

**DEVELOPING AND EXPLORING A CAREER EDUCATION  
PROGRAMME FOR DISADVANTAGED FET-PHASE LEARNERS IN  
THE NORTHERN AREAS OF GQEBERHA: A DEVELOPMENTAL-  
CONTEXTUAL APPROACH**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

in

**PSYCHOLOGY**

of

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

by

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Supervisor

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**FEBRUARY 2023**

## Abstract

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Career development theory and assessments in South Africa have often been unscientifically applied to traditionally disadvantaged individuals, with little consideration of the diverse contexts of indigenous groups in the country. Assessment measures were not suited to the needs of learners from resource-constrained environments, nor could learners from these communities access these due to the associated financial costs. Recent research developments (using more holistic approaches) suggest that career counselling in South Africa should move towards better contextualized approaches to understanding and informing career development. Follow-up research projects show the value of such approaches with youth.

Postmodern career development theories and models recognise that career counselling and development should focus on supporting individuals in constructing their careers from their own experiences within their environments, particularly for learners from disadvantaged communities whose career decisions and career development are inextricably influenced by their environments. The present study therefore employed the Developmental-Contextual Framework (DCF) to explore the perspectives of FET-phase Life Orientation (LO) educators on the LO curriculum (LO CAPS) for careers and career choices; as well as contextual factors influencing the career development of disadvantaged learners in public schools. The overall aim of the study was to co-construct and explore a customised career education programme, alongside LO educators, and determine whether FET-phase learners from disadvantaged public schools could benefit from such a programme. The DCF emphasises the dynamic relationship between an individual and the environment and the influences thereof on career development. The study draws from previous South African studies with disadvantaged learners and students that acknowledged the applicability of the DCF in the design of career programmes. This framework acknowledges the embeddedness of the individual in their proximal and distal environments and the role of these environments in the career decision-making of learners.

The study was conducted in disadvantaged secondary schools in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, with LO educators in the FET-phase and the LO subject advisor at District level. At the initial interview stage the sample consisted of 9 participants and reduced to 6 participants in the focus group stage. The study underlined the impact of various contextual factors on career decision-making and the inclusion of these in career education programmes, particularly when working with learners from disadvantaged environments. Furthermore, the study illustrated that the career education of FET-phase learners in public

high schools is lacking in many ways and that LO educators are not adequately trained to teach careers topics and therefore lack skills to support learners with their career development needs. The lack of, as well as poor and outdated career resources, impact negatively on the career education of learners in many public schools.

Underpinned by Action Research, over a series of seven focus group meetings, an applicable and relevant programme of career-related activities based on the DCF was planned and evaluated by educators. The cumulative data were thematically analysed and the study revealed that the customised programme could potentially address the career development needs of learners from disadvantaged public schools, if educators are adequately trained to apply it. Recommendations are made for further piloting and implementation.

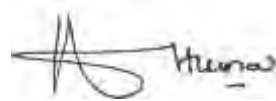
Key words: career education programme, career guidance, disadvantaged learner, developmental-contextual approach, Eastern Cape FET-phase education, Life Orientation (Careers and career choices)

## Declaration

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I, Antoinette Charlotte Lucy Human, declare that this research is a result of my own work, except where otherwise stated. I have given the full acknowledgement of the sources referred to in the text. This study has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

This thesis has been formatted according to the APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition referencing technique.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antoinette Human', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

2023

## Acknowledgements

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My Heavenly Father, for providing me with the opportunity to attempt this study and for seeing me through each step of my journey. All Glory to God.

My supervisor, Professor Jacqueline Akhurst, whom I hold in very high regard. I am deeply indebted to you for the many years of guidance, support and encouragement throughout this journey. Thank you for your expertise, wisdom, and comprehensive feedback.

My husband Bertram, for your loyal and endless support and encouragement over the years and for ensuring that the fire was burning early morning and evening during those cold Winter days.

My son Kearne, thank you for your regular early morning check-ups, encouragement and technical support.

My sisters, Angeline and Ellen, and my brother Thomas, thank you very much for the long-distance calls and words of encouragement.

The PPP Team, Cora van Vuuren, Anneliese Maritz and Susan Cahill. You guys were true lifelines on this journey. Thank you, Christine Lewis for being my Nieu Bethesda study-buddy.

Mark Maritz, many thanks for the technical support.

Dr Ntutu Foster, my 03:30 AM study companion. Thanks for checking in with, and on me at 03:30 AM. Your words "Get out of bed, PhD will not write itself" and "There is no cow (reward) for those that sleep" got me out of bed on many mornings.

Sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the participants in the study. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me, for supporting me and for making this study possible, despite the Covid-19 challenges that you faced. I am tremendously grateful to you.

Merryvale School for Specialised Education. Thank you for the use of the venue when I could not access venues during the Covid-19 period. Thank you to Aunty Sylvie Prinsloo for taking care of the Focus Group and always ensuring that the venue was disinfected, items were sanitised and refreshments were ready when participants arrived.

## Table of Contents

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	<i>Page</i>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation</b>	<b>1</b>
Personal and Academic Motivation	1
Purpose and Relevance of the Study	7
Location of the Research	7
Research Aims and Questions	8
Definitions of terms	9
Outline of Chapters	12
<b>Chapter 2: The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Life Orientation (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) in the FET Phase.</b>	<b>14</b>
Introduction	14
Historical Overview: From Career Guidance to LO (CAPS)	14
Transitioning of Curricula in S.A Public Schools post-1994	17
The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)	21
Life Orientation (LO)	22
LO Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (LO CAPS) Grade 10-12	24
Focus Area: Career and Career Choices (CCC)	27
Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) for LO (Gr 10-12)	27
The Role of the Life Orientation Educator	30
Qualities of a LO Educator	31
Conclusion	34

<b>Chapter 3 Literature Review: Career Development</b>	<b>36</b>
Introduction	36
Defining Career Development and Career Theory	36
Career Counselling in the South African Context	37
Review of relevant Traditional and Post-modern Career Development Theories / Approaches	38
Microsystems	49
Macrosystems	55
SA Research on the Developmental-Contextual Framework (Vondracek et al., 1986)	60
The Living Systems Theory of Vocational Behaviour and Development (LSVD): Vondracek, et al. (2014)	62
Conclusion	63
<b>Chapter 4: Conceptual framework, methodology and programme design</b>	<b>65</b>
Introduction	65
Acknowledging the Social Self	66
Research Aims and Questions	67
Qualitative Research	68
Research Design	74
The Research Process	75
Data Collection	80
Data analysis	85
Ensuring Trustworthiness	88
Reflexivity	90
Conclusion	90
<b>Chapter 5 Findings from initial interviews</b>	<b>91</b>
Introduction	91
Positioning Myself	91
Participants' engagement	92
Findings from the semi-structured interviews with LO educators	92
Conclusion	120
<b>Chapter 6: Focus Groups (SoaPs) and Evaluation</b>	<b>121</b>

Introduction	121
Focus Group Process	122
Summaries on a Page (SoaPs)	125
SOAP 1 – FG 1: Getting to know each other – “who are we?”	127
SOAP 2 – FG 2: The Family of Origin - “A trip down memory lane”	130
SOAP 3 – FG 3: The child extra-familial network	133
SOAP 4 – FG 4: The adult extra-familial network	137
SOAP 5 – FG 5: The family of procreation and distal contexts	140
SOAP 6 – FG 6: The Career Education Programme (CEP)	144
SOAP 7 – FG 7: Educator experiences of the DCF and Feedback on the CEP	147
Summary of experiences of the FGS	149
Conclusion	155
<b>Chapter 7: Discussion</b>	<b>156</b>
Introduction	156
Findings in response to the research questions	157
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion</b>	<b>177</b>
Introduction	177
Strengths and limitations of the Study	178
Further Research and Practical Implementation	181
Concluding Thoughts and Reflections	182
<b>References</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>208</b>
Appendix A Rhodes University Provisional Ethical Approval	208
Appendix B Department Of Education (Ec) Gatekeepers Approval	209
Appendix C Rhodes University Ethical Approval	211
Appendix D District Director DoE (NMBay District) – Notification For Research In School	212
Appendix E Principal Notification For Research In Schools	214
Appendix F Principal Consent	216
Appendix G Information Leaflet (Educators)	217
Appendix H Information Leaflet (Lo Subject Advisor)	220
Appendix I Informed Consent For A Psychological Research Study (Educators)	223

Appendix J Informed Consent For A Psychological Research Study (Subject Advisor)	224
Appendix K Semi-Structured Interview: Educators	225
Appendix L Semi-Structured Interview: Subject Advisor – Life Orientation (Lo)	225
Appendix M Evaluation Questionnaire	225
Appendix N Facilitation Guidelines	225
Appendix O Focus Group 2	225
Appendix P Focus Group 3	225
Appendix Q Focus Group 4	225
Appendix R Focus Group 5	225

## List of Figures

---

Figure 1	48
Figure 2	73

## List of Tables

---

	<i>Page</i>
Table 1 Summary of the Transitioning of Curricula in South Africa (1996 – 2012)	22
Table 2 Learning-Area instruction times	25
Table 3 Instructional times per LO focus area Grade 10 - 12 (DBE, 2011, p. 9)	26
Table 4 Grade 10 Annual Teaching Plan - CCC	28
Table 5 Grade 11 Annual Teaching plan - CCC	29
Table 6 Grade 12 Annual Teaching Plan - CCC	29
Table 7 Research Design	74
Table 8 Biographical and educational information of participants	93
Table 9 Themes, sub-themes, and description of themes	94
Table 10 Focus Group Dates and Topics	123
Table 11 Participant attendance register	125
Table 12 Evaluation of the Career Education Program (CEP)	151

## List of Abbreviations

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ANNSSF:	Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding
ATP:	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS:	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CCC:	Career and Career Choices
CPTD:	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
DCF:	Developmental-Contextual Framework
DoE:	Department of Education
EC DoE:	Eastern Cape Department of Education
FET:	Further Education and Training
GET:	General Education and Training
LO:	Life Orientation
NCS:	National Curriculum Statement
NEET:	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NSC:	National Senior Certificate
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPD:	Personal and Professional Development
SA:	South Africa
SASSA:	South African Social Services Agency
SOAP:	Summary on a Page
TVET:	Technical and Vocation Education and Training

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Orientation

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### Personal and Academic Motivation

I was drawn to the study based on my personal background and experiences. Coming from a Coloured Township in Tshwane, in Gauteng, which in many ways has a similar profile to the Northern Areas of Gqeberha (formerly known as the city of Port Elizabeth), I can identify with the environmental challenges of learners in public schools and the impact thereof on their career development. As a boarding school learner in a Roman Catholic convent school, in Ixopo, Kwa Zulu Natal, I only returned home to my parents every six months and was therefore very much dependent on the school and my peers for guidance in most spheres of my life.

I am the youngest child in a family of six children. My parents always referred to their educational levels in terms of Forms, which in my schooling days was referred to as Standards and today is known as Grades. They have however passed on therefore I cannot verify their exact schooling level but however suspect that their schooling may have been at the most at Form 1 or Grade 8 level. My father worked in a film laboratory and my mother was a housewife, who in later years became a day mother. Accessing quality education mattered much to them, hence enrolling five of their six children into boarding schools as they believed that it would provide us with better education opportunities. My brother was employed as a policeman, two of my sisters as nurses, and my other two siblings at the time of my undergraduate studies, were employed at a bank and an insurance company.

I am a first-generation graduate and the only one of my siblings who went to university; and could do so because my older siblings were all employed at the time when I completed my secondary education and hence, they paved the way for me to be able to venture into tertiary education. Although I had a DoE bursary, I was only able to consider tertiary education because my siblings made it possible for me. Their being employed resulted in minimising the financial pressure at home and consequently there was no need for me to enter the world of work immediately after completing my secondary education. They thus afforded me an opportunity to make a career choice and not be coerced by our circumstances into the world of work.

Compared to my friends who attended school within the community in Tshwane, I was sheltered from certain contextual factors from my community, since learners in my school and hostel were protected from the social ills that prevailed in our communities. We were also very well supported, particularly in the areas of personal development, life skills and education.

Although I did not have in-class career guidance discussions or one-on-one career discussions with my educators, learners were supported with current career materials that could be accessed in the library. Faculty year books and application forms from various tertiary institutions as well as career workbooks were sourced by educators and made available to learners. Whilst opportunities for career exploration and discovery were created by educators with the provision of career resources, educator support in the form of career discussions was lacking. Peers in the hostel provided an informal platform for frequent discussions, including topics about career prospects. I, as well as my peers, had limited career and self-knowledge and as such I was very uncertain about the career path that I wanted to follow upon exiting school, which resulted in me not being in tertiary education, not in employment and not in training (NEET) post grade 12. Although I obtained a bachelor's pass in Grade 12, which implies that I qualified to apply to a tertiary institution, poor knowledge about bursaries and student loans prevented me from accessing tertiary training immediately after grade 12.

Part time work, which I could not access as a boarding school learner, in a retail store close to the University of Pretoria exposed me to workplace skills and provided me with information about myself. I also gained a glimpse of student life from a distance, with students from the university visiting the store. This exposure is what triggered me to approach a student advisor at the University of Pretoria who provided me with career information that I could explore based on my matric results, as well as information about financial aid that I could access to further my studies. I am aware that without the support of that student advisor my career trajectory would have been completely different. Hence my motivation to make a difference in the career development of learners in disadvantaged communities who may have what it takes to assume tertiary studies, but due to limited career knowledge and support, are excluded from furthering their studies.

Furthermore, after completion of my studies, I was appointed to the Recruitment Services Department at the University of Pretoria. In this post I was required to support disadvantaged schools and learners, providing information pertaining to studying at the university, which included looking at subject choice, admission requirements, various courses across faculties as well as bursary and loan information. Office-based career consultations, career talks with learners at schools and career expo engagements once again highlighted the need for quality career education in structurally disadvantaged public schools. In addition, whilst in this position, I applied for the M.Ed. (Psychology) programme, specialising in career guidance. Supporting learners with their career development has thus been an interest of mine for many years.

My interest in the career education of high school learners in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha was triggered by requests from high school educators to support learners with career talks, whilst I was practicing as an Educational Psychologist within the community. In my career engagements with high school learners in affluent public schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay District I became aware of the noteworthy differences in the teaching and learning of the career and career choices topic in public schools. Due to barriers experienced with the Life Orientation (LO) subject, affluent public schools resort to using the services of private practitioners to augment the shortfalls in LO. Learners in affluent public schools have an economic advantage, which allows them access to external career resources for additional career counselling support. Similar opportunities are to a large extent inaccessible to learners whose career development is dependent on what is on offer in the LO curriculum, in previously disadvantaged public schools. With limited human and physical resources, marginalized learners are likely to remain challenged in the making of effective and sustainable career choices, unless career approaches in schools are contextualised and connect to the real-life experiences of learners.

My current position as an Educational Psychologist with the Eastern Cape Department of Education (EC DoE) lends itself well to supporting educators and learners with various aspects in the LO curriculum, but more so with career development, as it is a key performance requirement within the position. My previous experience with the General Motors Foundation, who invested in the training of educators, taught me that more learners can be reached by educators than by professionals who come to schools on the rare occasion. I therefore wanted to explore whether the training and development of LO educators on a contextually sensitive career education programme could be beneficial for the career development of historically disadvantaged learners.

Moreover, current career development theories and models are now recognizing that counsellors should focus on supporting individuals in constructing their careers, from their own experiences of work within their contexts and environments (Watts, 2009). Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018) and Phala (2019), all applied the Vondracek et al., (1986) Developmental-Contextual framework (DCF) for career development with different disadvantaged groups in South Africa. Within this framework, career development is perceived as a dynamic interrelated process that arises from the strong interplay between individuals and their contexts (Vondracek, et al., 1986) and it is therefore likely to recognise the environmental impacts and learners' challenges during career exploration. This framework appears to be suitable to this study based in previously disadvantaged schools, because of its emphasis on the interplay of environmental influences and the impact thereof on the career development and decision-making of learners.

## Background to the study

Career psychology in the South African context is best understood if one reflects on the socio-political landscape that influenced it during the apartheid regime, which was designed to oppress most of its citizens and limit their aspirations to low-paying work (Naidoo et al., 2017). The authors indicate that the quality and practice of career psychology in South Africa was profoundly affected by the social and economic legislation of apartheid. During apartheid career guidance within disadvantaged black schools was allocated low status, which resulted in under-developed or non-existent career counselling in disadvantaged communities, resulting in high levels of career uncertainty in learners. The inequalities imposed by apartheid, and the adverse effects thereof, are still experienced by rural and township learners in post-apartheid South Africa (Smit et al., 2015) and these have remained unchanged for the majority of its citizens (Maree, 2009).

Apartheid employment practices formed the basis of systemic trends in unemployment and have ensured their continuation in contemporary South Africa (Blustein et al., 2017), by not providing for the development of employees' skills. Apartheid employment practices and unemployment are thus tightly interlinked and have created and left unjust obstructions that "continue to impair the opportunities of many South Africans, especially those that have been historically marginalized" (Blustein et al., 2017, pp. 199-200). According to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS Q3, 2022) the number of unemployed people in South Africa has increased from 4.9 million in Quarter 3: 2012 to 7.7 million in Quarter 3, 2022, reflecting an increase from 67.3 % (2012) to 77.0% (2022) in the number of people unemployed for more than one year. The survey also noted that the Eastern Cape, where the study was conducted, has the highest not in employment, education, or training (NEET) rates for the age groups 15 – 24 (59.6 %) and 25 – 34 (40.5 %) for 2022. These figures reflect alarming increases in the unemployment rate, which impacts profoundly on the lives of people from disadvantaged communities. Learners in school may become discouraged when they notice that learners in possession of a grade 12 national senior certificate, are not able to access tertiary institutions, or find employment. It is thus critical that all stakeholders involved in the career development of learners come to the career education table and work towards approaches in which career education needs of learners, particularly in disadvantaged, under-resourced communities, are addressed. Schools are a resource for many learners, especially in disadvantaged communities, since their parents may be under-employed or unemployed and thus unable to provide assistance. As such, educators that are adequately equipped to

support learners with their career development needs, may have a better reach than one-on-one consultations, which are neither affordable nor replicable in disadvantaged communities.

Literature suggests that apart from the legacy of apartheid, several other factors have also been identified as major barriers to learning in basic education post-apartheid (Maree, 2015). Large classroom numbers, lack of educators interested in teaching LO and the inadequate training of educators, affects the effective teaching of LO in schools (Diale, 2016; Jacobs & Frantz, 2014; Panday, 2007; Wasserman, 2014). Additionally, time limitations for LO also do not allow for educators to follow a “more pedagogical process” in teaching career and career choices, nor do they afford learners opportunities for “critical exploration and creative thinking” (Smit, et al., 2015 p.123). When educators are not trained, or are not inadequately trained in teaching LO, they are likely to follow the curriculum verbatim (Smit, et al., 2015) and may adhere to the curriculum with no consideration for contextual challenges from the learners’ environments (Mahlangu, 2011). The afore-mentioned debilitating factors are described as “most severe in South Africa’s poorest and most vulnerable populations” (Bloch 2009, in Maree, 2015; p. 392) and these promote poor pass rates at schools and low throughput rates at universities, which impact on the employability of learners and the broader socio-political stability (Maree, 2015).

Akhurst and Mkhize (2006) indicated that pre–1994 career education, then referred to as School Guidance, was prioritised in South Africa in environments such as urban schools, urban tertiary institutions and by some non-governmental organisations, consequently neglecting learners from all other educational environments (Maree et al., 2006). The South African government has through conscious and continuous efforts endeavoured to address the inequalities created by apartheid, post -1994 (Jacobs & Frantz, 2014). When South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, Life Orientation (LO) became a compulsory learning area in South African public schools and School Guidance was incorporated into the Life Orientation (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) (LO CAPS). Life Orientation is the

study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, and career and career choices. (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p 9)

Career and career choices (CCC) is therefore an aspect embedded into the LO (CAPS).

In 1997, the government introduced the first national curriculum, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in the form of Curriculum 2005, to eliminate the shortfalls in the education system and to create equal opportunities for all learners (Smith & Arendse, 2016). In 2001 the Revised

National Curriculum (RNCS) was introduced for the General Education and Training (GET) Band (to the end of grade 9); and in 2003 the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was introduced for the Further Education and Training (FET) Band (post grade 9). The research to be described in later chapters will focus on grades 10 – 12, also known as the FET band. Various factors lead to the unsuccessful implementation of the NCS and according to Jacobs and Frantz (2014) educators seemed to find it challenging. In 2012, the South African government replaced the NCS with the National Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) for Grades R – 12 (Smith & Arendse, 2016), with the aim of creating more structure in terms of “time allocation to topics, which topics to focus on, and when to teach the topics” (Jacobs & Frantz, 2014, p. 70).

In addition to implementation challenges of the CCC topic in public schools, career assessments were previously unscientifically applied to traditionally disadvantaged learners, with no consideration for the first languages spoken or the uniqueness of various South African cultures (Maree & Beck, 2004). Western career theories were applied to inform the career development of individuals from structurally disadvantaged backgrounds. These theories do not consider the embeddedness of individuals within their living environments or the impact that environmental challenges pose to the career development of learners. Criticism regarding career approaches have led to calls for a shift from an objective approach to a more interpretive process (Maree & Beck, 2004) and have contributed to the move towards contextual approaches to understanding and informing career development within South Africa (Roberson, 2018).

South Africa’s challenges to implement effective career development at school-based level are not unique. Career development has shifted the focus of career counselling from the “concept of one job for life to managing multiple career transitions and the consequent professionalism of career service providers through investments in product development, career practitioner competency-based training, and professional associations” (Bezanson et al., 2016; p.219). Research, as discussed below, suggests an increase in international interest in the implementation of career education and its implications for school-based career development practices. Akpochafo (2018) noted that career development interventions in secondary schools in the Delta State of Nigeria are essential to broaden the career prospects of students and to avoid inappropriate career choices. Draaisma et al., (2018) indicate that schools in the Netherlands have started to acknowledge their responsibility in guiding students’ career development, by focusing on both academic achievement and career management competencies. Other research provides evidence that in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, career guidance and counselling

services essentially enhance the efficiency of an education system for the preparation of students for the contemporary market (Yuen et al., 2019). Such research suggests that career development in schools and particularly disadvantaged schools, can no longer be ignored.

### **Purpose and Relevance of the Study**

Concerns discussed above regarding the career development of learners and the implementation of LO (CCC) in public schools suggest that the teaching and learning of careers for learners in structurally disadvantaged public schools can no longer be overlooked. Empowering LO educators in schools who are critical resources for learners in disadvantaged communities, became the focus of the study as opposed to working with a group of learners directly, hoping that more learners would be successively reached in this way. LO Educators have a much wider influence on multiple learners as they have an existing platform viz., the career and career choices periods in the LO (CAPS).

Watson and Stead (2017) note that the emphasis of developmental-contextual approaches, on the dynamic interaction between the developing individual in a changing context, has made valuable contributions to career psychology. Developing onwards from research and recommendations for further studies by Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018) and Phala (2019), this study aimed to explore the DCF of Vondracek et al., (1986) as a basis for the exploration and development of a customized career education programme for FET learners, in several disadvantaged high schools in the Northern Areas of Gqberha. This research proposed to work collaboratively with educators to develop and trial the resultant programme of activities.

