: Exactly. The learner will only know the Moslems wear this and the do the Christians uses the cross...

Me: Yes, the symbols, that is very true. Thank you, Mme Mas. Thank you everybody for your time, and I am going to end this focus group now. Thank you for your valuable contribution.

(Miles & Huberman in Athanasou et al., 2013: 42).