### **Location of the Research**

This study was located in the Northern Areas of Gqberha in the Eastern Cape (EC) province of South Africa. The Eastern Cape Province, with Bisho as the capital, is the second largest province in South Africa (Hamann & Tuinder, 2012). The EC unites two cities on the coastline and rural areas, as well as the two former homelands or “Bantustans”, Transkei and Ciskei, which were created during the apartheid years to gather people together into tribal lands, preventing free settlement in other areas. Hamann and Tuinder (2012) indicated that educational achievements in the EC differ vastly amongst the different populations groups with poor reading and writing levels and very poor matric pass rates reported. The province is impoverished with a very high unemployment rate, with restrictions on educational, economic and infrastructural development that are to some extent due to the remnants of the homelands, which all continue to hamper educational progress in the province.

The Northern Areas of Gqeberha are described by Goliath (2014) as a geographical area developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when communities were compelled to move from what the Apartheid government referred to as the White Suburbs due to the Group Areas Act No.41 of 1950. The Northern Areas grew and went on to be categorised by the racial term of being a Coloured Area, which describes the predominantly mixed-race ethnic group that inhabited the area. Goliath (2014) further indicates that the people living in the Northern Areas do not form a homogenous community and that there are different classes living within this community, with socio-economic status based on the size of the houses, access to running water, ablution facilities, and whether these facilities are inside or outside of the home.

This study focused on LO FET-phase educators in public schools within these Northern Areas, who are teaching learners that are predominantly from lower income households. All fifteen high schools in the Northern Areas and the LO subject advisor from the EC Department of Education (Nelson Mandela Bay District) were invited to participate in the study. Initially ten schools and the LO subject advisor accepted the invitation to participate. The study was impacted by the Corona virus pandemic of 2020-21, with one school withdrawing at the first interview stage and a further three schools at the focus groups stage.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

The broad question framing this research is:

“Could FET-phase learners from disadvantaged public schools benefit from a developmental-contextual career education programme?”

Information was gathered through the lenses of the LO FET-phase educators and the LO subject advisor. The study explored LO educators’ perspectives about the LO (CAPS) and the teaching and learning of the career and career choices topic; contextual factors that influence the career development of learners; and the suitability of using the DCF of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986), as the basis of a programme devised with LO FET-phase educators. The study sought to develop a contextualised career education programme for learners that are structurally disadvantaged and not able to access the career resources accessible to their counterparts in ex-model C public schools (in other words schools that were previously reserved for white learners only, becoming multi-racial post-1994 and being generally better resourced).

The study therefore attempted to investigate and answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of FET-phase LO educators in disadvantaged public schools on the teaching and learning of the career and career choices outcomes in the LO CAPS?
2. How might an approach including contextual and situational factors be developed and implemented to shape the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools?
3. How did the career education programme evolve and what is the potential impact of the custom-developed programme on the career education of learners in disadvantaged public schools, according to the participating educators?

### **Definitions of terms**

In this research, the following definitions were adopted from the literature:

#### ***Apartheid***

The term Apartheid is translated from the Afrikaans language, meaning “apartness”. This ideology was introduced in South Africa in 1948 by the National Party government, referring to racial segregation, where people were required to live in separate areas and use separate facilities from what the white population used (African Union Human Rights Memorial, n.d.).

#### ***Career***

A career encompasses significant learnings and experiences throughout an individuals’ personal life, the competencies and activities acquired in various work positions or types, and the person’s trajectory following successive occupations (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

#### ***Career choice***

Miller and Brown (2005) state that career choice refers to decisions made or re-made by individuals regarding their careers and the world of work. According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2016), these include subjective decisions on personal preferences, aspirations, orientations, and intentions, as well as those based on objective information regarding economic conditions, employment opportunities and sociological factors such as family and education.

#### ***Career and career choices***

These relate to personal and practical concerns regarding careers and career choices (Wasserman, 2014). The aim of this as a LO topic is to assist learners with the acquisition of self-knowledge and career knowledge about possible career choices; to impart information regarding admission requirements into various fields of study; to assist with exploring access

to financial aid for tertiary studies, and to counteract concerns regarding unemployment (DBE, 2010).

### ***Career counselling***

According to NCDA (2009, p. 1) career counselling is “the process of assisting individuals in the development of a life-career with focus on the definition of the worker role and how that role interacts with other life roles”. Kidd (2006) refers to career counselling as the interaction between the client and counsellor guided by psychological theory, and aims to support the client with the management of career-related issues such as career decision-making.

### ***Career development***

A continuous lifelong process of human development with experiences that focus on enhancing understanding self and career information for career decision-making (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008). It is the lifelong evolution of work and constitutes the psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that impact on the nature and meaning of work over the lifespan of individuals (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

### ***Career education***

Career education equips individuals to manage the career choices and changes that they will encounter as they proceed through life (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006). It refers to the service of providing support and information to individuals, to enact subjective career intentions and goals, through career-related behaviour (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

### ***Career exploration***

Career exploration is the gathering and examination of information related to careers and comprises self- and environmental exploration. It includes aspects such as self-awareness, knowledge about careers and the world of work, setting career goals and career decision-making (Greenhaus et al., 2010).

### ***Career guidance***

Defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), (2004, p. 19) as “services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers”.

### ***Curriculum***

According to Ebert et al. (2013) the curriculum provides the content and resources, including processes followed, for the purpose of attaining identified educational outcomes.

### ***Coloured***

According to the Population Registration Act of 1950, all South Africans were classified ethnically as Bantu (all Black Africans), Coloured (those of mixed race), or white. A fourth category, Asian (Indian and Pakistani) was later added.

### ***Disadvantaged individuals***

This term refers to Black individuals, namely Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, who were deprived and disadvantaged by unfair discrimination based on race, by the South African government before 1994.

### ***Life Orientation***

Life Orientation (LO) is the “study of the self in relation to others and to society...It not only focuses on knowledge, but also emphasises the importance of the application of skills and values in real-life situations, participation in physical activity, community organisations and initiatives” (DBE, 2011, p. 13). LO, together with three other subjects are fundamental for the award of the National Senior Certificate (NCS) and are hence compulsory for all Grades 10 to 12 learners. The aim is to develop balanced and confident learners contributing to justice and democracy, “a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all” (DBE, 2011, p. 13).

### ***National Curriculum Statement (NCS)***

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 is the policy statement that regulates teaching and learning in South African Schools. Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 were replaced by the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (NCAPS) in January 2012 (DBE, 2011, p. 8).

### ***Life Orientation - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (LO CAPS)***

As per the definition of the NCS above, LO (CAPS), will be defined as the policy statement that regulates the teaching and learning of Life Orientation in all public schools (DBE, 2011).

### ***Public Schools***

Public schools are state-controlled schools and are therefore also referred to as Government schools. These schools are supported by the school governing body, and are required to supplement the resources provided by the state and improve the quality of education within the school for all learners based on their means (Section 36 of the South African Schools Act, 1996).

### **Quintile**

According to the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (ANSSSF) schools are ranked into Quintiles, ranging from Quintiles 1 to 5. A Quintile 1 ranking represents the poorest and most impoverished schools and a Quintile 5 ranking represents the most affluent schools (White & Van Dyk, 2019). The ranking is based on the unemployment and literacy rate within the communities where the schools are situated. The ANSSSF regulates the allocation of funds to schools and allocates more funds to schools that serve disadvantaged communities in Quintiles 1 - 3. Schools in the poorest communities are allocated an annual amount per learner (Nortje, 2017), which makes schooling possible for most learners. White and Van Dyk (2019) reflect on the inaccuracies in the application of the ranking system in South Africa, and how inadequate and unfair school funding impacts on the maintenance in schools as well as on the quality of learning and teaching. Participating schools in the study ranked between Quintiles 1 - 3 and are classified as impoverished, thus learners within these schools will either pay reduced school fee rate or no school fee.

### **Outline of Chapters**

This introductory chapter provides a background to the research study, the motivation for and purpose of the study, the research questions and the relevance of the study within the Eastern Cape, South African context.

Chapter two provides the reader with an overview of Life Orientation as a mandatory learning area in South African public schools and the role that it plays in the career development of learners. It explains the transformation of this learning area from School Guidance pre-1994 to the current LO (CAPS), the challenges faced in historically disadvantaged schools with the implementation of school guidance pre-1994, and persistent constraining challenges that continue to be experienced with the LO (CAPS).

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework of the study and draws on the literature to provide an overview of the application of traditional career theories within the South African context. It also reflects on post-modern theories relevant to the study and explains the developmental-contextual perspective, which underpins the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF model and how aspects in the model could facilitate or constrain the career development of learners.

Chapter four describes the research design and methodology of the study. The study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools. It was a constructivist qualitative study and focus groups were employed within an overarching framework of participatory action research. Data were collected through pre-intervention interviews, participatory action research, observations, focus group sessions, document perusal and a post-intervention questionnaire. These data were organised and analysed by means of Template Analysis. In addition, ethical considerations and the elements contributing to trustworthiness are also included in this chapter.

Chapter five presents the findings from the participant interviews. It reflects on the perspectives of LO educators on the implementation of LO, and contextual factors impacting on the career development of learners.

Chapter six describes the focus group interactions. To illustrate the unfolding process based on Action Research, each session is presented as a Summary on a Page (SoaP), followed by the researchers' reflections on each session. The model of the DCF for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) for career exploration with learners in schools is explored with the participants. A manual that provides guidelines on the practical outlines of lessons based on the DCF is proposed. The manual is supported with career resources and activities for career lessons in school in schools. These career resources are located as appendices. Participants' evaluations of the application of the DCF model are included in this chapter.

Chapter seven provides a discussion of the findings from the interviews and focus group sessions in relation to the overall literature, linked to the aim and research questions of the study.

Chapter eight provides the conclusions, strengths and limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further study.

## **Chapter 2: The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Life Orientation (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) in the FET Phase.**

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### **Introduction**

Chapter two covers the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the learning area, Life Orientation (LO), previously known in South African public schools as Guidance, including career guidance topics. Literature pertinent to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Life Orientation Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (LO CAPS) in the Further Education and Training Phase (FET: Gr 10 – 12) will be consulted to provide a picture of LO as a learning area, and its implementation within South African public schools. Career education, which is at the centre of this study, is subsumed within LO (CAPS). The role of educators and their Personal and Professional Development (PPD), regarding the teaching of LO, as prescribed by relevant education and training policies and acts, will also be discussed.

To understand the content and application of the current LO CAPS in South African public schools, it is required that Career Guidance in the South African context be looked at against the backdrop of the South African political landscape pre-and post the first national democratic elections in 1994. A historical overview of school guidance after the first national elections in South Africa, evolving to what is currently known as LO CAPS in SA public schools, as well as an overview of the transformation of school curricula to the current NCS, will be provided.

### **Historical Overview: From Career Guidance to LO (CAPS)**

Literature and statements on South African Education during the apartheid era, indicate that education in South Africa was segregated along racial lines. The statement to follow, from a report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education, highlights the unequal and fragmented application of the education system in South African schools. "...the education of the White child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of the Black child for a subordinate society" Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education" (as cited in Wasserman, 2014).

The following statement by Dr H.F. Verwoerd, student of German nationalist and ethnic psychology (Marx, 2013) who became former prime minister of the Republic of South Africa, and the architect of apartheid, supports the belief that segregation was the cornerstone of education during apartheid:

There is no place for the African in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour...For that reason it is to no avail for him to receive training which has as its aim, absorption in the European Community. (Verwoerd 1954, as cited in Panday 2007, p. 2)

Statements such as these indicate how education in South Africa was “deliberately deployed to perform a strategic gatekeeping function to regulate career development” (Naidoo et al., 2017, p. 8). During the apartheid era a form of community bookkeeping was applied, where guidance and group psychometric testing for blacks was employed by the government, solely to inform vocational decisions based on the human resource needs of the country (Watts,1980). Altruism and the career development of blacks thus never underpinned the reasons for recruitment, instead, it was driven by the countries’ need for low-cost semi-skilled labour. Education was consequently guided by various policies that were designed to deliberately delay the intellectual and career development of Africans (Naidoo et al., 2017) in order to keep them working in more menial occupations. The introduction of Native Education in 1920 is an example of various policies introduced by the apartheid government to prevent or delay the destiny of Black and Coloured children. The aim of this policy was specifically to introduce the belief in Black and White children that their vocational callings and career paths were dissimilar, because of their race group (Naidoo et al.,2017). Career policies in place at the time were thus specifically developed in such a manner that the career dreams and aspirations of Blacks and Coloureds were geared towards “career paths” identified by the government.

In 1953, the apartheid government further ensured separate development of different races, when Higher Education was employed as a vehicle for the development of the Bantu Education Policy for Black Africans (Nkomo, 1981; Sefotho, 2017). The purpose of this act was “to regulate entry and supply in the job market” (Naidoo et al., 2017, p. 9) and stunt the career development of Black and Coloured people by not affording them training above certain forms of labour (Flederman, 2011) hence maintaining the racial imbalance in the country (Smith & Arendse, 2016). The unjust application of the Bantu Education Act over decades resulted in the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and the school boycotts of 1980, where students marched against the systems of oppression and demanded an end to segregated and poor education. The uprising and boycotts allowed for the framing of alternative ideas in future citizenship and human rights education in South Africa (Smith & Arendse, 2016).

In 1981, the Department of Education and Training, introduced guidance for Black and Coloured people as an auxiliary service into schools, on an ad hoc basis (Naidoo et al., 2017). The authors indicate that although guidance was introduced into Black and Coloured schools,

it was given “low status and regarded as a luxury and, [as]expandable”. The guidance on offer in schools were aligned to the ideals of Christian nationalists and was geared to benefit the career choices of white learners only (Nel, 2014). As such the guidance offered to marginalised groups was of poor quality and hardly applied in black schools (Naidoo et al., 2017). Ironically, this seems to still be the case in most disadvantaged public schools in South Africa. Discoveries made by The National Education Policy Investigation in 1992 further highlighted inequalities in the implementation of guidance in South African Schools at the time. Discoveries were that guidance and counselling services in South Africa were neglected; that guidance and counselling services did not exist for most people; and that divergent approaches to guidance were applied in schools due to racial segregation of schooling (Naidoo et al., 2017). The discussion that will follow on the nature of the revisions and transitions of the South African curricula in schools will provide an idea of how the current South African National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and LO (CAPS) came into existence.

After the first national elections in South Africa in 1994, a national process was launched to eradicate pre-1994 curricula in public schools from content that was deemed as out-dated, inaccurate and insensitive. As a result, with the termination of the apartheid era after 1994, South African curricula in public schools underwent various alterations and revisions and previous subject statements, learning programmes and assessment guidelines were adapted and replaced (Wasserman, 2014).

Akhurst and Mkhize (2006) indicated at time that they were writing, 12 years post the new democratic South Africa, that although apartheid was no more, the inequalities that characterized apartheid education structures and career education still appeared prevalent in South African settlements and communities. It is the prevalence of these inequalities in the provision of career guidance and the limitations imposed by these inequalities on learners from under-resourced public schools in current times, that have led to the interest in this study. It is a concern that the historical after-effects of apartheid still reflect in the career guidance on offer in South African disadvantaged and under-resourced public schools, where it continues to remain undeveloped, is of poor quality and is not aligned with the diverse needs of the communities where learners live. Naidoo et al. (2017) therefore recommend a social justice agenda in career psychology, to “understand and transform structures and mechanisms that perpetuate oppression” (p.14).

## **Transitioning of Curricula in S.A Public Schools post-1994**

The education system inherited by the new South African democratic government was unequal and divided by “race, geography and ideology” (RNCS Grades R – 9 Schools: 2000). In the foreword of the 1995 White Paper for Education and Training, the Minister of Education, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, noted that “South Africa has never had a truly national education system and does not have one yet” (DoE White Paper on Education and Training 2015, p. 2). This statement suggests that the education and training plan in South Africa, post-1994, was required to be significantly adapted to make allowance for the “doors of learning and culture” to be opened for all its citizens (DoE 2015, p. 11). Curriculum and education specialists were consequently employed to revise the national school curriculum and a call was made to everyone in education and training to work towards the development of an all-inclusive system that would promote and release the talents of all South Africans (DoE 2015, p. 2).

### ***Curriculum 2005 (C2005)***

In 1996 the first major curriculum statement, called the Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework, was developed (Yoyo, 2018). The framework was informed by various documents such as the White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, the South African Qualification Act (No 58 of 1995) and the National Education Policy Act (No.27 of 1996). The White Paper on Education and Training of 1995 specifically advocated for transformational changes in learning content and teaching, and assessment practices in South African Schools (Yoyo, 2018).

In 1997, the first non-racial national curriculum, known as Curriculum 2005 (C2005), was introduced in all South African public schools (Smith & Arendse, 2016). C2005, was South Africa’s version of outcomes-based education (OBE) (Badugela, 2012) and was regarded as “the masterplan to eradicate the inequalities of the apartheid system” (Van Deventer 2009, p. 127) and to “redress the imbalances of the past...” (Wasserman 2014, p. 34). C2005 was thus the vehicle intended to transform apartheid education in South Africa (Smith & Arendse, 2016).

Although C2005 was “an improvement on the apartheid curriculum” (Panday 2007, p. 10), educators noted significant shortfalls, such as it being inaccessible and challenging to teach and riddled with jargon (Badugela, 2012). Educators were also discouraged by the curriculum as they were not adequately trained and received little to no support from the DoE (Van Deventer, 2009). Shortfalls and mistakes in the curriculum resulted in the appointment of a review committee in February 2000 whose task was to revise and refine C2005.

The Committee concluded that although C2005 created a new focus on teaching and learning, implementing the curriculum was challenging due to the following reasons (Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 31 May 2002):

- a skewed curriculum structure and design
- lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy
- inadequate orientation, training, and development of teachers
- learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms
- policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms
- shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005
- inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments.

Badugela (2012) indicated that these challenges manifested due to the rushed implementation of the new curriculum at a time when educator training for outcomes-based teaching and assessment was not yet at an adequate level. In 2001, C2005 was replaced with the Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 (Smith & Arendse, 2016) which in essence was not a curriculum per se, but an instrument to “streamline and promote” C2005 (RNCS for Grades R – 9).

### ***The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)***

The Review Committee, based on their findings on challenges that obstructed the effective implementation of C2005, proposed a revised curriculum structure, recommending change in the following areas (Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005, 31 May 2002):

- teacher orientation and training
- learning support materials and the organization
- resourcing and staffing of curriculum structures and functions in national and provincial education departments.

This new structure became known as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS).

### ***The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)***

In 2006, the RNCS became known as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for the General Education and Training Band (GET: Gr 7 - 9). This NCS for the GET Band was aligned to the Further Education and Training Band (FET: Gr 10 - 12). In the NCS, school subjects were replaced by eight learning areas in the GET Band, namely Mathematics, Languages,

Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences and Technology.

Policy on curriculum and assessment in the South African public schooling sector is proposed by the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (NCS). The current NCS is a policy statement for learning and teaching in South African public schools comprising of several documents, to be read together (DBE 2012, p. 14).

1. National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for each approved school subject.
2. The National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, and
3. The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12.

Learning and teaching outcomes are guided by general and learner specific aims highlighted within the NCS.

### ***Aims of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)***

#### **General Aims of the NCS**

Although there are various aims highlighted in the NCS (DBE 2012, pp. 4-5), only the aims that are relevant to this study will be highlighted and discussed in this paragraph viz.:

- Ensure that children acquire skills and knowledge and that they can apply these in a meaningful manner within their own lives. Curricula must be sensitive to global requirements and must promote knowledge in the local contexts.
- Equip learners with knowledge, skills and values for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical or intellectual ability.
- Facilitate learners from education institutions into the world of work and provide employers with profiles of learners' competencies.
- Ensure that the imbalances of the past are redressed and that equal opportunities are provided to all population groups.
- Infuse the principles and practices of environmental justice and human rights per the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Display sensitivity to factors such as inequality, race, gender, disability, language, age and poverty and many other matters.
- Emphasise the values of indigenous knowledge systems and the rich history of the country.

- Emphasise inclusivity as part of organizing, planning, and teaching in schools. Understanding and recognizing barriers to learning and planning for diversity.

The NCS general aims are incidentally well aligned to the Vondracek et al., (1986), DCF for career development that will be applied within this study and is discussed in detail in Chapter three. The DCF (Vondracek et al., (1986) just as the NCS general aims, seeks to employ life skills and assets applicable to the individual and relevant within their local contexts in their career development. The DCF as well as the NCS recognize that learners, their immediate and adult familial networks and their micro- and macro-level contexts are crucial aspects for career development and should therefore fundamentally be considered and reflected in the development of CEPs of learners. This is particularly relevant in the career development of learners from disadvantaged communities, where life skills and assets may not be overtly recognisable due to the impact of socio-economic challenges such as: high unemployment rates, matriculants not able to access tertiary education or the employment market, out of school youth and a multitude of inappropriate social behaviours within communities. Personal life skills and assets often need to be extracted by conversations from learners coming from communities where career aspirations appear bleak and a sense of hopelessness regarding prospective career success, prevails. The Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF is thus well aligned with, and well suited to driving the mandate of the NCS and has the potential to complement the defined learner outcomes as per the LO curriculum, as a career education tool.

### **Learner specific aims of the NCS**

The following specific outcomes for learners are captured in the general aims of the South African Curriculum (DBE 2012, p. 5)

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team.
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse organize and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and /or language skills in various modes.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

These learner specific aims are aligned and reflected in the objectives for LO as a subject in schools; viz., “to guide and prepare learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly

changing and transforming society” (DoE, 2002; p. 4). It is in LO that learners are afforded an opportunity to practically engage with real life matters that could enable them with problem-solving and decision-making skills that could enable them in making more appropriate choices (DBE 2012).

### **The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)**

To advance implementation of the NCS, revised curricula statements were again reviewed and adapted in 2009; and replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which came into effect in January 2012 (DBE, 2012). The amendments and adaptations to curricula resulted in:

- One distinct and comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for all approved subjects in schools as well as
- The replacement of subject statements, learning programme guidelines and subject assessment guidelines in Grades R – 12 (Wasserman, 2012).
- The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) thus replaced the two curriculum statements that were previously applied in SA public schools *viz.*:
  - The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 9, Government Gazette No. 23406 of 31 May 2002.
  - The National Curriculum Statement Grades 1 - 12 Government Gazettes, No. 25545 of 6 October 2003 and No. 27594 of 17 May 2005.

A summary of the transitioning of curricula in South Africa from 1996 – 2012 is provided below.

Table 1 Summary of the Transitioning of Curricula in South Africa (1996 – 2012)

Year	Description of Transformation in Curricula
1996	Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework. The first major curriculum statement in South Africa after Democracy.
1997	Curriculum 2005 (C 2005) The first Non-racial Curriculum
2001	Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grade R – 9 An instrument (not a curriculum per se) to streamline and promote Curriculum 2005.
2002	The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)
2006	National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (For the General Education and Training Band (GET Gr 7 - 9) and Further Education and Training Band (FET Gr 10 - 12)) School subjects replaced by eight learning areas (Mathematics, Languages, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences, Technology)
2009	Review of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Revised curricular statements (NCS) were reviewed and adapted and replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)
2012	The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) CAPS into effect in January 2012.

### **Life Orientation (LO)**

With the introduction of C2005 in South African public schools, LO was featured as a learning area (Smith & Arendse, 2016). This was to replace the former constraining approaches to School Guidance in apartheid-era curricula which was also a “non-examination” subject, and thus often not taken seriously by learners and educators alike. The introduction, broadening and re-purposing of LO, highlighted it as an important subject to be included in the school curriculum, but also emphasised a form of commitment by the government towards LO in general and further education.

### ***What is Life Orientation?***

“Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and

productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity and careers and career choices” (DBE 2012, p. 8). LO thus afford learners an opportunity to engage and practice skills that could enable them with problem-solving, decision-making and the making of appropriate choices (DBE, 2012). The main function of LO is to facilitate the application of acquired knowledge, skills, and values in real life situations (DBE, 2012). The subject therefore was not added to the school curriculum merely for the acquisition of information and knowledge, which is how it is predominantly applied in public schools. Instead, the essence of LO lies in the application of the acquired life skills in real life situations “to strengthen individual and personal qualities” Wasserman (2014, p. 33). It is this opportunity to apply acquired information, knowledge and skills which seems to be amiss in disadvantaged public schools, because the opportunity to action is rarely afforded to learners in their schools due to the lack of adequate teaching time and the lack of multiple learner resources. Hofmeyer (2010, as cited in Wasserman 2014, p. 34) indicates that there should be a “shift from what teachers were required to teach, to what the child is required to understand and be able to do after the teaching”.

LO is one of four fundamental and mandatory subjects required for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) for Grades 10 – 12 learners (DBE, 2012). It comprises six critical focus areas that are directed at addressing social challenges faced by South African youth, such as unemployment and skills shortages (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). It is through these focus areas that learners are “to be guided and prepared for life in order to contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all” (DoE, 2003, p. 9). The six focus areas covered in LO in the FET Phase are as follows (DBE, 2012):

- Development of the self in society
- Social and environmental responsibility
- Democracy and human rights
- Careers and career choices
- Study skills
- Physical Education

### ***The pedagogy of Life Orientation (LO) and its implications for the LO Educator***

According to Nel (2014) the pedagogy of LO (Gr 10-12) / Life skills (Gr R-9) should be based on Piaget’s, Vygotsky’s and Bruner’s cognitive constructivist theories, which suggests that teaching and learning should be active. This active learning implies that the educator becomes the facilitator that afford learners the opportunity to explore, discuss, problem solve and make decisions on their own. This is done by guiding learners towards finding the most appropriate

career solutions as opposed to telling learners what career decisions they should be making. Although direct instruction, namely the talk-and-chalk method may still be required, it should be kept to a minimum in LO. The DCF for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986), is the framework informing this study and speaks directly into what the afore-mentioned theories uphold, regarding self-exploration and narration for the acquisition of self-knowledge, career knowledge and skills.

The pedagogy of LO is built on various principles and the emphasis of the principles is the notion that knowledge is not fixed, but instead varies across different social contexts and historical times and changes as it is passed on through various people, cultures, and generations (Nel, 2014). Educators should thus have an awareness that knowledge is not static and therefore always in the process of construction and reconstruction. Wasserman (2014) indicates that a more flexible and adaptive curriculum allows for learner content to be adjusted and made applicable to suit a variety of cultural and economic conditions in South Africa. South Africa with its diverse population should thus, in the teaching and learning of LO, make allowances for the different perspectives or thought processes of individuals by allowing learners to learn from each other (Nel, 2014). This diversity implies that LO learner activities should accommodate learners' contexts such as ethnic group, socio-economic background, learner needs and learner styles. The LO CAPS (Gr 10-12) should thus facilitate the inclusion and accommodation of all learners by making allowances for the different perspectives of all learners in the teaching and learning process, notwithstanding their challenges or differences.

### **LO Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (LO CAPS) Grade 10-12**

With the introduction of C2005, LO was introduced as a compulsory subject for all learners in schools (DoE, 2003). With the review of C2005, the status of Guidance as a subject was also revised and was replaced with LO as a learning area upon the insistence of Minister Kadar Asmal, the Minister of Education (Wasserman, 2014). This new learning area was to draw from previously applied non-examination subjects such as Vocational Guidance, Family Guidance, Religious Education, Health Education, Physical Education and Youth Preparedness (Wasserman, 2014). The role of the LO curriculum is stipulated in the RNCS policy document Grades R- 9 Life Orientation 2002 (DoE, 2002a), in the CAPS Document for LO Senior Phase (Grades 7 - 9) and the CAPS document for LO FET Phase (Grades 10 -12) (DBE, 2011).

The aim of the new LO CAPS was to support learners with the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in their own lives, in a meaningful manner (DBE, 2013). The curriculum thus, whilst being considerate about global priorities, recognizes and promotes knowledge in local contexts (DBE, 2013). It thus aims to prepare and guide learners towards meaningful

and successful lives in a society that is constantly evolving, aiding them with information and knowledge to make informed decisions about their “health, personal, and psycho-social development; and the world of work” (DoE, 2002).

### ***Instructional Times per Learning Areas (Grades 10 – 12)***

Time allocations per learning area, per week are outlined in the LO CAPS document (DBE 2012) are reflected in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Learning-Area instruction times

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Time allocation per week (hours)</b>
Home Language	<b>4.5</b>
First Additional Language	<b>4.5</b>
Mathematics	<b>4.5</b>
Life Orientation	<b>2</b>
A minimum of any three subjects selected from <b>Group B</b> Annexure B, Tables B1-B8 of the policy document, <i>National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12</i> , subject to the provisos stipulated in paragraph 28 of the said policy document.	<b>12 (3x4 hours)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.5</b>

Table 2 indicates that although LO, is a mandatory subject, similarly to the Home and First Additional Languages and Mathematics, it is allocated the least amount of instruction time, despite the acute need for learner participation, practical engagement, and topic research. The demands on educators, including “overload of integration, assessment, recording and paperwork” (Panday 2017, p.10) are seemingly also disregarded. The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) indicates that allocated instruction times per week may only be applied as stipulated by the document and may not be used for the teaching of other or additional subjects. However, in reality the application of instruction times appears to be fluid in schools, especially where LO is concerned, where instruction time is often applied to teach other subjects. Tebele et al., (2015, in Theron, 2016, p. 45) indicated that “school-based career education does not materialise as prescribed by policy” in schools. Due to various reasons, including educator and learner attitudes towards LO, the subject is often not regarded as a critical learning area in schools. LO teaching time is consequently often sacrificed to catch up on the so called “critical examination subjects” or “killer subjects” namely Mathematics, Physical Science and

Accounting. This is particularly the case where educators teach other subjects alongside LO, which implies that it would be the case for most educators because LO is allocated to educators to fill up their timetables, rather than related to their skills or interests. Educators are allocated a certain number of teaching hours as per the school timetable. If there are remaining teaching hours after allocations have been made for their key learning area, the remaining hours are often filled up with LO. These LO periods are thus often applied as “catch-up” periods for other subjects. If LO was regarded as a specialized subject, requiring specialist skills, and allocated to educators trained and skilled in LO, this occurrence in schools, where LO time is used for the teaching of other learning areas, would possibly be less likely to occur and the status of LO could be elevated by educators and learners.

### ***Instructional Times per LO Focus Areas***

According to the DBE (2011) CAPS Gr 10-12 (LO), there are 66 hours available for the teaching of LO in Grades 10 and 11, and 56 hours in Grade 12. In the NCS, two hours per week is allocated to LO in which content from all six topics (listed below) must be covered. To guarantee the coverage of the curriculum and examinations, LO content is grouped across the 40 weeks (80 hours) of the school year. Hence career education, which is found under the CCC focus area, is allocated between 8 – 11 hours per term. Instructional time across the six LO learning areas is illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Instructional times per LO focus area Grade 10 - 12 (DBE, 2011, p. 9)

<b>LO TOPICS</b>	<b>Grade 10</b>	<b>Grade 11</b>	<b>Grade 12</b>
1. Development of the self in society	8	11	9
2. Social and environmental responsibility	4	3	3
3. Democracy and human rights	7	7	4
4. <i>Careers and career choices</i>	11	8	8
5. Study skills	3	4	4
6. Physical Education	33	33	28
Contact Time	66	66	56
Examinations	14	14	24
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Total Weeks</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

It should be noted that although career and career choices is allocated the highest (Grade 10) and second highest (Gr 11 & 12) number of hours in LO, these hours are regarded as inadequate by educators, since the CCC focus area require educators and learners to research and discuss topics extensively. According to (Smit et al, 2015), part of the neglect in LO is reportedly caused by inadequate time allocation for career education, and the lack of or limited opportunities for LO educators to provide individual career education to learners. Furthermore, time is also required for experiential learning and practical application, which rarely takes place in schools.

### **Focus Area: Career and Career Choices (CCC)**

Only the focus area on CCC is relevant to this study. Wasserman (2014, p. 41) indicates that this focus area primarily addresses “personal and practical issues” pertaining to careers and career choices of learners. The emphasis in this learning area is to support learners on their career development journeys by allowing them to do self- and career exploration to acquire self- and career-knowledge that is required to make informed career decisions. Learners are further also supported in aligning their career expectations to personal attributes such as abilities, personality, interests, and values. Tertiary training institutions, admission requirements, bursaries and study loan opportunities should also be explored.

As learners from disadvantaged communities often find themselves in positions where they may not access tertiary institutions due to financial constraints, opportunities on entering the labour market immediately after exiting the FET phase, are also explored. Learners with learning barriers also need to be supported regarding vocational choices relevant to them *viz.* redirection to schools of skills or TVET Colleges. It is thus clear that LO, specifically the CCC focus area, appears to be the ideal agent through which the career development needs of learners in disadvantaged public schools could best be addressed. Learning and teaching deficits in the CCC curriculum should therefore be adequately addressed to ensure that learners access quality career education in schools.

### **Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) for LO (Gr 10-12)**

In the allocated 66 hours (Grade 10 and 11) and 56 hours (Grade 12) per annum, numerous themes from across the six focus areas in LO must be covered. Reflecting on the amount of content that must be covered across the six areas, the allocated 56 to 66 hours does not seem to be enough to do justice to the content that should be covered. If one was to do an even distribution of time for the six focus areas across a 4-week period, each area would be allocated 1.8 hours in a 4-week period. It should be noted that content from the six focus areas is to be covered on a weekly basis, but only during specified terms and weeks, as per the

ATP. The tables below provide a reflection of the CCC choices topics that educators must teach in Grades 10 -12, within the allocated hours, across the academic year and according to the LO ATP.

Table 4 Grade 10 Annual Teaching Plan - CCC

Annual Teaching Plan (ATP)		Topics
<u>Term 1</u>	<u>Term 3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects, career fields and study choices: decision-making skills</li> <li>• Socio-economic factors</li> <li>• Diversity of jobs</li> <li>• Opportunities within career fields</li> <li>• Trends and demands in the job market</li> <li>• The need for lifelong learning</li> </ul>
Week 4 – 6	Week 6 – 10	
3 hours	5 hours	

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Adapted from LO CAPS Gr 10-12 (DBE 2011, pp. 12-16)

Grade 10 is the first year in the FET-phase and the topics are therefore relatively generic. The career information provided is at an introductory and basic level and lays the foundation for the Grade 11 and 12 career content that looks at career topics in greater detail. Grade 10 is the first grade where learners are allowed to choose their subjects which is often based on Grade 9 results. In Grade 10 the focus is more on subject choice than career choice. In Grade 10 learners are still allowed to make a maximum of two subject changes if challenged in subjects.

Table 5 Grade 11 Annual Teaching plan - CCC

Annual Teaching Plan (ATP)		Topics
<u>Term 1</u>	<u>Term 3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements for admission to higher education institutions</li> <li>• Options for financial assistance for further studies</li> <li>• Competencies, abilities, and ethics required</li> <li>• Personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest</li> <li>• Knowledge about self in relations to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions</li> </ul>
Week 4 – 6	Week 6 –	
3 hours	10 5 hours	

Adapted from (DBE 2011, pp. 17-20) LO CAPS Gr 10-12

The Grade 11 career topics are much more geared towards career choice and career decision-making. The focus is therefore more on exploring prospective careers, courses at tertiary institutions and the admission requirements of these institutions. First enquiries regarding tertiary education are within the Grade 11 year. In Grade 11 learners are allowed to make one subject change to ensure that they meet the admission criteria for the courses that they are considering.

Table 6 Grade 12 Annual Teaching Plan - CCC

Annual Teaching Plan (ATP)			Topics
<u>Term 1</u>	<u>Term 2</u>	<u>Term 3</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commitment to a decision taken: locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources</li> <li>▪ Reasons for and impact of unemployment and innovative solutions to counteract unemployment</li> <li>▪ Core elements of a job contract</li> <li>▪ Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school</li> </ul>
Week 8-10	Week 5-7	Week 3-4	
3 hours	3 hours	2 hours	

Adapted from (DBE 2011, pp. 21-24) LO CAPS Gr 10-12

At Grade 12 level learners can no longer make any subject changes. The focus in Grade 12 is therefore on following through with career decisions made in Grade 11. Career exploration

is about prospective careers, tertiary education, the world of work and employment. There is also a focus on career related documents such as application forms (tertiary education, learnerships, bursaries), curriculum vitae's and employment contracts.

### **The Role of the Life Orientation Educator**

Educators are required to go beyond mere delivery of the curriculum by developing, defining and reinterpreting it (Wasserman, 2014). This statement signifies the important role of educators in the lives of learners and why it is essential that they acquire and apply new information, knowledge, and skills continuously. What educators say and do in the classroom with learners, impacts on the lives of learners and has future repercussions. "It is what teachers think, believe, and do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people receive" (Wasserman 2014, p. 59). The above statement is true to all learning areas and particularly important for LO educators, who work in close proximity with learners' intimate and private thoughts, and within their private spaces. Only when learners are comfortable with educators and believe in them as being accessible, caring, trusting and genuinely interested, can they truly start to open up, and be accepting of what educators have to offer.

Although many educators may have the heart, passion and drive for teaching, there are many personal and professional factors that impact on these qualities and their aspirations for learners and teaching. Educators felt unprepared to teach LO without training and minimal advice and consequently felt "frustrated and ill-equipped", Taylor and Viinjevold (1999, as cited in Wasserman, 2014; p. 37). Pandy (2007) points out that the attitudes of educators' impact on the way that they will deliver the curriculum in schools, implying that educator perceptions of LO will determine the way in which they will implement the subject. When educators are well-equipped for their teaching roles and have adequate knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively, they are less likely to feel intimidated by the multitude of social challenges of learners in the classroom (Badugela, 2012); and consequently, less likely to feel incompetent and become discouraged.

Key roles and competencies of a competent educator, stipulated below, is highlighted in the Norms and Standards for Educators, gazetted on 4 February 2000 (DoE, 1996; Badugela, 2012; Wasserman, 2014) : (1) learning mediator, (2) interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, (3) administrator and manager, (4) scholar, researcher, and lifelong learner, (5) community, citizenship and pastoral role, (6) assessor, (7) learning phase specialist. A brief description of the educator role and related competencies may be found in Badugela (2012); DoE (2000) and Wasserman (2014).

Educators therefore should have awareness and understanding of the important role that context plays in implementing the curriculum and realise why merely working from textbooks and syllabi does not do justice to learners who are required to acquire essential skills for informed and responsible decision-making for their future careers. The DBE (2011, p. 8) stipulates that educators should equip learners with relevant knowledge, values and skills that will inform their choices and decisions so that they can take appropriate actions for living meaningful and successful lives. Educator roles suggest that educator flexibility and adaptability is essential in the development and implementation of lesson plans. Consideration of contextual factors “local realities” (Swarts et al., 2018) described above should reflect in lessons during teaching and learning as they influence how people learn and develop (Wasserman, 2014).

### **Qualities of a LO Educator**

In addition to the seven roles, successful LO educators are expected to possess the following qualities in fostering healthy engagements with learners *viz.*: Approachable, Listener, Caregiver to learners and colleagues, Empathy, Trustworthy, Confidentiality, Sensitivity towards community values, Passionate about the fundamental values of the constitution and Non-judgmental (Adapted from DoE, 2000).

Although most LO educators seem to choose LO as a teaching subject because of their passion for supporting learners, even beyond their basic academic needs as noted earlier, there are also a group of educators teaching LO by default, to fill up educator timetables. Wasserman (2014) explains that the afore-mentioned qualities are presumed to be intrinsic to individual educators, but if lacking, they can be reinforced or developed through intensive training and professional development programme and could go a long way towards supporting and encouraging learners in the classroom.

### **Personal and Professional Development (PPD)**

For educators to provide relevant and adequate teaching and counselling support to learners as is the case in LO, educators should ensure that they attend relevant workshops and training courses in their specialist learning areas to refresh previously acquired information by adding new information to their existing knowledge. Newman (2013) indicates that teacher education helps to facilitate the teaching and learning process in schools because with relevant and current information, they can assist learners to become productive citizens. Not all newly qualified educators are fortunate to receive mentoring and guidance from skilled educators in their learning area, when they start their teaching careers. With little to no teacher knowledge

about the learning area, or lacking knowledge about the appropriate facilitation skills for the specific learning area, “new” LO educators are placed at a disadvantage and in a position where they are often only provided with the curriculum and textbooks for teaching. There is rarely induction or observation opportunity in schools, besides the observation by tertiary institutions at schools, whilst studying. Continuous global change places further strain on educators and the education system with the need for personal and professional development becoming inevitable.

Post-1994, various policies and frameworks were reviewed to ensure equality and democracy for all. As such many of the reviewed policies recognise the changing roles of educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the needs of learners (Wasserman, 2014). As such policies, acts, and ethical guidelines relevant to education and educators were developed and put in place to support and guide educators; consequently, ensuring quality education and training in South Africa. A brief discussion on policies and acts relevant to educators follows.

### ***National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa***

This policy for teacher education was designed to develop educators to meet the needs of a democratic South Africa in the 21st century and is supported by the belief “that teachers are the essential drivers of a good quality education system” (National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2006, p. 5). If educators are thus such a critical human resource for the delivery of quality education, then it is crucial that educators are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal and professional development and that such opportunities should be created for them by the DoE and their professional body, the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

The aim of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development (2006, p.4) is to address professional competence of educators and consequently quality education, in the following manner:

- equip educators to assume essential and demanding educator tasks
- enable educators to continually develop their professional competence and performance
- raise the esteem in which educators are held by the people of South Africa.

### ***South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)***

After an Inter-ministerial Group drafted the National Qualifications Bill, it was passed into law as the South African Qualifications Authority Act on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1995. SAQA is the oversight body of the NQF and the custodian of its values and character (South African

Qualifications Authority Act, No. 58 of 1995). SAQA ensures that the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is implemented and that the NQF's objectives which is the development of lifelong learning and the social and economic development of the nation, is implemented. SAQA is thus the system or vehicle created to "support lifelong learning, social justice, and democratic participation", (Nkomo 2003, as cited in Wasserman, 2014).

### ***National Qualifications Framework (NQF)***

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a comprehensive system for the classification, registration, publication, and articulation of quality-assured national qualifications (NQF Act No 67 of 2008). The NQF thus strives to address training and development injustices from the past and to drive and facilitate quality education for all South Africans as outlined in their aims:

- Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements
- Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training, and career paths
- Enhance the quality of education and training
- Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training, and employment opportunities

### ***The South African Council for Educators (SACE)***

SACE is the professional body for educators and aims to enhance the status of the teaching profession through the registration of educators, the management of professional development of educators and to maintain and protect the professional teaching and ethical standards for educators (SACE Act 31 of 2000). The primary aim of SACE is thus to encourage educators to manage their professional growth (National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development, 2006).

Registration with SACE is compulsory for educators and only persons registered with the council, may be appointed as educators (SACE Act 31 of 2000). Registration with SACE suggests that educators and lecturers are "fit to practice" (SACE Act 31 of 2000:13). Although this is true for registration of persons that qualify for registration based on an education qualification, "being fit to practice" is questionable in terms of on-going continuous professional development. Despite the requirement for educators to be registered on the SACE portal and to upload training and development activities bi-annually, not all practicing educators are registered for Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) with SACE. The CPTD system gives credits, namely continuous professional points, for useful educator development activities such as webinars, workshops, educational videos and journal articles. At the time of

this study, audits for CPTD, confirming compliance with the minimum points requirement, did not appear to be in place, hence suggesting that educators may not all be “fit to practice” in terms of current and relevant information in their learning areas.

Although the DBE in South Africa has an LO curriculum with well-defined outcomes in place, it seems that their training of LO educators may be inadequate and may not equip educators sufficiently to deal with the multitude of challenging issues affecting teaching and learning in disadvantaged public schools (Diale et al., 2014). LO educators that are not adequately equipped are therefore unlikely to do justice to delivering the LO curriculum, in the case of this study, the CCC focus area, without relevant career training, development, and support. Although educators are required to take responsibility for their own professional development, support from the DoE, in terms of career training and development opportunities could be developed to ensure meaningful teaching and in LO (Diale et al., 2014).

Poor educator training and development contributed to the unsuccessful implementation of C2005. It seems that poor career training and development of LO educators continue to impact negatively on the career education on offer to learners in under-resourced public schools. Unless LO educators’ training and development needs are adequately addressed, the quality of career education in schools is unlikely to guide and prepare learners “for life in order to contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy, and an improved quality of life for all” (DoE 2003, p. 9).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the impact of apartheid and its policies on curricula and guidance in South African public schools. Despite various policy and curricula transformations to redress the injustices of the past in public schools, the impact of the segregation caused by apartheid, particularly in disadvantaged public schools, is still apparent today. LO, which is regarded as the learning area that should provide learners with essential knowledge and skills on what to expect in their ever-evolving future lives and careers, continues to be faced with implementation challenges ranging from the lack of quality educator training and development, low relevance of the curriculum to learners’ immediate environment, the lack of attention paid to the LO learning area and a variety of contextual factors prominent in under-resourced communities. The impact of mediocre career education support in disadvantaged public schools is noticeable in the quality of learners’ subject and career choices, the frequency of subject changes within the phase, the learner drop-out rate in the phase, indecision of first year tertiary students and the youth unemployment rate. The impact of personal and professional development opportunities of LO educators on the effective and efficient delivery

of the LO curriculum, particularly the CCC focus area, should be investigated by the DoE. Career development opportunities for LO educators is likely to enhance educator career knowledge and improve the quality of career education within public schools.

In the next chapter career development in South Africa will be discussed along with its impact on career education in disadvantaged public schools. Following and overview of theory and research, emphasis will be placed on the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF for career development.

## Chapter 3 Literature Review: Career Development

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### Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of literature exploring relevant career development theories, the application of these theories in the South African context and the theoretical framework relevant to the study. The chapter starts by defining career development and career theory and by contextualizing career counselling in South Africa. It then proceeds with a brief outline of traditional and post-modern career development theories. The latter part of the chapter focuses on the theoretical framework guiding this study, the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF. Description of the developmental-contextual model is provided, followed by discussion on relevant South African studies with the model, as applied on youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. The chapter is concluded with a brief discussion of the Living Systems Theory for Vocational Behaviour and Development (LSVD), which builds on Living Systems Theory and the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF.

### Defining Career Development and Career Theory

Vondracek and Porfelli (2008) described career development as a continuous lifelong process of human development. An individual's evolving development over the lifespan is intertwined with various experiences that contribute towards an understanding of the self and career information, which then influence career decision-making. In addition, contextual factors impact on the nature and meaning of work for individuals (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Career theories are the systems or frameworks that attempt to explain career-related behaviour and is critical in career development as they "provide the parameters within which we can understand and hypothesise about career behaviour and choice" (Watson & Stead, 2017, p. 21). Theory can be viewed as being similar to a roadmap: "Maps and theories are representations of reality designed for a particular purpose to help guide the user's understanding of the terrain" (Swanson & Fouad, 1999, p. 4). It is career theory that provides the necessary direction that is crucial when assisting individuals with career choice and development, thus highlighting why an understanding of relevant career theories, explaining vocational behaviour and direction when supporting individuals with career choice, is essential in career counselling. It should be noted that the explanation of career behaviour depends to a great extent on this map and how it is interpreted.

## **Career Counselling in the South African Context**

The validity, applicability, and relevance of Western-based career development theories in the South African context has been widely questioned (e.g., Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Buthelezi et al., 2009; Maree, 2009), because they are not culturally sensitive and therefore not appropriate or applicable to diverse multi-cultural communities as found in South Africa. The assumption was that western theory and constructs had “similar meaning and relevance for different ethnic groups” (Stead & Watson, 1998; p. 290). It thus was assumed that these theories and constructs could be applied without adjustment to all population groups in South Africa. In particular, counselling theorists and practitioners were consequently challenged to think about the validity of career constructs in the contexts where they work (Stead & Watson, 2006). Requests for “a proper determination of the applicability of career theory to diverse population groups” (Maree, 2017, p. 106) then followed.

Further concerns with western-based theory highlight the notable autonomous perspective (Maree, 2013) and individualism embedded in western constructs, lacking consideration for “structural factors, group values and group achievement” (Spencer 1999, p. 9) that are common in disadvantaged and resource-constrained communities in South Africa. The needs and local practices of these communities are overlooked in the traditional theoretical career frameworks and psychometric assessments. Traditional theories on their own have proved to be insufficient for career development in South Africa when looking at the lack of job opportunities and the high unemployment rate in South Africa (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006).

Increased criticism of the suitability and relevance of imported theories in the South African context by various career researchers (e.g., Maree, et al., 2006; Maree, 2013) have led to calls to scholars to develop cross-cultural models and theories that are relevant, suitable and sensitive to the needs of individuals from diverse groups. Calls by career researchers resulted in moves towards post-modern perspectives in career development theory and counselling practices, locally and internationally.

The response to the calls for a change in career development approaches resulted in a global shift in career development theory and career counselling practices, with a move from a primarily quantitative, positivist approach to the acknowledgment and inclusion of qualitative, post-modern approaches (Maree, 2010). This move extended beyond the inclusion of qualitative approaches, to the application of a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the South African context (Maree, 2013). The application of more than one approach in career counselling allows for the triangulation and crystallisation of findings, consequently enhancing their reliability, validity, and trustworthiness (Maree, 2013). Maree, et

al. (2006) proposed that a holistic approach that considers both the individual and their environment is more appropriate for career interventions within the South African context.

### **Review of relevant Traditional and Post-modern Career Development Theories / Approaches**

Naidoo et al., (2017) indicate that career psychology stems from mainstream and vocational psychology, which originates from the United States of America and Europe. Career counselling in South Africa has been informed by western-based theories such as Holland's trait-and-factor theory and Super's lifespan, life space theory.

Discussion of traditional and post-modern career development theories and their applications in the South African context follows in the next paragraphs.

#### ***Traditional Career Theories***

Arthur (2014) indicates that traditional theories are representations of organizational careers reflecting a time when the ideal was to find a job, and keep it for life. Traditional theories focused on employment and professional advancements within a single-employment setting, throughout an individual's life and may have been relevant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Traditional career theories are known for placing an emphasis on individuals more than on the contexts in which individuals live and propose principles that are regarded as universal and applicable in all situations (McMahon & Watson, 2007). A brief review of selected traditional career theories informing career development, and relevant to this study follows.

#### **The trait-and-factor approach: Parsons**

Career theory development was limited before the 1950s, with the trait-and-factor approach most prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century (Watson & Stead, 2017). The earliest career theories that informed career development and career counselling practices, also known as the first wave of career development, are the trait-factor theories (Naidoo et al., 2017). The seminal work of Frank Parsons (1909) is of the earliest recorded vocational guidance works available on career development theory (Watson & Stead, 2017).

Although Parsons's theory has been critiqued for being "too narrow in scope to be considered a major theory of career development" (Zunker 2002, as cited in Watson & Stead, 2017, p 24), it is regarded as having provided the foundation for most modern career development theories (Brown, 2002). The trait-factor model has been absorbed into many other approaches to career counselling, called person-environment theories (Osipow et al., 1996). Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments, Super's Life-span, Life space Theory,

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-making (SLTCDM), all evolved from the seminal work of Parsons.

### **The theory of vocational personalities and work environments: Holland**

Holland made a prominent contribution to developing the trait-and-factor approach further (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016), basing his ideas on the fit between person and environment. Holland's model thus assumes that there is a reciprocal relationship that exists between people and their environments and that they influence each other (Swanson et al., 1999). According to Watson and Stead (2017) Holland's model proposes that an individual is matched to a specific occupation that meets their needs based on their interests, which are assumed to be fixed for their lifetime. People are thus likely to choose careers that are congruent with their occupational interests and where they can be around other people like them (Kidd, 2006). Career behaviour, according to the person-environment theory, is thus determined by an interaction between personality and environment.

Holland's (1997) model is centred around the concept that most people fit into one of six vocational interest profiles namely, Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC). Roberson (2018) indicates that career and occupational environments are similarly categorized in support of the six personality types. The Self-Directed Search (SDS) and the South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) are career interest inventories that are based on Holland's hexagonal model and are frequently used in South Africa. Research by Morgan and De Bruin (2015) on the South African Career Interest Inventory (SACII) and the structural validity of Holland's circumplex model in the South African context indicated that the model may be valid in the SA context, but that much research is still required to make the SACII a viable instrument for career assessments in SA.

The validity of Holland's hexagonal model in non-westernised and multicultural contexts has been critiqued for not illustrating occupational developments caused by global changes in the world of work (Maree, 2010). Finding a match between individuals and their work environments with trait-factor-theory alone is no longer sufficient (Maree, 2013), because objective tests frequently are inadequate and tend to miss the mark when it comes to assessing for subjective career counselling understanding and variables (Hartung, 2011). In addition, the person-environment fit approach of Holland has also been critiqued for its quantitative approach, as the client is assessed and feedback and recommendations are provided by the professional, deemed as the expert in the relationship. In providing a summary of possible solutions to the client, active participation by the client is diminished. More

research is recommended to determine cross-cultural transportability of Holland's model in African contexts (Morgan & De Bruin, 2018).

### **Lifespan, life space theory: Super**

Super's lifespan, life space theory evolved as a progression on from earlier trait-and-factor theories, whose focus was on career choice rather than on career development (Phala, 2019). In contrast to trait-and-factor theories, lifespan, life space theory places an emphasis on developmental and contextual factors of career development (Brown & Lent, 2013) recognising the influence of the family, peers, school, economy, and the labour market (Spencer, 1999).

Life stages, vocational tasks and the self-concept lie at the foundation of Super's lifespan, life space career development theory (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Super's theory acknowledges that career choice is a dynamic process that evolves as the person's life progresses (Kosine & Lewis, 2008) and that the individual's self-concept is regarded as changing as a result of accomplishing development tasks over the course of life stages (Super, 1990).

The theory proposes that people move through five stages during the career development process: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. "Movement through the five stages could be a flexible process where people recycle through certain stages during various periods of life" (Kosine & Lewis, 2008; p. 229). Super referred to this process as mini-cycling. Career maturity, a central concept of the lifespan, life space theory, signified the readiness and competence to make career decisions at a specific developmental stage, and to cope with the tasks of each life stage (Super, 1990); and this was then modified as career adaptability (Savickas, 1997).

A critique of Super's theory is that it assumes that choice is an option and fails to acknowledge that individuals do not all have the luxury to act in the interest of their self-concept (Spencer, 1999), since contextual factors such as family, culture, economic status may constrain their career decisions. The same applies to career maturity, where individuals do not necessarily decide freely whether they are ready or not ready to enter the world of work because contextual factors may impact on their readiness. Concepts such as choice and career maturity are thus problematic when applied to individuals from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Roberson, 2018). Furthermore, Stead and Watson (1998) made a case that Super's theory was standardised and validated on American white population groups and can thus, due to the differences in contextual factors, not be generalised to all population groups. The applicability of the theory for black South Africans has been disputed and

recommendations are that the theory should be re-investigated by local researchers for use within the South African context.

### **Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT): Bandura**

Social Learning Theory (SLT) originating from the work of Bandura is regarded as “perhaps the most influential theory of learning and development” (Nabavi, 2012, p. 5) and works from the premise that interactions with the environment and teachings from these interactions, impact on career choice (Swanson et al., 1999). According to SLT, individuals learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modelling (Nabavi, 2012). The rationale behind SLT is that our thinking, and therefore our career planning, is influenced by our environment and that career ideas and decisions of individuals have their origins from encounters with their environment. The environment includes the influences of role modelling by significant others such as parents and relatives on career thinking. Planned or unplanned learning opportunities (encounters) from the social environment have an impact on the career paths of individuals (Akkermans et al., 2018) and are considered as useful for career discussions because career counsellors can tap into them when they facilitate further career planning for individuals. A critique of SLT however includes that the environment is seen as the major influence of behaviour, viewing behaviour specifically in terms of nurture rather than nature; and consequently, underestimating the complex nature of humans and the impacts of for example physiology on individuals’ behaviour (Kirby, 2020).

By the mid-1980s Bandura’s research moved towards a more holistic focus and resulted in a change in emphasis to social cognitive learning theory (SCLT) (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). SCLT expanded on SLT and included the important role of cognition in learning, and its influence on behaviour and development. SCLT suggests that people learn by means of observation, understanding, predicting, and changing behaviours (Nabavi, 2012), thus social interactions are important influencers. However according to SCLT, learning may also occur without change in behaviour. Individuals may thus learn from observing or modelling others, but these learnings may or may not be evident in their performance or actions, depending on the role of cognition in learning. Choice in relation to careers is therefore “influenced by our beliefs as well as our capabilities” Bandura (1997, cited in Nabavi, 2012). According to SCLT, individuals think and justify their social experiences, which then influence their behaviour and decisions.

The limitations of SCLT are that not all social learning is directly observed, hence making it difficult to measure and quantify social cognition. The theory is also not necessarily as applicable across different ethnic groups (Lent et al., 1994) and research has not considered enough the contextual influences in career choices, both those that are supportive and those

that might be barriers (Lent et al., 2000). Furthermore, the theory seems to ignore the influences of development, since it does not differentiate between child and adult learning.

### **The Social Learning Theory of Career Development (SLTCD): Krumboltz**

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Development (SLTCD) provides further explanations for people's career decisions (Krumboltz & Levin, 2004). This theory is similar to the SCLT of Bandura in that it also suggests that the social environment of people influences the manner in which they perceive the world and their subsequent decisions. However, Krumboltz (2009) also emphasises "happenstance" and the influences of both planned and unplanned life experiences. The theory considers the unpredictability of life and people's difficulties with decisions in this rapidly changing world of work. The impact on career education is that the theory promotes the development of curiosity and learning, suggesting that people should not merely choose a career by matching themselves to a specific career, but should instead observe and learn from fluctuations and trends in the world of work and become active participants in future career planning.

In conclusion, although traditional career theories have a place in identifying the factors that might influence career development, they have been critiqued as being too simplistic for complex 21<sup>st</sup> century career demands (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Traditional career theories and approaches cannot on their own adequately serve to meet the demands of the field, because they do not reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century realities; and in the South African context and omit to address the needs of diverse, multicultural groups (Watson & Stead, 2017; Maree, 2019). The impact of contextual influences on the career development of individuals are not reflected enough in traditional theories (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Contextual factors such as poor and limited career education in schools, socio-economic constraints, unemployment and many more (Stead et al., 2004; Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006) are all prevalent factors impinging on the career development of learners in disadvantaged and resource-constrained communities in SA. Career decision-making and guidance are informed by career theories; therefore, it is essential that career theories applied within the SA context should be inclusive and reflect circumstances for all citizens, including those who are marginalized.

Researchers have proposed that career development needs in South Africa could be more appropriately addressed with the application of a combination of quantitative-qualitative approaches (Amundson, 2006; Maree, 2010; Watson & Stead, 2017). These involve using both traditional and post-modern approaches that include the narrative or storytelling perspective. Discussion of relevant post-modern theories, models and approaches follows.

### ***Post-modern Approaches / Theories / Models***

In response to the critique noted above, there have been moves, locally and internationally towards post-modern perspectives (Maree, et al., 2006). Postmodernism, which is a collection of theories and approaches with similar features, views reality as being created by entities that differ regarding personal, historical and cultural contexts (Hargenhahn, 2005, as cited in Maree, 2013). Post-modern approaches or non-traditional theories emphasise the exploration of careers that exceed the boundaries of single employment settings and underline the impact of the environment or contexts on career development. McMahon and Watson (2007, p.171) indicate that post-modern career research underlines “subjectivity, perspectivity, multiple truths, interpretivism and context”.

Post-modern approaches differ from traditional approaches in that the role of the individual, the environment, and the interaction between the two are emphasised (Watson & Stead, 2017), as opposed to the narrower focuses and lack of consideration for context in traditional approaches. They encourage individuals to actively construct meaning from their own experiences, gaining insight into their own realities, “with an emphasis on the personal and contextual nature of career development” (Roberson, 2018). Career decisions are believed to be influenced by other individuals, the environment and society at large, and the exploration of, and interaction with the various systems elaborate meanings and understanding regarding career development (Patton et al., 2017).

In post-modern approaches the client becomes a much more active participant in constructing an account of their own reality and the counselling process becomes a collaboration between the professional and the individual. Individuals are thus no longer merely passive receivers of information and skills from professionals, previously regarded as the experts in the traditional approaches. Post-modern approaches are therefore interactive in nature and focused on eliciting and interpreting the life stories of clients (making meaning) as well as on the interpretation of objective test results of clients (Maree, 2013).

### **Relevant Post-modern Career Perspectives**

The following theories of career development were regarded as relevant to the study because they also emphasise the interaction between individuals and the environment, therefore underlining the importance of context in the career development of individuals. These theories have been extensively applied with learners in disadvantaged communities and have been deemed applicable for use in such contexts. Their strengths and weaknesses for use in disadvantaged communities is briefly discussed in support of my decision to apply the Vondareck et al., (1986) DCF in this study.

### **Life-Design Paradigm (Career Construction Theory): Savickas**

Post-modern career research by Savickas (2012) in the form of his Life-Design Paradigm is a major contribution within the post-modern field of career development. Savickas's Life Design Paradigm contains elements from Guichard's Life-long Self-construction theory, Savickas's Career Construction theory (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016) as well as the Systems Theory framework of Career Development (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

Savickas (2012, p. 13) indicates that "the paradigm for life design interventions constructs career through small stories, reconstructs the stories into a life portrait, and co-constructs intentions that advance the career story into a new episode". Life-design counselling is based on stories that show the individuality of clients and positions the client as well as the counsellor as subjects in the counselling process, unlike vocational guidance that is based on scores and measures the client against models, patterns and occupational groups (Savickas, 2015).

According to Savickas (2012), successful lives and careers are designed in social contexts and require reflexive construction, deconstruction, co-construction, and reconstruction of individuals' life stories. In life design counselling individuals are presented with an opportunity to construct their own careers by telling their small stories and thus to increase their "adaptability, narratability, intentionality and activity" (Maree, 2017, p 111). Foxcroft and Roodt (2013) indicate that the strengths of career construction and life design counselling lie in recognizing that individuals know themselves best and are therefore the experts of their own lives. It is this focus on the individual and their story that suggests that the life-design approach may be well suited for use on individuals from marginalised communities.

In recent years, the Career Interest Profile (CIP; Maree, 2007) has been used widely across different groups in SA, and shows consideration for language, culture, and other contextual variables, providing the counsellor with subjective and objective information that can be applied in counselling (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). Although the CIP is likely to work very well in the career development of learners from disadvantaged public schools, it is not easily accessible to learners in financially constrained communities, due to the cost implications in acquiring the interview schedule and resource material.

### **Psychology of Work Perspective: Blustein**

Blustein's psychology of work perspective is very relevant for career development in communities that have been traditionally oppressed because of age, race, social class, gender and being resource constrained (Blustein, et al., 2008). The authors indicate that career counsellors lack tools to explore the lives of individuals who cannot access social and financial capital (Duffy, et al., 2016). This perspective signifies that for marginalised individuals work is

not necessarily based on the expression of their talents, interests or personality, but instead it is driven by contextual factors and based on survival. The work experiences of marginalised individuals, according to Duffy et al., (2016) are strongly determined by their contexts, and work-based transitions are consequently involuntary. The opportunity for self-expression, self-determination and career choice are thus limited or lacking in marginalised communities. The inclusion of the psychology of work perspective into vocational and work-related counselling allows for the inclusion of individuals who have been oppressed and “lack a strong voice” (Blustein et al., 2008, p. 305), subsequently allowing for the reshaping of the career lives of individuals that have been relegated to low social positions.

### **Systems Theory Framework (STF)**

The System’s Theory Framework (STF) of Career Development proposes that individuals are located within multiple (individual, social and environmental) systems that consistently interact with each other (Patton & Mc Mahon, 2006). The STF refers to the “complex interplay of influences through which individuals construct their careers” (Patton et al., 2017, p 89).

The *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)* of Patton and McMahon (1999) is a qualitative assessment that is grounded in constructivist theory and the STF. The MSCI provides a framework that can be used by clients to visually present the collection of micro-systemic influences, as relevant to their own career stories. STF and the MSCI are regarded as suitable for use in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and within the diverse South African context, because they are sensitive to variables such as ethnic cultural influences, socio-economic status, and other contextual variables (Patton & McMahon (1999). Local research, for example by Kuit (2006) and Geijsendorpher (2008), indicated that the MSCI can also be applied in group settings for career education and the materials have been successfully applied in the South African context with black and white middle-class high school students. The MSCI is however not easily accessible to learners from public schools in disadvantaged communities because of cost implications of the MCSI assessment materials, which are unlikely to be accessed by financially constrained communities.

### **Ecological Systems Theory (EST): Bronfenbrenner**

Although Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (EST, 1979) is not a career theory, it is applied in career development (as for example in the STF above). Bronfenbrenner’s EST explains the context and quality of the individual’s environment and how multiple levels of direct and indirect social influences impact on the development of the individual. These levels provide an understanding of how learner development is shaped and influenced by a broader social context of family, school, friends, and community (Van Vuuren, 2022). Bronfenbrenner

argued that human development can best be understood when the entire ecological system in which the individual (learner) lives and where the development occurs, is taken into consideration (Roberson, 2018). EST thus suggests that career development of learners should consider the impact of social influences on career decisions, since the development of a learner is a product of the interaction between the individual and multiple relationships, and their cultural, social, economic, and political environments (Swart & Pettipher, 2019).

The initial EST refers to four levels of context that fit into and interact with each other. Each of the four levels viz., the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem describe a specific environment or context, and each system arises from “a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction” (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 22). In later years Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem, which was a time-related system. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described each of the systems and their direct and indirect influences as follows.

The *microsystem* is at the most proximal level in the ecological system and represents the individual's immediate physical, social, and psychological environment. It portrays the influence of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships between the individual and individuals within the immediate environment such as family and friends. The *mesosystem* depicts the relationships and social interactions between the different microsystems such as the relationships between two of the individual's settings, for example, the family, school, and peer group, at a specific time (e.g., a parent-teacher meeting). What happens in one microsystem impacts on another microsystem and these interactions impact on development. The mesosystem will thus include interactions between a learner and out of school engagements such as sports (Neal & Neal, 2013). The *exosystem* refers to external environments which influence aspects of the individual's life, but in which the person is not directly embedded. Individuals are indirectly influenced by the exosystem, even if they are inactive within it. Although not an active participant, the individual may be strongly influenced by decisions taken in these environments, for example, education or health systems where children are influenced by policies but do not directly participate in the making of these policies (Neal & Neal, 2013). The *macrosystem* symbolises the most distal level of environmental influences, such as cultural and political influences or ideologies inherent to certain societies or cultures. The bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1989) accentuated the role of the individual, who is at the centre of the environment, more than models that preceded it. In later years, to recognise changes over time an additional system, the chronosystem was added to the model, forming a five-system model. This acknowledges the dimension of time, its relation to interactions between systems, and the influence it has on individual development for example the transition between schools, or from school to tertiary institution (Neal & Neal, 2013).

Critique of the EST of Bronfenbrenner is that it does not adequately account for the proximal and distal contextual influences on individuals. Stead (1996) suggests that the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF, with its holistic perspective and emphasis on proximal and distal influences on the individual may be an effective tool to understand the career development of black adolescents, pre- and post-apartheid. A realistic and contextually sensitive approach to career education with black learners has been supported by career researchers (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Stead, 1996). This study builds on the work of Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018) and Phala (2019) who all applied the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF in their research with participants from disadvantaged communities.

### **The Developmental-Contextual Framework (DCF): Vondracek et al. (1986)**

Watson and Stead (2017) state that the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) is a conceptual framework that draws from the ecological theory of human development and that it is designed to assist with theory development. It is not a career theory per se. The multiple and dynamic relationships between the individual, the frequently changing environment, and the influence that these relationships have on each other, is at the core of this framework. Phala (2019, p. 12) describes the framework as “a progressive, mutual accommodation between an active growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives”. The framework suggests that career development does not happen in isolation and that there are dynamic interactions between the individual and the environment. The relationships between the different environments affect each other, as well as the larger context in which they are embedded. These dynamic relationships are portrayed in the framework, with bi-directional arrows between the person, the proximal (micro-level) and the distal (macro-level) environments (Phala, 2019).

When “a person’s characteristics of individuality match or fit the demands of a particular setting, adaptive outcomes in that setting will accrue” Vondracek et al., (1986, p. 81). Dynamic processes that take place between the individual and the environment expose the individual to encounters that will determine whether potential will be facilitated or constrained (Watson & Stead, 2017; Swart & Pettipher, 2019). This implies that characteristics that are incongruent in the environment of the individual are thus likely to dwindle. The model thus recognizes that the self-determinism and agency of the individual and the dual nature of influence between the individual and the environment across the life span, impact on career development and decision-making (Watson & Stead, 2006).

The DCF, with its consideration for the dynamic interactions between the individual and multiple factors from the environment, has made a substantial contribution to career psychology. Research from the developmental-contextual perspective was done to illustrate

career development in South Africa during the Apartheid era (Stead, 1996). Changes were made to the Vondracek et al. (1986) framework, making it suitable for application with black adolescents; suggesting that with relevant adaptation the model has potential to be applied with learners from disadvantaged public schools, as in the case of this study.

The DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) is portrayed as consisting of four microsystems and eight macrosystems with bi-directional arrows indicating relations amongst the microsystem and macrosystem which, Vondracek et al., (1986, p. 80) refer to as “the relation between the individual attribute(s) and the contextual feature(s)”. The Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF is presented below, followed by an exploration of its features.

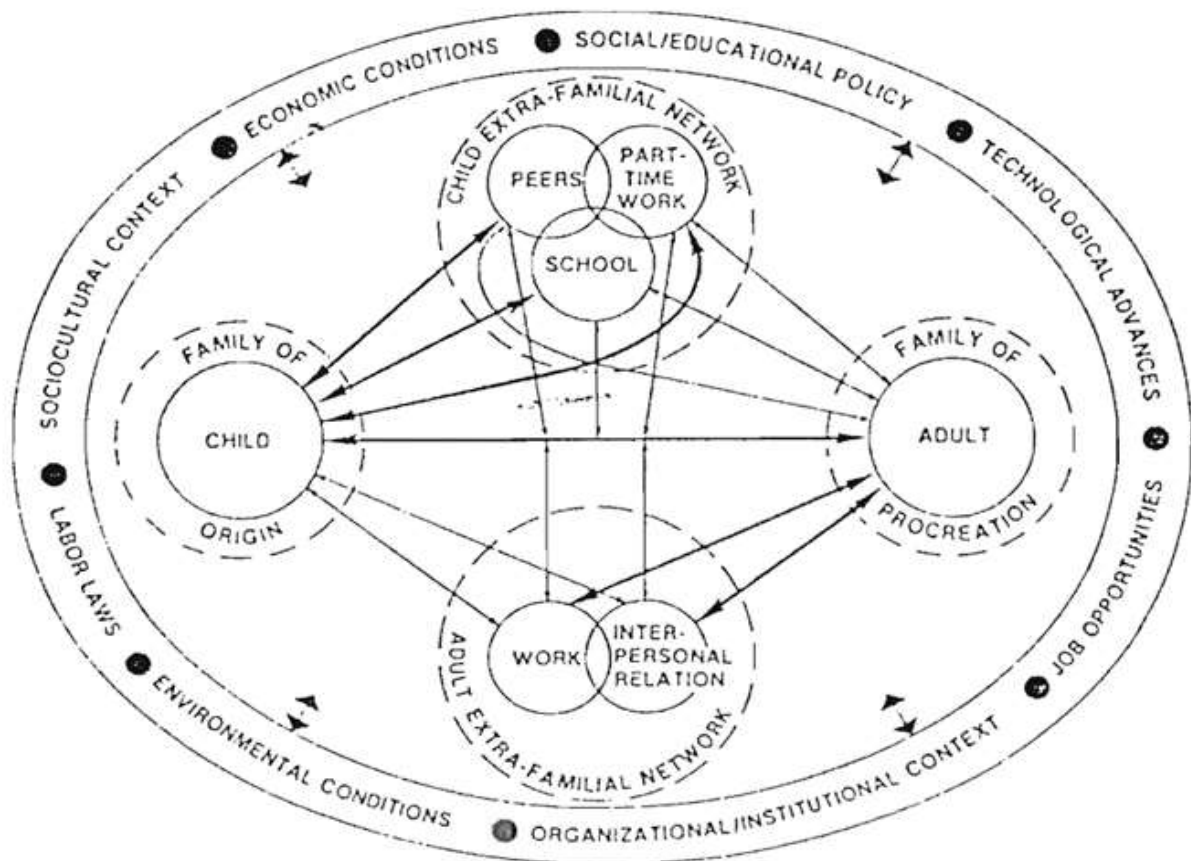


Figure 1 *The Developmental-Contextual Framework of Career Development.* (Vondracek et al., 1986)

## **Microsystems**

Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.22) defines a microsystem as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics”. The microsystem is regarded as the proximal and immediate environment in which the individual lives. The Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF has four central microsystems represented in separate circles to illustrate the relative importance of these different systems as they evolve over time. These are the family of origin, the child extra-familial network, the adult extra-familial network, and the family of procreation. Each of the microsystems signifies a part of the context in which the individual is embedded and represents the individuals’ immediate environment that directly influence the behaviour and development of the individual (Vondracek et al., 1986).

### ***The family of origin***

The background of the family is regarded as “a cluster of powerful forces that shape the capacities and accomplishments of an individual throughout their lifetime”, (Bachman 1970, as cited in Vondacek et al.,1986, p. 49). According to Savickas (2012), children assume a particular position in the family and then view the world from that point. Elements within the environment, that is activities, interpersonal relationships and various roles provide for the connections between the developing person and the specific context (Vondracek et al.,1986) of relevance at the time. Literature indicates that career decision-making of children is influenced by interpersonal relationships and that career aspirations of children are sometimes strongly influenced by the family (Ajayi et al., 2022; Robinson & Diale, 2017).

Akosah-Twumasi et al., (2021) state that obtaining parental approval and prioritising family responsibilities and commitments are key needs in children. Denial of or disregarding of parental preferences in the career decision-making process is therefore likely to make career decision-making more complex for learners in the African context. We are however reminded that in some circumstances, although support could be obtained from the family, parental contribution to the career planning of their children might be minimal (Albien & Naidoo, 2017) and that parents and their children may often seem to be ill-informed about the intricacies that go into career planning, job acquisition and information on how to succeed in the workplace (Bray et al, 2011). This suggests that parents may also lack basic career information and need to also be brought to into career discussions during the career development of their children. Theron’s (2016) research indicated that intergenerational career expectations can be narrow and that shifts in career knowledge and intergenerational career expectations should be

facilitated, to contribute to the success of marginalised learners. The above is particularly critical based on the findings by Kumar (2016, as cited in Ajayi et al., 2022, p. 107) “that parents have considerable influence on their children’s choices of profession.”

### ***The child extra-familial network***

The child extra-familial network consists of peers, the school and part time work (Vondracek et al., 1986). A description of each of these systems follows.

#### **Peers**

The career decisions of learners are influenced by their peers (Ajayi et al., 2022) in various ways. Peers play an important role in the career development of learners by virtue of engagement and socialisation with each other in various contexts from sport, cultural activities, classroom discussions, chat groups and many other social platforms. It is the engagements within various contexts that expose learners to self and career information related to themselves and others (Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Albien & Naidoo, 2017), which may be similar or different to those of their parents and other immediate family (Phala, 2019). Although the influences by peers could either facilitate or constrain career decision making (Albien & Naidoo, 2017), they provide a supportive role by affording each other access to crucial information for career decision making. Career information and guidance from peers are crucial for career development, especially when “traditional routes such as school career guidance are not functioning well” (Ajayi, 2022; p. 108). as evident in disadvantaged public schools in SA. In disadvantaged communities, siblings who have completed schooling and are unable to become employed play a critical role in influencing the career development of their immediate siblings and in the community at large. Not being able to find employment, regardless of a NSC, either encourages or discourages learners. Learners may opt to persevere and aspire towards attaining qualifications beyond the NSC level, hoping these will take them out of their current situation; alternately learners may become discouraged because the large number of unemployed, but matriculated youth, in their community does not instil hope for their future.

#### **School**

Vondracek et al. (1986, p. 49) describe the school context as a combination of “activities, interpersonal relations with teachers, other students and guidance counsellors, various roles and role expectations and physical, structural and material features”, an influential micro-system in career development. The authors regard the school context, after the family, as the most important microsystem because of the strong influence it has on the career development

of learners. Research has shown that career information provided in schools may be an important influence in the career decisions of learners (Ajayi et al., 2022).

Spencer (1999) indicates that learners develop expectations about the world, confidence, and self-efficacy through interpersonal relations at school. It is these engagements with others at school that may shape their career development. Career development is however dependent on resources available at schools. Apartheid-era Bantu education in South Africa created a discrepancy between the career education provided in affluent schools and schools in rural or disadvantaged communities where "schools in rural areas were the least resourced of all, their teachers the most underqualified, and their learners the most in need of expansion of the knowledge of the world of work" (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999, p.7). The SA educational policy's mandate and responsibility is to guarantee that all learners receive career education and facilitation during their schooling (DBE, 2012). Despite this mandate, the discrepancies described by Akhurst and Mkhize (1999), are still prevalent in marginalised communities in SA. Career service delivery is impacted negatively when content is poor, career resources are lacking, teaching and career exploration time is limited and the training of career practitioners (both educators and counsellors) is inadequate.

Problems with service delivery in public schools in disadvantaged communities has resulted in learners from poorer communities moving to schools that can better cater for their educational and career needs. This pattern has resulted in learners having to attend schools further away from home, incurring financial costs, because they want to access a more comprehensive curriculum than what is on offer within their immediate schools. Learners whose parents cannot afford the transport and tuition fees of schools outside of the community, are forced to remain at under-resourced schools within the community, following a narrower curriculum that generally does not include subjects from all learning areas. Subjects such as Mathematics, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Accounting are often not on offer at all schools within disadvantaged communities. At times there may not be qualified educators to provide tuition in such subjects, which results in learners who want to take certain subjects needing to transfer to schools where they are able to access teaching and learning opportunities in these subjects. The career prospects and career decisions of learners with good potential to succeed in these subjects, but whose families cannot financially afford to send them to other schools, are thus seriously affected as subjects fall away when too few learners take them up. Essential career information, held by the learners that leave, is also lost to learners that remain within the community's schools, resulting in diminished peer information and motivation regarding certain subjects for these learners.

### **Part-time work**

Part-time work settings encountered by children who take up work influences their career development (Vondracek et al.,1986). When learners take on different life roles and participate in part time work from a young age by performing chores, they take on the role of a worker, which helps them to improve their career development because the opportunity to acquire abilities and competencies linked to a career utilising these roles (Phala, 2019). In SA learners from rural and very poor urban communities rarely have an opportunity to work in part-time formal employment, since they often perform informal and unpaid work within the family home (Spencer, 1999). Child headed households, where children take on adult responsibilities because adults are absent, are common in South Africa (Mturi, 2012). The work performed by these learners within their homes are often because of family needs, and although this exposes children to certain work skills and values, it restricts them from accessing broader career worldviews that could be obtained in formal and structured work environments. Opportunities to practically explore job prospects by job shadowing as prescribed in the LO curriculum, also do not exist due to limited access to workplaces, the abilities of parents to network or access opportunities, and constrained financial resources in the communities. Financial resources to afford learners the opportunity to travel daily to places, where they could observe others in the workplace, are also limited. Learners are consequently required to rely on other avenues to observe workplace engagements and behaviours, such as reading, television programmes, movies, and peer group sharing. The learners that may be able to access airtime, will visit social platforms, which may not always be reliable, especially when sites are not frequently updated.

### ***Family of procreation (adult)***

The transition from youth (schooling) to adulthood (work) is regarded as an important period for families, communities, and the country's economy (Phala, 2019), since it is during this period that individuals move from being dependent on their families and the community, to becoming employable and independent. Although learners aspire towards pursuing various careers for many years whilst in school and finishing school, many are not nearly ready for the challenges that comes along with this transitioning, particularly those learners from marginalised communities where adequate and relevant career education is often lacking. Bray et al. (2011) describes the transition from adolescence to adulthood as intense and complicated. Activities during the transition period include awaiting employment opportunities after completing grade 12, being employed full time or part time, or pursuing full time or part time tertiary studies.

Learners with barriers to learning are also inclined to drop out of school, when attending school is still mandatory (between the ages of 7 to 16 years). These learners and their parents are often less likely to consider transitioning to alternative career paths based on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The reason is that TVET is associated with non-academic and practical education paths, written and developed for black South Africans (Perry 2009, in Theron, 2016).

Working and employment affords learners the opportunity to move out of the family home to live independently on their own, or with peers. Whilst transitioning happens for all learners, it should be noted that there is no fixed time to transition as it occurs at various stages of the individual's life and that it is also not the same for all learners.

The above is particularly the case for girls that are impacted by teenage pregnancy in schools. The following statement by Cloete (2022, p. 1) is alarming regarding the career development of girls: "Of every three learners who fall pregnant, only two will return to school". The *Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools Act* has been the DBE's response to support learners who may become pregnant in schools; and aims to prevent discrimination against pregnant learners in schools, to potentially curtail the adverse impact of teen pregnancy on girls. Despite the policy being in place, there are learners that do not return to school during pregnancy, or at times do not ever return to school after a pregnancy. When learners do return to school, the responsibility of parenting may impact on their schooling, such as absenteeism when giving birth as well as when the baby is ill, reduced homework and study time being available and exclusion from participation in extra-mural and social activities. All these and many other socio-economic factors, such as possibly adding to existing financial challenges within the home, may impact, derail or even stunt the career development of these learners. It should be noted that transitioning for South African learners in disadvantaged communities is often very challenging due to contextual factors prevalent in the communities where they live. "It is therefore imperative that school managers and governing bodies ensure that the rights and development of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are taken in respect of pregnant schoolgirls" (WC Policy on Pregnancy, Report by IMG Planning, n.d).

### ***Adult extra-familial network***

#### **Work**

Youth is seen as a time in which young people are obligated to take greater responsibility for themselves and for others in their lives (Glaser, 2018). Youth that are financially secure

contribute on a micro-level to their own and their family's needs, and on a macro-level to the economy of the country by becoming less dependent on government support (De Wet, 2017).

Working people create wealth and by working they embody the livelihood of the culture and the society in which they live (Vondracek et al., 1986). The impact of work on an individual is thus much more profound than merely being occupied during the day or earning an income (Spencer, 1999). By working, individuals contribute to the society in which they live, and to the economy of the country. Furthermore, work helps with identity formation and steers interactions and relations within a sociocultural context (Phala, 2019).

Spencer (1999) noted that the unemployment rate in South Africa impacted on people's career development, their identity, and their mental health. Unemployment deprives individuals from acquiring realistic ideas about work, as they are not afforded the opportunity to access and interact with others in workplace settings or to gain relevant work experience. The unemployment rate in South Africa and particularly in resource-constrained communities is very high. The official unemployment rate was 33.9% in the second quarter of 2022 (Stats SA Q2, 2022), but it is much higher for youth. With fewer employment opportunities in SA, individuals both young and old are forced to engage in entrepreneurial activities to create work for themselves. In recent years it has become all about creating employment (entrepreneurs) and becoming employable, rather than seeking employment. Maree (2017, p. 105) indicates that the notion of "employment" has, in the post-modern world, shifted to "employability" because it now is about having the necessary skills to create work for oneself and becoming self-employed, as opposed to becoming employed by others, hence a more entrepreneurial focus.

### **Interpersonal relationships**

Spencer (1999) noted that people adopt various roles based on whom they engage with, and that roles and role expectations within environments play an important part in understanding the context of career development. Vondracek et al. (1986) maintained that we do not live in isolation but constantly interact, relate, and influence each other. Expectations of how people should behave in situations will differ from individual to individual and because people will understand and interpret interactions differently, they will take away different things from these engagements. Within the South African context, there is a noteworthy difference between people influenced by western cultures, which are based on prizing autonomy and those embedded within indigenous cultures, which are based on collectivism (Phala, 2019). The aforementioned suggests that the influence and expectations of cultural views on career development in the workplace should not be overlooked, particularly within diverse

multicultural population groups. Feeling understood and supported in the workplace is likely to facilitate vocational growth and consequently good interpersonal relationships amongst colleagues (Adams, 2014).

## **Macrosystems**

The outer circle of the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF represents the eight more distal social and environmental contexts that are specific to and impact on the career development of individuals (Spencer, 1999; Phala, 2019). These have been identified because they derive from the broader macrosystem (often at national level) and have important influences upon career decision-making. The eight social and environmental influences of the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF are as follows: Social / Educational Policy, Sociocultural Context, Labour Laws, Environmental Conditions, Organisational / Institutional Context, Job Opportunity and Technological Advances (Vondracek et al., 1986).

### ***Social / Educational Policy***

The South African Bill of Rights is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa and stipulates the fundamental rights of all the people in the country (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). It emphasises that every person has the right to human dignity, equality, and freedom and hence the right to access adequate schooling and receive appropriate and satisfactory education.

With the inception of the new South African government in 1994 and policies such as the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), aiming to ensure that all learners can access quality education without any form of discrimination, it was presumed that the education system would change rapidly to accommodate individuals from marginalised communities. Unfortunately, the transformation in education has been slow within SA, struggling to overcome problems associated with the apartheid era (Stead & Watson, 1998).

Social and Educational policies impact on the other macrosystems and influence career development across the lifespan (Vondracek et al., 1986). As such it is essential that prospective students are informed about bursary schemes funded by the South African government. Two prominent bursaries are the National Student Financial Aid System (NSFAS) provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training to assist economically disadvantaged students to enable access to Higher Education (<https://www.nsfas.org.za>) and the *Funza Lushaka* Bursary Programme.

The South African Social Services Agency (SASSA) also provides grants that are intended to improve the quality of life of individuals. The Child Support Grant is aimed at low-income households and is intended to support parents in taking care of the basic needs of their children. Many families in disadvantaged communities access this grant, which often is used by parents to cover scholar transport costs, and depending on the quantile of the school, school fees. The grant thus assists in keeping children in school and provides learners from structurally disadvantaged communities with an opportunity to access education and subsequently to improve their career prospects.

The quintile system is another initiative of the government and the DoE to ensure that learners from disadvantaged communities can access education at low or no cost, hence catering for learning and teaching opportunities for all learners of school-going age (White & Van Dyk, 2019). This categorisation provides for no-fee schooling, as well as other provisions such as school nutrition and feeding schemes.

It is thus evident that if not for some of the Social and Educational policies described above, many learners in disadvantaged communities would have been further deprived of an opportunity to access school and to pursue tertiary education. Maree (2020, p. 122) indicates that when people live in conditions where they are not afforded an “opportunity to blossom” their self and career construction tends to be hidden or may even be destroyed. The Social and Educational policies of the government, even though constrained by economics, may open the doors of opportunity for many learners from structurally disadvantaged backgrounds, as is evident annually when learners from very impoverished high schools obtain high level matric passes.

### ***Economic conditions***

In South Africa, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the workforce. The official unemployment rate was 33.9% in the second quarter of 2022 (Stats SA Q2, 2022). The unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2022 was 27.9 % for workers 35 to 44 years of age.

The youth unemployment rate refers to that segment of the workforce between 15 to 24 years that is not currently working but actively searching for work (Stats SA, 2020). Statistics SA (2020) indicated that the youth are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market and the persistently high youth unemployment rate is amongst the most pressing socio-economic problems in South Africa. The unemployment rate in the age group 15 to 24 years in South Africa was 59.0% in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020. In 2021 the youth unemployment rate in

South Africa was 64.18 %, reflecting an increase of 4.56 % from 2020 (Statistics SA, 2020). Statistics further indicated that the unemployment rate for graduates in this age group was 33.1% during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020, compared to 24.6% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2019, which was an increase of 8.5 percentage points. The unemployment rate for graduates in South Africa is thus also very high, although it is lower than the unemployment rate of those with lower educational levels, implying that education is still crucial to positioning oneself in the South African labour market and that educated people seem to have better chances of finding employment with good working conditions. Chances of finding employment in South Africa appear to become less when people are not skilled or do not have any work experience. People in this sector are classified as discouraged work-seekers and are described as individuals that are actively seeking employment, but unable to find any form of employment and consequently lose hope of ever finding employment. The sector of young individuals that have disengaged with the labour market and are neither building on their skills base, nor continuing with further education and training to improve their skills are classified under the category of not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

Unemployment, particularly in youth, is regarded as a major national challenge in South Africa and urgent and coordinated responses to alleviate the unemployment of youth and expand employment in South Africa is required (Stats SA, 2020). Empowering learners from disadvantaged, under-resourced public schools with adequate career education may improve the career trajectories of the youth and is likely to also reduce the youth unemployment rate, and consequently the overall unemployment rate in South Africa. It should be noted that socio-economic status, which according to the American Psychological Association (2018) refers to the social standing or class of individuals or groups, is measured as the combination of education, income and occupation, having an effect on the quality of life.

### ***Sociocultural context***

The sociocultural context in disadvantaged communities is best described by the philosophy of *uBuntu*, which proposes that a person's humanity is expressed in their relationships with others (Lefa, 2015), meaning that people do not exist on their own but belong and exist in a community with others. That is, that "a person is a person through other persons" (Qangule, 2019, p. 15). *uBuntu* thus signifies the importance of relationships, interactions, influences and contributions from the family, community and the environment, and the impacts of these on the career development of individuals. The Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF is thus well aligned to the *uBuntu* philosophy, in that it reflects on the interconnectedness of systems and explains how we learn from our engagements with others as opposed to being self-reliant (Qangule, 2019). Phala (2019) noted that due to the collectivist approach of indigenous people,

particularly those living in disadvantaged communities, decision-making is often based on interactions with the family and within the community. Individuals are constantly learning from their engagements with others in the community and therefore learners within disadvantaged communities are likely to be impacted by activities that transpire within the communities they live; and therefore, their career decisions and career development will be impacted by the contextual factors within their communities.

### ***Labour Laws***

Both Spencer (1999) and Phala (2019) referred to the relevance of labour laws in the career development of individuals. In SA the Employment Equity Act 55 (1998) was implemented to redress workplace injustices caused by Apartheid towards certain designated groups. The aim of the act was to restore the dignity of individuals within the workplace (Phala, 2019). The vehicle used to address workplace inequality and discrimination was the Affirmative Action (AA) policy. The aim of the policy was to “deracialise” South Africa and to provide a platform to address the demographic weighting in the workplace (Reuben & Bobat, 2014) and consequently ensure that suitably qualified people from all designated groups would have equal employment opportunities and equal representation in all occupational levels in the workforce. South African labour law has however been critiqued for not protecting marginalised workers, particularly those in the informal economy (Fourie & Van Staden, 2022). The authors indicate that the inability of labour law to cover marginalised workers suggests that it is not yet coherent with the realities that are universally applicable in the world of work.

### ***Environmental conditions***

According to Spencer (1999) the living environment of individuals impacts on their overall development in that a well-resourced environment is likely to facilitate positive aspirations, whereas an impoverished and poorly resourced environment imposes challenges that make the attainment of aspirations more difficult. Almost 20 years later, Phala (2019) reflected on how geographical segregation, caused by apartheid, still impacted on impoverished black rural and township communities in South Africa. Despite changes post 1994, with black people migrating to urban areas, and some people in townships provided with government subsidised housing from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), that may or may not include basic amenities such as running water, electricity and ablution facilities, black people in underprivileged communities continue to live in a disadvantaged space. Learners from financially constrained communities in South Africa thus often live in overcrowded and impoverished conditions and continue to be less likely to access functional and well-resourced schools and adequate education, which consequently impacts on their career prospects.

### ***Organisational / institutional context***

The organisational and institutional context in which individuals find themselves impact on work aspirations and work satisfaction (Vondracek et al.,1986). The social networks that an individual belongs to provide access to work opportunities through social relationships and connections. When there are few openings, employment opportunities may thus be dependent on who you know (social networks, Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2011) and those connections are often related to social capital. Recruitment can be a costly and laborious process, therefore there are private companies that prefer to do recruitment via social networks and obtain referrals from individuals known to them, as opposed to employing outsiders that are unknown to them. Phala (2019) indicated that there also seems to be a preference to recruit from within the same socio-economic groups and from the employed sector, rather than from people who have been unemployed. It therefore often appears to be easier to seek and find employment whilst in employment. The socioeconomic status of individuals therefore impacts on career aspirations and development, and therefore less privileged individuals remain at a disadvantage as they are less likely to interact within networks that can facilitate work opportunities for them. Less fortunate individuals are thus in a disadvantaged position as they are more likely to be excluded when recruitment is done via social networks.

### ***Job opportunities***

Career choice and job opportunities were limited for most black individuals before 1994 because of the apartheid policies that were in place (Spencer, 1999). These policies, especially influencing education, were designed to make it difficult for black people to compete for jobs against their white counterparts whose education levels, geographical location and training gave them advantages. South Africa's affirmative action (AA) legislation was implemented in 1998 and aimed at ending discrimination and exclusion against the majority of South Africans from various spheres of life, including the economy (Burger & Jafta, 2010) and to ensure more equal opportunities for all. However, to date, youth from disadvantaged communities in South Africa remain challenged in finding suitable employment because of their families' limited resources to access quality education, inadequate career education and challenges with accessing relevant and current career platforms. Dube (2019) noted that young individuals not connected to the world of work are more disadvantaged and less likely to find employment because they are not linked into the social networks that may facilitate work opportunities for them (as noted above). Limited job opportunities further restrict chances of becoming employed or suitably employed. Even individuals with substantial

academic qualifications are often challenged when searching for suitable employment, although they seem to stand a better chance than individuals with no qualifications.

### ***Technological advances***

With the increase in technology and automation in the workplace, many people have lost their jobs and consequently have had to redefine their careers. As such career counselling should consider the impact of constant change in the world of work and develop and equip individuals so that they are able to deal with the change (Spencer, 1999). Maree (2012) indicates that the development of a lifelong learning attitude, in the form of continuous professional development is required to keep up with technological advances and to remain relevant in competitive working environments. Maree (2017) refers to the term “employability” within the post-modern world, with individuals needing to be responsive to changes in the world of work. Examples of changes in the world of work re evident where manual, physical work performed by various individuals has in recent years migrated to being managed through technologically operated systems. This has resulted in substantial job losses in occupations where roles previously performed by several individuals, can now be performed by a system with perhaps one individual operating the system. It should however be noted that job losses in one area, may often result in the creation of job opportunities in another area, with the creation of new careers; however, individuals need the requisite training and skills to access these.

### **SA Research on the Developmental-Contextual Framework (Vondracek et al., 1986)**

This study draws from, and builds on studies by Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018), and Phala (2019). These studies investigated the impact of developmental-contextual factors on the career development of various disadvantaged groups. The Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF of career development was utilised in all of these studies, highlighting that developmental-contextual factors play a pivotal role in career development, influencing the participants’ career decisions. All four studies emphasised that dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments can no longer be over-looked in career counselling or career education in schools.

### ***Stead (1996)***

Stead’s (1996) study was conducted shortly after apartheid was abolished in South Africa. Research in this study focused on the extent to which developmental-contextual factors impact of the career development of Black South African adolescent learners. Potential interventions that could assist with the career development of these learners were also explored.

Findings of the study were that counsellors required training regarding multicultural counselling techniques for use with individuals from various ethnic groups. Furthermore, suggestions were made regarding becoming more sensitive to the specific developmental-contextual needs of individuals in career development.

### ***Spencer (1999)***

Spencer investigated a CEP with students enrolled in the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) which was a one-year bridging course at the University of Natal, for black students with insufficient matric points to enter the Science faculty. Spencer facilitated career groups and aimed to assist the students with increasing their self-knowledge in relation to their career decision making. The programme with the students dealt primarily with the issue of contextualism, focusing on the role of the macro- and micro-contexts in shaping careers.

Findings from the study indicated that career education, without consideration for the context of individuals, is inadequate. Additionally, the value of group discussions for career exploration, in addition to other career education techniques, were underlined. The study also shed some light on the limitations of the western, individualist approach on career education and development, when working cross culturally as in the SA context.

### ***Roberson (2018)***

In response to the call for the exploration of career development theory and counselling practices suitable in the SA contexts, and building on Spencer's (1999) study, Roberson applied the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF for career intervention with young adults in a community-based setting, seeking employment. Contextual factors impacting on career thinking and decision making were explored via peer learning, through group discussions.

Findings from the research were that the intervention using the DCF model facilitated greater self-knowledge, increased career knowledge and consequently enhanced career planning. Group discussions were found to be a valuable resource to elicit career-related information from participants, as well as for extrinsic motivation. The research also highlighted the limitations of more traditional career development theories and the importance of the development of career assessment instruments suitable for the SA context. Roberson (2018, p. 62) noted that the DCF is a "valuable model in facilitating career exploration".

### ***Phala (2019)***

Phala's (2019) research was also based on the work of Spencer (1999). Phala applied the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF to investigate the relevance of career discussions with young

people from disadvantaged backgrounds, whilst they were completing a “second chance matric”, a critical stage in their lives. In the application of the framework, Phala focused on the dynamic relationship between an individual and the ever-changing environment and the bi-directional influence of each on each other. The aim was to gain insight into young people’s views of careers and the influence thereof on their career aspirations and decision-making.

Findings from Phala’s research supported the findings of Stead (1996), Spencer (1999) and Roberson (2018) regarding the investigation and implementation of relevant career interventions for the diverse, multi-cultural South African population, as well as the benefits of contextual approaches that highlight the dynamic interaction between an individual and their environment, with parents identified as the key influencers in the life of children. Phala (2019) found that her participants related to the model. Moreover, the study indicated participants’ greater openness to group career exploration, rather than individual counselling, because it catered for peer consultation and career discussions in what was constructed as a non-judgmental setting. She recommended that customized programmes built upon the DCF could be cost effective and hence suitable for use within disadvantaged communities.

In conclusion, future research with the framework for career exploration with resource constrained communities was recommended in all these studies.

### **The Living Systems Theory of Vocational Behaviour and Development (LSVD): Vondracek, et al. (2014)**

It should be noted that the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF has been in existence for 37 years and was always proposed as a model for further development. Below I will provide a brief discussion of the newer proposed LSVD, to inform the reader of the subsequent research and theory development by Vondracek, et al. (2014). The LSVD is however much more complex than its predecessor and therefore, following immersion in it a decision was made that it was less suited to educators who lack LO training and basic counselling skills.

The DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) and the Living Systems Framework (Ford, 1987) were precursors of the Living Systems Theory of Vocational Behaviour (LSVD) (Vondracek et al., 2014). LSVD is a combination of systems theory and important ideas about career-related behaviour and development. The LSVD explains how individuals construct their career pathways and emergent career patterns through interaction with resources and assets recognized within their contexts, and how counselling can facilitate these processes.

Vondracek et al. (2014) noted that learning takes place through Behaviour Episodes (BEs), which are described as the person-in-context units of analysis or the building blocks used by individuals to construct and remember experiences. The resultant patterns recognised by the person can be used to understand the developmental career history and for the construction of future career pathways. The authors indicate that BE schemas are created when people experience similar BEs over time. These patterns, which are self-constructed, can be reactivated through consultation with a counsellor to facilitate future BEs. With a new BE, a previous BE schema closely related to the goals and context of the new BE is selected. However, BEs have some flexibility, to be adapted as needed to guide new BEs. LSVD is thus a relevant theory for the acquisition of occupational skills and competencies, as they can be learnt by elaborating on BE schemas already in existence (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2014). Furthermore, the theory sheds light on the processes used by individuals to shape their lives.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of the study to be described in the next chapters is to find alternative, culturally appropriate and cost-effective ways to support learners from disadvantaged communities with their career education, within the school context. Learners from disadvantaged public schools are unlikely to access individual or group career counselling offered by trained professionals, due to the associated costs. Most are unlikely to access career services outside of the school environment and they are therefore dependent on the school and educators to support them with their career education. The literature review illustrated that the DCF of Vondracek et al., (1986) has potential as a model for career education and further development for use with disadvantaged groups in SA public schools (Akhurst & Spencer, 2000), since it considers both the individual and their context in discussions. Stambulova & Alfermann (2009, as cited in Rabie, 2017) describes individual career behaviour as specific to the context and therefore it should be explored within the cultural setting of the individual instead of making cultural comparisons. Additionally, the low-cost implications of using the model in career education makes it suitable for use within disadvantaged communities because it can be replicated by trained facilitators with relative ease, since there are few resource implications.

Vondracek et al.'s (1986) framework, with its overlapping and interrelated systems, as evidenced by research using the DCF by Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018) and Phala (2019), has the potential to influence the career decisions of learners or students from disadvantaged communities because it recognises the interplay between individuals and their environments. In studies, the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) was found to be responsive to the

career-related needs of individuals in disadvantaged communities, similar to the demographic composition of people in the study to be described.

The chapter that follows will explore the research approach and methodology designed to achieve the predetermined aims and objectives of the study as described in Chapter one.

## Chapter 4: Conceptual framework, methodology and programme design

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### Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the research methodology supporting the research design and the relevance thereof to this study. In exploring the research topic for this study, constructivist methodology was adopted due to its suitability to a context where individuals are seen as active constructors, interacting with and modifying their settings. The study will follow a qualitative research approach, with Action Research (AR) as the overarching mode of inquiry. A broad overview will be provided on the nature of qualitative research and AR, with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of applying them in this study. I will elaborate on the activities undertaken in the research process which, based on the research question and aims, was best addressed across three phases. The first phase was the exploration of the perceptions of the participants of the LO CAPS (career and career choice outcomes) for FET-phase learners. The second phase of the research was intended to explore the participants' perspectives on situational-contextual factors that impact the career development of learners. Then, the third phase focused on the development of the Career Education Programme (CEP) in collaboration with the educators and their responses to the collaborative work.

Due to the cyclical and evolving nature of this research, the steps in the methodology were not initially overtly clear, but these were shaped during interactions with participants. Willig (2013) explains that modifications during research may be required, based on how it transpires during pilot studies or the early stages of research. Spencer (1999) concurs, indicating that meaning can only be acquired through context and that the influences of the context on the study emerge, as the study progresses.

The methodology chapter will thus provide a comprehensive explanation of the research paradigm, the research design including the ethical approval process, the underpinning AR approach and research methods employed in the evolution and execution of this study. A profile of the participants, the means of data collection and analysis, and an outline of the steps and processes that led to the CEP being developed will also be described in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of aspects that enhance rigour in the research process and findings, including trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

## **Acknowledging the Social Self**

Various authors (Goliath, 2014; Neuman, 2006; Walshaw, 2008) refer to the importance of acknowledging the social self in qualitative research. The authors suggest that self-assessment of and reflection on the researcher's position in the community where the research will be conducted must be considered, due to pre-existing personal beliefs, values and experiences that were applied to identify the topic of interest. Walshaw (2008) refers to the self as being:

under scrutiny whilst exploring multiple layers of performing the art of research to accommodate the subjective, intersubjective and any emotional and unconscious interactions between the two roles of researcher and report-writer. The researcher must therefore, throughout the research process remain aware of performing the dual role of the 'self as a researcher' and the 'self as the writer of reports' (p. 324)

The process of reflection in this study will be guided by three questions proposed by Gillham (2005), combined with my own views:

- What do I expect to find?
- What would I prefer to find?
- What would I hope to find?

As a student advisor at the University of Pretoria, Tshwane, I was afforded the opportunity to provide career guidance to learners from various financial backgrounds. It was within this role that I became aware of the gaps in career knowledge between learners from affluent schools and learners from structurally disadvantaged schools, with learners from affluent public schools clearly more exposed to opportunities to acquire career information. Then, as a psychologist in private practice in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, in the EC, the career work that I was exposed to in schools again highlighted the vast differences in career guidance and exposure of learners from affluent public schools and their counterparts in disadvantaged public schools, who both follow the same LO (CAPS) curriculum. Differences in career education and exposure to career opportunities were thus observed across two different provinces in South Africa. This made me wonder whether there was indeed a difference and whether career intervention could possibly help learners from structurally disadvantaged public schools with their career development? I therefore was keen to explore this notion. At one stage, I was part of a group of four psychologists who annually administered subject choice and career assessments with learners in affluent public schools. These assessments were factored into the school calendar and paid for by parents. As part of my community outreach from my practice, the most that I could do at that time within the public schools in the

disadvantaged community where I was working, was deliver career talks to large groups of learners, in very limited time. This was also only requested by three of the fifteen schools in the target community of this study.

It was this discrepancy between the type of career guidance on offer in disadvantaged and more affluent public schools that had me wondering about the adequacy and efficacy of the LO CAPS (CCC) of the DoE, in supporting learners in disadvantaged communities. From my experiences, it seemed that the manner in which LO CAPS (CCC) was offered in schools does not adequately support the career development of learners, as it does not adequately reflect on or is not sensitive enough to the influences of contextual factors. In my opinion, awareness of situational contextual factors in learners' environments and the impacts thereof on the career decisions and development of learners can contribute in a meaningful way to the development of a CEP to support learners with their career decisions. If the career needs of learners were more effectively addressed in schools, it might impact positively on somewhat reducing the learner drop-out rate and improving the matric pass rate observed in disadvantaged public schools.

With the study to be described further, I was expecting to find that career education received little to no attention in disadvantaged public schools but was hoping to find that LO educators, who are often regarded as individuals that are more inclined to be of service to learner in school, would be open to explore avenues or apply techniques that allow for learners to obtain relevant career and self-knowledge required for career decision-making. I was also hoping that LO educators would be knowledgeable about the learners' contexts as these were to inform the CEP. In light of the above I asked the questions "Could FET-phase learners from disadvantaged public schools benefit from a customised CEP?" and "Would LO educators regard such a programme as constructive towards improving the career education of FET-phase learners in disadvantaged public schools?" I subsequently developed the aims for the study as discussed in the next paragraph.

### **Research Aims and Questions**

The main aim of the study was to develop and explore a CEP for structurally disadvantaged FET-phase learners in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, by applying a developmental-contextual approach. This would be achieved by applying the DCF of career development by Vondracek et al. (1986). The framework focuses on the dynamic relationships between an individual and their ever-changing environments and the reciprocal interactions between these elements of the system (Phala, 2019).

The broad question framing this research is therefore: “How could FET-phase learners from disadvantaged public schools benefit from a career education programme based upon a developmental-contextual approach?”

To investigate the above broad question, the following research questions will be explored:

1. What are the perspectives of FET-phase LO educators in disadvantaged public schools on the teaching and learning of the career and career choices outcomes in the LO CAPS?
2. How might an approach including contextual and situational factors be developed and implemented to shape the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools?
3. How did the career education programme evolve and what is the potential impact of the custom-developed programme on the career education of learners in disadvantaged public schools, according to the participating educators?

### **Qualitative Research**

The current study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research aims to understand aspects of social life by generating words as constructed by the participants, rather than applying numerical data or statistical forms of data analysis (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016). This is congruent with the aims of this study where my aim was to gather in-depth and rich information about 1) participating educators’ lived experiences about the implementation of the LO (CAPS) in public schools, 2) situational and contextual influences impacting on the career development of learners, and 3) participants’ views on the utility of the customised CEP developed during the study. The data obtained helped me to understand the experiences and challenges of the participating educators and the LO subject advisor, in the teaching and learning of careers in structurally disadvantaged public schools. With the data obtained, I was able to understand how intertwined contextual factors were with the career development of learners and how essential it was for CEP’s to be customised as per learners’ needs. I was also able to comment on the impact of contextual influences on the career development of learners, and to co-construct a customised CEP, collaborating with the participating educators.

Willig (2013) argues that qualitative research aims to obtain a record of the participants’ experiences, ensuring that very little is lost during the translation process. I am aware that the qualitative, and hence contextual nature of the study could pose constraints on issues such as validity, or the generalization of the data to other communities (Botma et al., 2010). However, I was reassured that the “flexibility and open-endedness of qualitative research methods, provide the space for validity issues to be addressed during the research itself”

(Willig 2013, p. 91). The rigour of this study was further enhanced by encouraging participants to ask questions, to correct assumptions and provide feedback on the findings of the study. Attempts were made to provide a close and accurate report about the experiences of participants by including their thoughts and opinions, and where necessary, concrete career supporting documents and activities were used.

### ***The Constructivist paradigm***

“A paradigm defines a researcher’s philosophical orientation which has significant implications for decisions made in the research study, including choice of methodology and methods” (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017, p. 26). Identifying the research paradigm is crucial to the research study as it influences the chosen strategy for the research, the mode in which the research will be constructed and how the research data will be analysed (Poni, 2014). The meaning and interpretation of the research data, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), will thus be informed by the philosophical view of the researcher and will reflect the researcher’s beliefs about the world in which they live.

The constructivist paradigm is regarded as a relevant paradigm of inquiry for this study because it “views the person as an open system, constantly interacting with the environment, seeking stability through ongoing change” (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 149). Howell (2015) concurs, indicating that central to the constructivist paradigm is the belief that realities do not merely exist out there, but that individuals construct their realities through continuous interaction with and modification of their social and cultural environments. I wished to explore the impact of the learners’ social and cultural contexts on their career decisions and overall career development and, according to Geijsendorpher (2008), within the constructivist approach the individual within context is acknowledged, because they play a key role in their unique career development. Atwater (1996) also describes cultural realities, in other words people’s outlook about themselves and the kinds of decisions they make, as being constructed through social interactions. The constructivist worldview thus recognises that people are not passively being influenced through social interactions, but actively participate in the social construction process. Concurring with this view, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that the constructivist paradigm supports the view that people make their own reality by the meanings and interpretations they give to their experiences.

The views of these authors resonate with my ontological assumption about “what is real?” in the community where I will be doing my research. I grew up and attended primary school in a similar community as learners referred to in the study, had less privileges than those in middle to upper class communities, worked in a private practice as a psychologist within a structurally disadvantaged community, and am currently employed with the EC (DoE) supporting both

advantaged and disadvantaged public schools. As such, my engagements with both types of learners and schools provided me with some insights into how learners' career decisions could be influenced by their environments. I was therefore aware that my interest in this specific study may be swayed by my personal experiences and that the interpretation of the findings was likely to be influenced by the reports provided by the participants.

I was aware, that due to multiple experiences of participants, they might express multiple meanings, which will be subjective in nature (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, the constructivist paradigm seemed to be best able to embrace participating educators' knowledge and understanding of how the socio-cultural contexts of learners shape their career decision-making. The paradigm also affords the study the opportunity to let educators reflect on and tap into the socio-cultural contexts of learners, to support them in the construction or reconstruction of their own career stories.

Rehman and Alharti (2016) indicate that the constructivist paradigm is applied by researchers to define the nature of the research enquiry which is based on the four dimensions of ontology, epistemology, methodology and method.

Richards (2003, as cited in Rehman & Alharti, 2016, p. 51) explains that ontology is "the nature of our beliefs about reality". It thus refers to the assumptions that researchers make about reality, how these assumptions exist and that which is known about it. Creswell (2014) describes our realities as socially constructed by our subjective experiences and us thus living in socially construed multiple realities. As such there can be no single reality (Poni, 2014). Robson (2002) suggests that as social realities are constructed by participants, they are likely to alter each time the participants change. In the case of this research study, my assumption was that the career education in the LO CAPS for FET-phase for learners in public structurally disadvantaged schools does not adequately reflect situational contextual factors that could affect the career decisions and career development of learners. For another researcher that which is real, at a given point and time within the same community, may be different.

Epistemology refers to the "branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated" (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 52). Epistemology therefore relates to investigating social contexts and finding out "how we know what we know" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 27). In this study I investigated the research question by interacting face-to-face with FET-phase LO educators in public high schools in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha to gather a record of their experiences about the career and career choices outcomes in the LO (CAPS). I also explored their perspectives about contextual factors that impact on the career development of the learners, respecting their context-specific constructions. Lastly, I explored and co-constructed, alongside the participants, a customised

CEP for FET-phase learners within the research community and hoped to evaluate the potential impact thereof on the career development of learners, thereby adding to knowledge about evidence-based programmes.

Methodology refers to the strategy that will inform the researcher about the nature of the data required for the study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). It refers to the practical manner that researchers use to find out what they believe there is to know (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The methodology of a study will thus describe the approaches, methods and procedures used in the research study to obtain the appropriate data to answer the research questions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) posed earlier in this chapter. Goliath (2014) indicates that the methodology is informed by the researcher's ontology and would include decisions regarding "which research design would best address the research question, what type of data to collect from whom, where and how, how to analyse the findings, and lastly, how to report on the findings in written form" (p.126). Considering the research questions, aims and objectives of this study, a qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate because I wanted to gather meaningful data, in order to reveal the perceptions and experiences of participating LO educators in their contexts.

The final dimension of inquiry are the research methods, which refer to the specific tools used to collect and analyse data. These are selected according to the research design, the research aims and the research questions of a study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). These will be described later in the chapter.

### ***Action Research***

Action Research (AR) was employed as a mode of inquiry in this exploratory study because of its concern with improving the quality of service or practice (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016). The aim of the study was to identify problem areas in the LO (CCC) curriculum in participating schools and to develop and explore an alternative career education programme to augment the current "service" currently offered within these public schools. Furthermore, AR attempts to recognise the multifaceted and intricate dynamics within the social context of individuals (Phala, 2019), which was what the researcher was trying to find for the implementation of Vondracek et al.'s (1986) DCF. As an Educational Psychologist working directly within these schools, I wanted a framework that would allow me to actively participate in the research and AR seemed most suitable, since it is described as a "learning framework that focuses on practitioners taking an active role in change through a series of activity cycles, which evolve based on self-reflection and collecting evidence" (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013 p. 410).

The basic principle of AR involves “identifying a problem, imagining a possible solution, trying it out, evaluating it (did it work?), and changing practice in the light of the evaluation” (McNiff, 2002, p. 7). It is thus through this cyclical and iterative problem-solving process that learning takes place and practice can improve. Within this study, AR formed the basis of planning and implementing the seven focus group sessions, which focused on proximal and distal factors impacting on the career development of structurally disadvantaged learners.

Participation was an essential feature in the current study. AR is strengthened by three core principles, namely democracy, justice and participation (Roberson, 2018). Ebersöhn and Malan-Van Rooyen (2018, p.1) indicate that “the use of participatory methodologies to generate data for development aims in marginalised populations is known”. It was therefore important to make use of participatory methods in order to make known the voices of people who had been previously oppressed in the Apartheid system, meaning that their knowledge was seldom previously represented in dominant discourses.

In this study I applied Collaborative Action Research (CAR) which aims to understand social practices through collaboration. McNiff and Whitehead (2011) argue that where teachers and academics are involved, the main concern of CAR would be to bring about educational improvement. I aimed to work as collaboratively as possible with the participants and as sessions progressed, included them progressively more in the actual decision-making and development of the CEP, to be implemented in their schools. CAR was also better suited to this study because I, and not the participants, evaluated the cycles and processes of the focus group sessions (Akhurst, 2022).

Akhurst and Lawson (2013, p. 211) assert that in AR “the work is ‘done *with*’ others, in contrast to other forms of research that is ‘done *to*’ others”. In AR data is thus generated in conjunction with the participants, rather than for the participants. As such AR researchers immerse themselves within the research as co-participants in the role of an insider-participant to understand and enable change from the perspective of an insider. It was therefore essential that I was constantly mindful of my dual role of facilitator and participant in the focus group sessions.

The main challenge with AR for this study was in earning the trust of participants and to be afforded an opportunity, as an external professional, to work with participants and to explore our perceptions and experiences of career education in school, as well as to explore the DCF for career development with their learners. One participant questioned my interest in the study in their school, indicating that she has been involved in research in her school at various times and that they never received feedback or benefit from being involved in studies. She indicated that research in disadvantaged communities is often done for personal academic gain by

researchers and rarely to benefit the learners. I was therefore aware that it was important to gain and earn the trust of participants because it was vital to the study, due to the cyclical nature of collecting and processing data. I could mitigate the above-mentioned concerns with previous engagements within the community schools, and my contributions with the development of materials to support educators in the community; as well as being employed within the EC (DoE) and requiring the data for the development of career support materials to support educators within the Nelson Mandela Bay District. It was therefore imperative that the participants and I work together to develop and implement the research (Maree, 2012). This point also emphasises the need for the research to also benefit participants, because it was aimed at an intervention, which they could implement in their teaching. Akhurst (2022) notes the suitability of AR to such small-scale interventions.

The cyclical and evolving nature of AR comprises the four stages of planning, acting, developing and reflecting. This process allows for newly generated insights and alternatives in one cycle, to be transferred over to inform and influence the activities of the next cycle (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013). In this study I applied the AR model of McNiff and Whitehead (2011) portrayed below. The actual implementation of the model is discussed alongside activities in Chapter six, with the Summaries on a Page (SoaPs, Akhurst & Lawson, 2013) highlighting the progression from one session to the next.

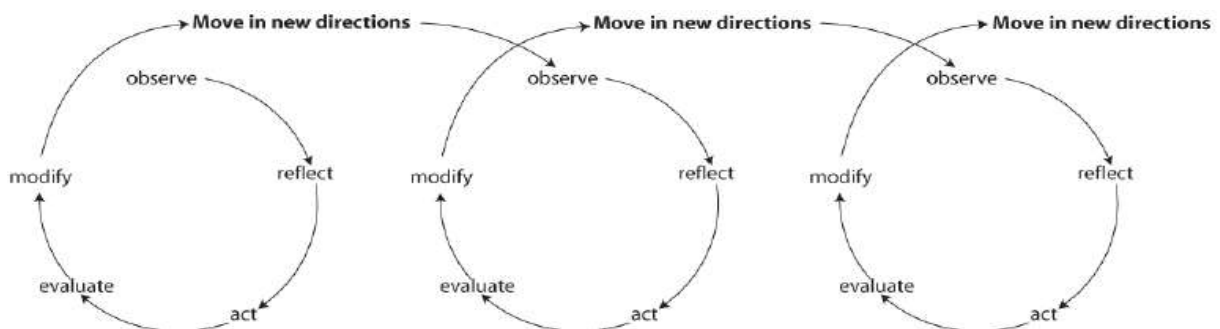


Figure 2 Action Research Cycles (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011)

In the research to follow, each cycle as shown in the diagram above, is represented by a single session. In each session, I would plan for the interactions and then systematically observe and reflect on what transpired. This evaluation then became the basis for the planning of the next session, and so on. These cycles were repeated seven times for each focus group meeting, with participants working “toward problem-solving and research evidence collected along the way” (Akhurst, 2022, p.115).

## Research Design

Kumar (2014) defines the research design “as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems” (p.122). The research design is thus the map or blueprint within which research is conducted and is implemented to guide the research process to obtain answers to the research questions. It is thus the research design that provides the action plan for the study (Taylor 2008, as cited in Human-Hendricks, 2017). In the research design the researcher reveals the participants of the study and how they were selected, what data will be collected, where it will be collected, and how it will be collected and analysed. Table 7 below provides an outline of the research design.

Table 7 Research Design

Phases	Actual Plan (Original plan Impacted by Covid-19)
Phase 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Telephonic contact made with the principals of participating schools, explaining the purpose and envisaged outcomes of the study and to determine interest. Initially discussion planned as face-to-face contact session with principals, but due to Covid, the plan was adjusted (with ethical permission from RU).</li> <li>* Document analysis: FET-phase LO (CAPS) documents were studied to obtain an understanding of the implementation of LO in schools.</li> <li>* Interviews were telephonically scheduled. Participant could either do telephone / Zoom / Skype interview.</li> <li>* Interviews were conducted. Due to network and data challenges, some participants requested a face-to-face interview, but abiding by Covid regulations.</li> </ul>
Phase 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Interviews were transcribed, and the data was analysed and interpreted.</li> <li>* Consultation with subject advisor regarding FET-phase LO Annual Teaching Plans (ATP's) to align these to the data (contextualise) and draw on it for the planning of the first FGS and the subsequent outflow of the contextualised CEP after the FG sessions.</li> <li>* Start of the FG sessions (aligned to the DCF).</li> <li>* Situational contextual factors per the DCF, were explored in each FG session.</li> <li>* Data analysis of FG sessions as it transpires followed by the development of the CEP, as the FG sessions unfold.</li> <li>* Facilitation of CEP lessons by participants in schools after each FG session.</li> <li>* Input of participants on CEP lessons and activities after implementation</li> <li>* Consult with LO subject advisor regarding input to CEP lessons and activities and alignment to ATP's.</li> </ul>
Phase 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Focus Group: Participant Feedback and Evaluation of CEP.</li> </ul>

## **The Research Process**

In selecting a method of data collection, socio-economic-demographic characteristics of the study population play an important role (Kumar, 2014). Research methods that were used in this study were selected according to the research design that provided the basic action plan for the study (Taylor 2008, as cited in Human-Hendricks, 2017) and responded to the research questions. Purposive sampling techniques, data collection methods such as document analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus-groups, followed by thematic analysis were all well suited to this study. Each of these selected methods will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

## ***Ethical Considerations***

De Vos et al., (2005, p. 63) defines ethics as:

a set of morals and principles that are suggested by an individual and group, are widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.

As a registered psychologist, the basis of my work rests upon the ethical standards as required by the Health Professions Council of South Africa. In addition, I needed to make an ethics application to the university prior to the study. In this I was required to outline the purpose of the research; describe each method of data collection and type and characteristics of the sample. I needed to specify the recruitment details and the nature of the information to be gathered, as well as the nature of the interaction(s), their frequency and duration, the procedure(s) involved. The application also required me to detail the gaining of permission, consent and assent; as well as the means of providing privacy to participants, and confidentiality of data; and data management, storage and use. Finally, I needed to describe the risks and benefits of the research and any potential conflicts of interest.

Following provisional ethical approval (Appendix A) from the Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC), I approached the EC (DoE) Head Office, based in Zwelitsha in King Williams Town, to obtain gatekeeper approval (Appendix B) to conduct research in the identified EC schools. As the EC (DoE) have scheduled sittings across the year, there was a relatively long waiting period before feedback was received, and permission was granted. Once written permission was granted by the EC (DoE), the relevant approval letter was submitted to the RPERC for full approval to conduct research (Appendix C) The approval letters from the EC (DoE) and the RPERC was attached to the letter to the

District Director at the DoE (NMBD), for permission (Appendix D) to commence with the study within the selected high schools in the district. Once permission was granted by the DoE (NMBD) I made telephonic contact with the 15 high schools to obtain permission to email the information and invitation letters (Appendix E) and consent forms for principals (Appendix F) to the schools.

Initially I was going to have one meeting with all the participating principals to explain the nature of the research but had to deviate to telephonic consultations and Zoom or Skype sessions due to Covid-19. I obtained the necessary permission from RU to review my data collection plan in this way. I telephonically contacted the 15 high schools to schedule meetings with the principals to collect the consent forms and the names of the participants.

Two principals indicated that we could meet in person at their schools and granted permission for educators to participate in the research. One of the two schools was keen to participate and provided details of the participant, but when interviews started, the participant was impacted by Covid-19 and was emotionally not in a good place to further participate in the study. Eight telephonic consultations were conducted with principals, who also accepted the invitation to participate in the research. Of the remaining five schools, two principals indicated from the onset that the educators were too busy and would not be participating, the other three principals indicated that they would follow up with educators and get back to me. However, despite various attempts to obtain the names of participants, I received none. Six schools were subsequently removed from the participating schools list.

I arranged to email the relevant information letters (Appendix F) to principals, describing the participants that were required for the study and the envisaged process and outcomes of the study. The principals identified the participants in the schools and provided me with the names and contact details of the interested participants. Interest was telephonically confirmed with the participants. The next step was to schedule the group meeting with the participants to introduce the study and process. I aimed to finalise the group meeting in term 1 and start with data collection in term 2, however due to Covid-19 my data collection process was completely derailed.

### **Informed consent and voluntary participation**

Prior to commencing with the study and actual sessions, participants were provided with an ethical clearance letter (Appendix C), consent forms (Appendix I) and complete details about what was expected from them and the duration and time commitments of the study (Appendix G). The research objectives of the study were communicated in writing to the participants within the invitation letter. Participants were again verbally informed before commencing with

the interviews and provided with an opportunity to ask questions, and to decline if they were not satisfied, once information was verbally clarified. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage, if they wished to do so. I also had a telephonic consultation with the LO subject advisor to invite her to participate in the study. An invitation letter (Appendix H) and consent form (J) was emailed to her.

Nine participants indicated a willingness to participate in the study at the interview stage. An educator interview schedule (Appendix K) and subject advisor interview schedule (Appendix L) with questions that could provide information to answer the research question, was conducted with the participating educators and the subject advisor. Participants were informed about audio recordings for data processing purposes of the study. They were also notified that all recordings would be destroyed upon completion of the study, once the required period for storing them had expired (Appendix G).

Nonmaleficence requires that researchers should ensure that participants are not harmed in any manner, nor be deceived by the researcher at any stage during the study (Goliath, 2014). Due to participant distrust about researchers often exploiting vulnerable schools and communities for personal gain for the acquisition of qualifications and lacking genuine interest and care for participants, it was critical that participants were not deceived. Additionally, I also ensured that participants would not be exposed to physical, emotional or psychological harm (Phala, 2019). The nature of information to be gathered and discussed for this study was not overtly sensitive or harmful, and although participants at times had different perspectives, based on their specific schools and experiences, discussions were done in a dignified and amicable manner. I however encouraged participants to inform me or to seek professional assistance should any of the content in sessions trigger any negative emotions in order to support them in accessing psychological services.

### **Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity**

To protect the privacy and anonymity of the group all identifying information was disguised and participants were identified by a numbering system only known to me. Participants were re-assured that all personal details would be excluded when writing up the results and that only my supervisor and I would have access to the raw data, where perhaps participants could be identified. Participants were also informed about the password-protected security measures put in place to ensure that no one had access to any of the raw data from the study. In the release of the findings, that is the publication of the thesis and the handing over of copies to Rhodes University and the EC (DoE), who require a copy based on the bursary

provided by the department for the study, particular care would be taken to uphold the rights and interests of the participants beyond the study.

### ***Research Population and Sampling***

Kumar (2014) points out that in qualitative research the selection of the sample is influenced by various factors. These include the researcher's belief that the participants have extensive knowledge about an event or subject, the ease in accessing the potential participants, the event or situation of interest, how typical the case is of a category of individuals, or simply that it is totally different from the others.

Furthermore, in qualitative research, there is no predetermined sample size. Instead, the researcher waits until the corpus of data reaches a point of saturation, where similar information or patterns are repeated, then data collection is no longer necessary from further participants.

Qualitative research generally makes use of purposive sampling (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016). Participants for this study were selected by employing a non-probability purposive sampling technique. Non-probability sampling suggests that participants were chosen by a process that does not give all the individuals in the population an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling, assumes that the investigation wants to discover, understand and gain insights and therefore the sample should be one that has the most knowledge, as well as be one from which most can be learned about the phenomenon to be studied. The criteria used for sampling is a key aspect of purposive sampling. The participants in this study were decided upon as they represent a "phenomenon, group, incident, location or type" (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016, p. 85).

Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for the study as it was assumed that the population group to be studied, the FET-phase LO educators and the LO subject advisor, had the most knowledge about the career and career choices of learners in the community studied because they are involved in the teaching and learning of LO. These educators were deemed to probably have more knowledge about how career education transpired in schools and the impact of contextual factors on the overall career development of learners, based on the nature of their engagement with topics discussed with learners in LO as described in Chapter two of this study. The advantage in applying purposive sampling to this study was the accessibility of the population due to being employed within the DoE and working within the district where the schools are located but also because of previous engagements with Northern Areas schools, as part of social responsibility initiatives.

Although I decided on purposive sampling from the onset of this study, it suited the study even better when I was prevented from continuing with data collection as initially planned in my proposal, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown, which included curfews, stay-at-home orders and many other societal restrictions implemented to curb the spread of viruses that caused Covid. The lockdown for South Africa was announced on 23 March 2020 for a period of 21 days, which was then extended and impacted on people's movements for a number of months. Due to Covid-19 regulations regarding proximity and group meetings, I could not access participants to continue with individual face-to-face interviews or focus group sessions. School closures resulted in backlogs in teaching and learning and educators were required to spend time on catching up on academic backlogs created during the lockdown period when they returned to school. Educators had little to no time to participate in out of school activities. I consequently was required to be economically smart with time and work within the periods when it was less busy in schools and when educators could avail themselves for contact.

The participants for the study were selected based on geographical location and experiential knowledge. Reflecting on the research question in Chapter one, the research population initially comprised educators from fifteen high schools in the Northern Areas and the LO subject advisor. Educators that teach the LO (CAPS) with FET-phase learners and subject educators in the phase that supported learners with career decision making, were included in the sample. Ten of the fifteen schools that were invited initially accepted the invitation to participate in the study. One school withdrew due to the educator being impacted by Covid-19 at the interview stage. From my personal engagements with schools in the past, I was aware that sometimes learners access educators that they are comfortable with for support, instead of the LO educator. As such the invitation to participate was also extended to educators teaching other subjects but supporting learners with their career needs. These educators were also likely to provide relevant career information to the study. There were however no participants from the latter group and all the participants in the study were teaching LO, even though some of them also taught other subjects.

Nine FET-phase LO educators from nine high schools and the LO subject advisor participated in the study at the interview stage. All nine participants were invited for the focus group sessions, but only six participants actively participated in the focus group sessions. One participant went on maternity leave when we started with the FG sessions. The other two educators accepted the invitation to attend the first two FG sessions but did not attend. One of the two indicated that she had other commitments that clashed with the FG sessions, but that she would like to have access to the career materials that would be shared with

participants. The other participants did not formally withdraw from the study but did not attend any of the FG sessions.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, gender variables were not used to include or exclude participants in the sample. There were however only females that responded on the invitation. Of the six participating schools in the FG sessions, only two schools had male educators teaching LO, both were reportedly young and new to teaching.

Regarding race and language, all but one participant were in the South African category where people are ethnically labelled "Coloured". Please note that this information is included here, due to the influences of Apartheid categorisation, which impacts on people's previous experiences of oppression, and in this context the term is not seen as derogatory (whereas in other countries, this might be so). There was one white participant at the interview stage. This participant withdrew due to being on maternity leave at the time of the FG sessions. Participants in the study were fluent in both English and Afrikaans and used a mixture of both languages to express themselves in the interviews and focus group sessions. I am proficient in both English and Afrikaans which helped a great deal with the flow of discussions. Since I also belong to the ethnic group labelled coloured, and worked within the Northern Areas, I was therefore also familiar with most of the colloquial language, jargon and slang that was used in engagements, which facilitated engagement between myself and the participants. Participants seemed to be at ease to express and share information in the sessions.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected for the study through various data collection techniques namely semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, focus groups, document analysis (DoE policies, field notes, journals).

### **Documents**

Document Analysis is a form of qualitative research and a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating both printed and electronic documents. As the aim of document analysis is to understand the realities of the participants (Silverman, 2010), all textual data that could possibly shed light on the research question must be accessed. Documents are easily accessible, manageable, reliable and practical resources which can be efficiently and effectively applied for the collection of data. As applicable to other analytical methods in qualitative research, documents must be analysed and interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around a topic (Bowen, 2013). The researcher should thus elicit meaning from the documents, gain the necessary understanding from the data and develop empirical knowledge, that is an understanding of the participants' realities. Corbetta (2003, as cited in

in Human-Hendricks, 2017) highlights several advantages of using documents for data collection as opposed to others, namely that 1) as a non-reactive technique, the information in the document is not subject to distortions as the researcher was excluded from the actions drafted in the document; 2) documents provide information about the past; and lastly 3) documents are cost-effective as they already exist and need not still be produced. Whilst documents are an efficient source for gathering data, limitations of these as data are also to be considered during analysis. Documents may be lacking in detail; they could have been designed for other reasons than research; they may be difficult to retrieve as well as be selectively biased (Bowen, 2013).

Bearing in mind the advantages and disadvantages of document analysis, the following sources were critically analysed:

- The LO CAPS (FET-phase) – Outcome on career and career choice
- LO career and career choice lesson plans (FET-phase)
- Other relevant DoE policies applicable to the study
- Previously published work on the LO CAPS (FET-phase) – Outcome on career and career choice; and
- Previously published career education programmes (FET-Phase).

I generated data from my field notes that I recorded whilst I observed participants during discussions and activities in the FGS. I also obtained vital information from their discussions before commencing with the FGS, whilst we were informally having refreshments upon arrival at the venue. Field notes refer to qualitative notes recorded by researchers during research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006); made during or after the careful observation of a phenomenon being studied. The notes are intended to be read as evidence that gives meaning and to assist in recall of the meanings made of experiences by researchers. Field notes provide first-hand information and can be accessed again at a time that is convenient for the researcher. A disadvantage of field notes is that dependability may be compromised because the circumstances of an event cannot be repeated, consequently this form of data does not allow for the original findings or conclusions to be validated by other researchers.

### ***Interviews***

Interviews are a verbal process by which individuals describe their experiences of the phenomenon being studied. The type of interview is determined by the specific need of the study and could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured; conducted with individual participants or groups in focus-groups settings (Henning, 2011). Interviewing is a process of finding out what individuals think and feel about their worlds (Silverman, 2010) and ultimately

leads to collection of the reports of the subjective realities of the participants, which is of interest to the researcher (Naicker, 2019).

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

The primary methods used for data collection in this study were semi-structured interviews, focus groups, documents, field notes and observations. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy. In it, the researcher poses a series of predetermined open-ended questions to participants. During the semi-structured interview, the interviewer makes use of a written interview guide, for educators (Appendix L) and (Appendix M) for the subject advisor, outlining the pre-planned questions or key words, then these are followed up by further probing and clarification, depending on the participant responses (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016). As the interview progresses, the interviewee is provided with an opportunity to elaborate on or substantiate what was asked (Human-Hendricks, 2017).

Special care was taken to design questions that were suitable to the sample group, namely LO educators with either diplomas or degrees in education. The questions were put simply but also in such a manner as to generate discussion. Verbal and non-verbal feedback was used to encourage sharing, as well as to indicate that what was shared was relevant and interesting. I attempted to draw all participants into discussions in the focus group sessions, and if not for being mindful of including all participants, I would have missed valuable information from a somewhat reserved participant, about how family structures differ and how the traditional view of family structures has changed; as well as how these have impacted on her career development. It reminded me to probe and prompt for input from other quiet participants in the group, when necessary. Collaboration was further enhanced by summarising and paraphrasing what participants shared, to ensure that the actual meaning of their stories was captured (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

### ***Piloting***

Smith et al. (2009) advise that a pilot study may help the researcher to become familiar with the interview schedule and research questions. According to Bell and Waters (2014) data collection instruments should be piloted to determine the duration of the questionnaire. After drafting my interview questions for the educators (Appendix K) and the subject advisor (Appendix L) and submitted them to my supervisor. Based on her input I adapted the questions and piloted with two educators, both teaching LO in the FET-phase. Questions were discussed with participant (P 3) to determine the relevance of questions. I also emailed the questionnaires to a friend that has been subject head for LO in the FET-phase for more than 20 years in the Limpopo Province. She provided additional input to the questionnaires. At this

stage the questionnaire was adapted and re-worked to try and ensure that it would provide information that provide answers to the research questions. The educator (Appendix K) and subject advisor (Appendix L) questionnaires were very much similar, except that the questionnaire for the subject advisor was adapted to determine experiences and perceptions within the LO subject advisor role.

### ***Focus groups***

As indicated previously, the study was conducted through the over-arching framework of AR, which according to Akhurst and Lawson (2013) allows for collective reflection, where work is done in collaboration *with* the participants and not *to* the participants. This promotes planning, action, observation and reflections that are “site and situation specific” (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013, p. 411). Focus groups were adopted as the method for data generation and collection within the AR framework. Akhurst et al. (2020) indicate that AR allows for a step-by-step process of collecting evidence that could hopefully bring about change in practices and systems. Bryman (2016) describes a focus group as an interview in a group setting, focusing on a specific topic, with the emphasis being on group interactions and participants’ combined constructions of joint meaning.

Focus groups differ from a group interview in that they encourage debate and conflict about topics, because of the interactive nature of the discussion. The dynamics in the focus group sessions thus assist in the generation of deep, rich and authentic data (Nieuwenhuisen, 2016). Focus groups encourage group members to generate a wide range of responses, including to trigger forgotten experiences, but also to nudge withdrawn participants to engage in discussions. Focus groups are likely to facilitate peer learning and could potentially improve self and environmental knowledge about the research topic, through the sharing of contextually relevant experiences in group discussions (Roberson, 2018).

I am cognisant that the interactive nature of focus groups also has disadvantages. Withdrawn and quiet participants’ views and opinions may be suppressed by dominant participants and potential conflicts, which could cause strain during sessions, may also arise during discussions. The researcher must be prepared for these issues and deal with it by applying appropriate techniques, for example recruiting relatively homogenous groups in terms of age, sex, education and experience (Smithson, 2000). The participants in this study were all very knowledgeable about LO, with some participants having extensive knowledge in the field because they had previously been teaching School Guidance, now LO, for many years. What was admirable in the groups was that the more senior and experienced participants acknowledged the strengths and value that the younger and less experienced educators bring to LO. For example, as per participant words “being technologically smarter” they were more

innovative and competent to source current career information for use in the classroom, from the internet.

### ***Questionnaires***

I used questionnaires in my interviews to obtain biographical information about the participants, gain insights into their perspectives about LO (CAPS) career and career choices, and situational contextual factors impacting on the career development of learners (Appendix L) for educators and (Appendix M) for the subject advisor. A questionnaire was also implemented after participants were exposed to the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) and the implementation of the CEP (Appendix N). Although this questionnaire was completed in a group setting at the last FGS, participants were required to complete it individually. The group setting provided an opportunity to clarify questions.

### ***Participant observations***

Participant observation is a data collection method, placing the researcher simultaneously in the dual role of participant and researcher whilst engrossed in the social context of the study with participants (Guest et al., 2013). Participant observation is a useful strategy for gathering information about the social interactions or a phenomenon being studied (Kumar, 2014). Building on the information of previous authors, Nieuwenhuisen (2016) indicates that participant observation is typical in AR projects, where the researcher becomes a participant in the research process, collaborating and working alongside the participants in the designing and development of intervention strategies.

In this study I was required to immerse myself into the research process to gain, as indicated by Nieuwenhuisen (2016), an insider (emic) perspective. During the research process I initially aimed to establish rapport with the participants. I obtained permission from the participants to do audio recording of all the sessions and recorded all the interview and focus group sessions. I also made notes of engagements with participants. These recordings were transcribed after sessions and inferences and conclusions were drawn from them. Kumar (2014) highlights that although participant observation allows the researcher to gain deep, rich and more accurate information, the researcher must be aware of the disadvantages of participant observations: firstly, that participant behaviour could become altered because participants are aware that they are being observed (the so-called Hawthorne effect) and secondly of the possibility of introducing observer bias in being selective in observing or influencing the flow of discussions.

## **Data analysis**

Data analysis is the process whereby order, structure and meaning are brought to the data that has been collected (De Vos et al., 2005). The aim of generating data is to obtain information that will provide answers to the research question of the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Hunter (2010) cautions that constructing meaning from the generated data is done by representing and interpreting the voice of others and hence emphasizes the importance of doing so respectfully and with humility.

Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process whereby data is organized into categories and patterns are identified amongst these categories (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). Data analysis thus involves finding trends, themes and patterns in the generated data.

### ***Thematic Analysis***

The qualitative data from the study were subjected to Thematic Analysis (TA). An inductive, bottom-up approach, which involves allowing codes and emergent themes to be gathered from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012), was used. TA was deemed appropriate for this study because the aim of this study is aligned with TA aims, namely, to obtain the views, experiences, opinions, and knowledge (Caulfield, 2020) of participants. In addition, data collection techniques of the study, for example interviews and focus groups, are often associated with TA and its potential usefulness within participatory research projects in action research (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying and reporting on patterns within data. The authors suggest that TA assists the researcher with the organization and description of the data, as well as with the interpretation of various aspects of the research topic. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) concur, by suggesting that TA is more than mere summaries of the data but calls for the interpretation and sense-making of data. The advantages of applying TA lies in its flexibility and accessibility as a method of analysing data, which on the opposite side could pose as a challenge as its flexibility often result in a lack of clarity regarding its use (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The authors advise that this could be counteracted by abiding to the prescribed guidelines and aims to ensure rigour in the analysis of data.

Prior to data analysis, it is suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) that the researcher make a few decisions. Firstly, the researcher must decide on how the reporting of the data will be done. The researcher could either opt to describe one theme or aspect of the data in detail or, opt to describe the entire data set as a whole. This study assumed the latter approach, which according to Braun and Clarke (2006) may constrain the depth of the analysis due to the

greater volume of the data. To curtail this, I therefore attempted to ensure that all aspects of the participants' input were heard and recorded.

Secondly, a decision on the identification of themes must be made, that is, should a data-driven (inductive) or theory-driven approach be applied? An inductive approach was selected in this study for the initial interviews and early focus group data because themes were drawn directly from the data, instead of searching for themes through theory or literature. I adopted this approach because themes that transpired could then stay connected to the data that was provided by the participants.

Lastly, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a decision must be made on whether the reporting of themes must be done at an implicit (interpretive) level, or an explicit level. I ascribed to the implicit level of reporting. In this study I attempted to understand and interpret the career development of learners in structurally disadvantaged public schools through the lens of LO educators and the LO subject advisor. By means of interpretivism, I was able to gain information from the perspectives of the participants and develop an understanding of how career education transpires in disadvantaged public schools. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe interpretivism as a relativist ontological perspective, where those who ascribe to it believe that the world depends on how the individual views and experiences it. This implies that the world is viewed differently by different people, hence the existence of different realities. Additionally, I also wished to determine what impact situational contextual factors had on the career-decisions and overall career development of learners from these schools. It was therefore essential that I ensure that I maintain a balance between my subjective interpretation and the voice of the participants.

In this study Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework was applied to analyse the more open-ended data. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) note that this is the most influential approach in the social sciences "because it offers such a clear and usable framework for doing thematic analysis" (p. 3353).

### **Phase 1: Familiarity with the data**

Phase one requires that the researcher engage extensively into the data by repeatedly reading the data "to an extent that they are familiar with the depth and breadth of the content" (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.16). I familiarised myself with the data by listening to the audio recordings twice, once immediately after the interviews to ensure that all the information was captured and the second time when I transcribed it. When I was uncertain, I returned to the recordings again to ensure that I transcribed accurately. In the FGS it was important for me to listen to the recordings on the same day, particularly as I had to do reflections immediately and use

the information from the sessions to prepare for follow-up sessions because of the AR approach adopted in the study.

### **Phase 2: Generating initial codes**

The next phase involves the generation of codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The authors indicate that the initial codes are small units of analysis which eventually come together to form themes. I performed a preliminary coding of the data to identified broader priori themes, salient to answering the research question, which sought to develop and explore a contextualised CEP for FET-phase learners in public schools that are structurally disadvantaged with the DCF. I initially identified fifty-seven codes. In-depth discussions of codes with a colleague resulted in the clustering of codes into themes and sub-themes. I discarded the seven codes that were not relevant to answering the research question. Some codes that had a similar feel, were also grouped together to form one theme.

### **Phase 3: A search for themes**

Braun and Clarke (2006) indicate that the search for themes follows upon completion of coding all the data. Several codes, based on their connections, are grouped together and provide overarching themes, sub-themes, and themes that may be discarded because they do not contribute towards answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes and sub-themes were also forwarded to my supervisor for further review. The process resulted in the themes and sub-themes discussed in Chapter five.

### **Phase 4: Theme review**

In the theme review, identified themes that showed potential in answering the research question were refined. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended that data extracts assigned to each theme must be read to ensure that they reflect a clear pattern and are indeed relevant to the theme. Themes are identified depending on whether the study took an implicit (interpretive) or explicit approach. The implicit (interpretive) approach of this study influenced that eight broad themes that were identified.

### **Phase 5: Defining and naming themes**

This phase involves finding the essence of each theme as opposed to merely rewriting the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher is required to reveal the key aspect of what the theme signifies, and to do this the researcher is required to reveal what is of interest in the story being told (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I carefully worked through each theme to make sense of it and to determine what information I could gathered from it to answer the research question in Chapter one.

### **Phase 6: Producing the report**

This is the final phase in the generation of the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the write-up of the report should present a case and a line of reasoning in response to the research question. In writing up the findings I revisited the aims of the study and attempted to report and present the identified themes in such a manner that it provided relevant and thick data. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that extracts by the participants clarify themes and therefore I ensured that I provided participant extracts throughout the write up, to support my findings.

Further, in order to cope with the volume of transcribed and process data derived from the focus groups, I also adopted a more “top-down” form of TA, termed “template analysis”. According to Brooks & King (2014), this is a flexible method used to organise and analyse qualitative information into themes by using a coding template. In template analysis the researcher constructs themes before the analysis process begins, which assists the researcher in paying attention to the questions from the research that need to be answered (Phala, 2019).

### **Ensuring Trustworthiness**

In positivistic quantitative research, the constructs of validity and reliability are important measures of the rigour of the research. However, “where reliability and validity are the key measures in quantitative research, trustworthiness is of the utmost importance in qualitative research” (Nieuwenhuisen 2016, p.123). The author proposes that the researcher should consider the four constructs proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) when pursuing trustworthiness in research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### ***Credibility***

The goal is to display that the research was completed in a manner that ensures that the subject was accurately identified and described (de Vos et al., 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that credibility establishes confidence that the findings are from the perspective of the participants and are true and believable.

I maintained credibility in the study by ensuring that clear parameters were set and adhered to whilst doing the research. I further increased the credibility by applying data source triangulation by accessing various resources and data collection methods, such as documents, interviews, field notes, focus groups and questionnaires (Polit & Beck, 2012) for the generation of data. I was able to gain rich information from the documents perused, individual interviews focus groups and questionnaires. I analysed data from the interviews,

focus groups and questionnaire separately, and then synthesised it to determine and describe my findings. Data gathered were checked with participants and misinterpretations were clarified before it was used in the study.

### ***Transferability***

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that whereas there is no generalization of findings in qualitative research, transferability should be used in qualitative research. Transferability is a construct used by readers of research to “make connections between elements of a study and their own experience or research”. In this study I endeavoured to increase transferability by making use of purposive sampling and ensuring that the participants to the study were knowledgeable about the LO (CAPS) (CCC) and about contextual factors impacting on teaching and learning of careers in schools. I also sought to give a detailed report of experiences during the data collection process. I further attempted to ensure that the findings of the study would be transferable to other contexts, that resemble the context of this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

### ***Dependability***

Nieuwenhuisen (2016) indicates that in qualitative research the term dependability, as opposed to reliability, is used. The author suggests that the research process should be documented in such a manner that other researchers should be able to have a clear indication of how the research data was analysed, how decisions were made and how the researcher came to the conclusions of the study. To enhance dependability of the study I attempted to provide an account of the findings that was as accurate as possible to that which was provided by the participants. I was able to do this as I made audio-recordings of all the contact sessions with participants and was able to revisit them when I was in doubt. Interviews and focus groups audio recordings were also transcribed in separate journals that allowed for quick access. Written records of the data analysis process facilitated the write-up of the research findings.

### ***Confirmability***

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that when transferability, dependability and credibility is achieved, then confirmability is confirmed. The authors emphasise the importance of ensuring that the findings of the study can be verified by that of other studies because, according to De Vos et al., (2005) it eliminates the evaluation of innate characteristics to the study on the data, rather than on the researcher. Furthermore, reflexivity enhances confirmability and therefore I was aware that the findings of the study could be contaminated by my subjective influence on participants and the study. I therefore ensured that I strive to maintain as neutral as possible a position in the study, keeping records of data collected (which could be verified) and that the

findings were derived from the data and not from “figments of the inquirer’s [my] imagination” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). Both the participants and I are employed by the DoE, hence the need for additional measures to enhance objectivity was vital.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity, according to Berger (2013) “is applied as a quality control measure” (p. 219) and “enhances the rigour and ethics” (p. 221) of research. Reflexivity is the process of having continuous internal conversation and critical self-evaluation by researchers about their position in the research and the awareness that this position may affect the research process and outcome. Reflexivity allows the researcher to inspect how and when personal assumptions and views might taint the interpretation of the data provided by participants (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Awareness of personal contributions; and personal and methodological concerns, allows the researcher to honour all others involved in the research study (Palaganas et al., 2017).

I was aware that my personal background, experiences and positions that I hold informed my assumptions and thus could potentially influence the research process both negatively and positively. My position as a psychologist and my experience with career assessments and career guidance with learners provided me with career skills and information that created an imbalance of power of knowledge that could both facilitate and constrain the collaborative research process. I attempted to mitigate the imbalance by acknowledging to participants that they were the “experts” in terms of knowledge about LO, career education in schools and contextual factors that impinges on the development of learners, and that it is the combination of both their and my knowledge that could be helpful in the development of a contextualised CEP. Furthermore, it was essential that I remained cognisant of and transparent about other potentials aspects that could affect the collaborative process during the research process.

The overarching framework of AR in the study further facilitated opportunities for continuous reflections throughout the research. Maree (2008) indicates that action research can be used in a variety of contexts such as schools and communities because it emphasises the manner in which participants work together to find practical solutions to their problems (Maree 2008).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the research process followed in conducting this study. The chapter provided a broad outline of the research design, as well as the methods and procedures used to obtain and analyse data. The above was followed by a discussion on ethical considerations and the evaluation process. The next chapter will focus on the presentation of the findings of data.

## Chapter 5 Findings from initial interviews

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### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings that emerged from data gathered from the pre-intervention interviews, conducted with FET-phase LO educators from high schools in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha. These are presented thematically. The interpretation and discussion of the findings will also be done in response to the first research questions posed in Chapter one, drawing from existing literature where relevant.

### Positioning Myself

In Chapter one, I indicated that I have my own story of how the lack of adequate career education services in structurally, under-resourced public schools impacted on my career development as a young learner, coming from a similar contextual background as the learners in the study. The lack of CE support, noteworthy differences in CE support on offer between well-resourced and under-resourced public schools, and the impact of CE support or lack thereof became evident to me in my roles as educator, educational psychologist in under-resourced communities and student advisor, supporting disadvantaged students from both well-resourced and under-resourced public schools for an established university.

I therefore came to this study having some awareness of the impact of developmental-contextual factors on the career development of learners. My journey and experiences are thus intertwined with my thoughts about the research, the participants, and their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that researchers are part of the landscape of the research process. I therefore had to remind myself throughout the study to position myself as a curious collaborator and to quiet my own voice, to ensure that I hear the voices, experiences, and perspectives of the participants. It was thus essential that I make “every effort to not make assumptions, but instead check and critically assess myself throughout the research process...remaining as close as possible to the words of the participants in presenting the findings in this chapter” (Naicker 2019, p. 150).

I acknowledge that the participants are not empty vessels and have copious knowledge about several aspects of LO and specifically career education. Participants have found ways to support learners with their career development such as accessing student support services at tertiary institutions, inviting organisations and professionals to present career talks, exposing learners to career expo's and accessing personal cell phone data to do career searches in

class. Participants also draw on experiential knowledge to support the learners. Seven of the nine participating educators had more than five years' experience. I acknowledge that the above ways of career exploration are just as valid as the developmental-contextual approach of career education introduced to them through this study.

### **Participants' engagement**

For this study, and the ways that it unfolded, a distinction needs to be made between participants in the interviews and participants in the focus groups, because of the difference in the number of participants during the two processes. Although all fifteen high schools in the Northern Areas, and the subject advisor for LO from the DoE (NMB District) were invited to participate in the study, only ten high schools and the LO subject advisor accepted the invitation. Consent forms for participating in the study were completed by the participants. One educator, affected by Covid-19, dropped out at the time of the interviews. Interviews were thus conducted with nine educators and one subject advisor for LO. Gender was not a recruitment requirement for the study, but it happened that schools only identified females to be part of the study.

Eight of the nine participants would have been classified as coloured, and one participant was white. The eight coloured participants were raised in, and attended school in the Northern Areas, with some of the educators still residing within this community. The social-contextual experiences shared by the participants therefore not only came from teaching in the schools but also came from their experiences as children, living within the same community. The participants were fluent in both Afrikaans and English languages and although they expressed themselves in both languages in casual conversation before sessions, they predominantly spoke in English during the interviews.

### **Findings from the semi-structured interviews with LO educators**

The interviews were analysed and interpreted using template analysis, developed from the order of the semi-structured interview question. In this chapter findings related to the themes and sub-themes are presented.

The information captured in Table 8 emerged from the data analysis of the first four interview questions and focused on personal information about participants' training, qualifications, major subjects, years qualified as an educator and number of years' experience in Career Guidance (as previously known) or LO CAPS. Theme one, Competency and skills in teaching LO, resulted from these questions.

Table 8 Biographical and educational information of participants

Participant	Qualifications	Majors	Years Teaching	Years LO Teaching	Current Subjects
P1	B.Ed.	Accounting, Mathematics Literacy	4	4	LO, Accounting, Mathematics
P2	BA, HDE, B.Ed.	Education, Pedagogics	32	31	LO, Afrikaans
P3	BA, HDE, ACE (LO), Honours	English, Religious Studies	20	14	LO, CAT, English
P4	Diploma Sports Management, Cert. Business Studies, Hons: Sports Management	Sports Management, Business Studies, Education Management	7	7	Only LO
P5	B.Comm, PGCE, LO (Methodology)	Business Economics, LO Methodology	14	13	Only LO
P6	Dip (Human Resource Management), PGCE	Human Resource Management, English, LO	6	5	LO, Afrikaans
P7	BA, ACE (LO), Human Ecology, ACE (LO)	Food Sciences	35		Only LO
P8	N. Diploma (Tourism Management); PGCE	Tourism Management	2	2	LO, Tourism, Economics
P9	B.Ed. Physical Education	Physical Education, Afrikaans	33		LO, Afrikaans
P10	BA	History, Psychology	29	2	LO Subject Advisor

In Table 8, it is evident that all the participants have professional qualifications and are registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE). The participants varied from relatively newly trained educators with only 2 years of teaching experience to educators with up to 37 years of teaching experience. Experience in teaching career guidance or LO ranged from 2 years to 35 years. Some of the educators are thus relatively new to education and to teaching LO. The substantial range of teaching and LO teaching experience between participants was beneficial to the study as participants with multiple years of teaching experience had experienced the transitioning from the previous School Guidance curriculum to the current LO CAPS version. The participants provided rich comparative insights between the curricula. They shared advantages and disadvantages of the various curricula, that other educators including myself, did not have.

All the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process were grouped together and are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Themes, sub-themes, and description of themes

Themes and Sub-themes	Description of Themes
<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Competency and skills in teaching LO CAPS (CCC)</p> <p><b>Sub-themes</b></p> <p>1.1 Lack of LO training, qualifications, and teaching experience</p> <p>1.2 Tenure / Poor transference and retention of LO skills and knowledge</p>	<p>This theme reflects on the training, qualifications and experience of educators teaching LO CAPS. It describes how the lack of the above obstruct teaching and learning of LO CAPS in schools. It also reflects on the lack of transference of knowledge, skills and experience.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Challenges LO CAPS (CCC)</p> <p><b>Sub-themes</b></p> <p>2.1 Quality of LO CAPS</p> <p>2.2 Focus of LO CAPS (Theory vs Practical)</p> <p>2.3 Standardisation: Lack of continuity / lack of cohesion/ variations in teaching LO</p> <p>2.4 LO workload</p> <p>2.5 Time Allocation for LO</p> <p>2.6 Lack of inclusivity: LO not responsive to the needs of learners with academic barriers</p>	<p>The theme and sub-themes look at challenging factors within LO that impact on the effective teaching of the curriculum. It also provides insight into why educators in schools are not eager to teach the subject.</p>

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<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Status OF LO</p> <p><b>Sub-themes</b></p> <p>3.1 Adverse Educator Perceptions</p> <p>3.2 Adverse Learner Perceptions</p>	<p>This theme describes the perceptions of educators and learners of the LO CAPS. It provides insight as to the reasons why LO is rated so low, compared to other subjects in school.</p>
<p><b>Theme 4:</b> Unjust Treatment of LO</p>	<p>This theme sheds light on the injustices done to LO in schools by educators and learners.</p>
<p><b>Theme 5:</b> LO as a Filler-subject</p>	<p>This theme illustrates how LO is allocated in schools and the impact thereof on the teaching and learning of LO.</p>
<p><b>Theme 6:</b> Resources</p> <p><b>Sub-themes</b></p> <p>6.1 Inadequate, insufficient, and outdated learning support materials</p> <p>6.2 Educator-Learner ratio's/ Lack of LO Educators</p> <p>6.3 Technology</p> <p>6.4 Lack of Funds</p> <p>6.5 Inadequate support from the DoE</p>	<p>This theme illustrates how the lack of essential resources negatively impact on the effective teaching and learning of LO. It describes how the absence of quality, relevant and current resources complicate the educators' task in bringing LO information, specifically career information, across to the learners. It also highlights how the lack of both structural and human resources contribute to the lack of learners' career knowledge.</p>
<p><b>Theme 7:</b> Contextual factors impacting on the career development of learners.</p> <p><b>Sub-themes</b></p> <p>7.1 Parental involvement</p> <p>7.2 Low socio-economic status / Poverty</p> <p>7.3 Role models: family, friends, community</p> <p>7.4 Educators' attitude, morale and aspirations</p> <p>7.5 Crime, substance dependency and gangsterism</p>	<p>The theme and sub-themes describe the socio-contextual factors that impact on the career development of learners from disadvantaged communities.</p>

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### **Theme 1: Competency and skills in teaching LO CAPS (CCC)**

#### **Lack of LO training, qualifications, and teaching experience**

Participants believed that the lack of training in teaching LO obstructed the effective teaching and learning of LO. Panday (2007) highlighted the importance of educator support and training, as well as additional competencies in the teaching of LO. The importance of educator training in LO is further corroborated by Jacobs & Frantz (2014) who in their study identified that educators that were not adequately trained to teach LO obstructed its teaching. This might be due to lack of exposure to its underpinning rationale and approach.

Although all the participants in this study have a professional qualification in education and were SACE registered, only four had an additional qualification in LO. These data suggest that although the participants are qualified educators and perhaps competent to teach in their specialised fields as per their qualification, not all are trained and competent to teach LO. From the study it appears that LO in schools is frequently allocated to educators as an additional subject to fill up their timetable. In the participating schools, educators who are not trained, and often have little to no knowledge or interest in LO, are often required to teach the subject as depicted by the following statements from participants:

P2 *“LO is allocated to educators that are not trained in the subject”.*

P5 *“In my school it is quite a challenge to teach LO. New educators are not LO educators. In my case my methodology was in Business”.*

These findings are corroborated by Van Deventer (2009, p. 128) where it was found that “LO is taught by a broad spectrum of teachers that are not specialists in this field”. The implications of allocating LO to educators that are neither trained nor knowledgeable with the subject content, are that those educators experience challenges teaching the subject as illustrated by the following excerpts:

P6 *“There is a lack of qualified educators. Educators require assistance in one way or the other... LO is given to educators that have no clue to teach the subject. It becomes a free period because the educator does not know what to do with the learner in the period... If educators had more information on the subject, it could change how they think about the subject”.*

P2 *“Few educators specialised in Psychology or Guidance (LO). Some have specialized but preference is given to other subjects ... Should LO remain in schools, then training educators is a good idea.”*

P9 *“LO educators are not specialists in careers and are challenged to teach career and career choices”.*

P6 *“LO is a sensitive issue in the staffroom. Educators say: “I will not cover that section because I can’t even talk about it myself”.*

P8 *“The learners are not enthusiastic about LO. I think it is because the educators do not have enough training”.*

The participants perceived the lack of qualification, competence, and skills in teaching LO as a contributing factor to the unjust treatment of LO by senior and other staff, as will be discussed later in this chapter under theme four.

### **Tenure / Poor transference and retention of LO skills and knowledge**

Furthermore, it was noted during the interviews that some participants who have acquired knowledge in teaching LO across several years, will soon be exiting the DoE system, leaving with all their accumulated knowledge. In this study three educators, with extensive experiential knowledge, will be retiring within the next one to five years. Since LO educators are frequently changed and educators are described as having little to no interest in teaching LO, these highly experienced educators will exit with their LO skills and knowledge, and it is likely that there will be no transference of essential LO skills and knowledge to other, or new LO educators.

## **Theme 2: Challenges of LO CAPS (CCC)**

### **Quality of LO CAPS**

Participants noted that challenges and frustrations faced by educators were not due to the quality of the LO CAPS per se, as evidenced in the concepts that follows:

P1 *“LO is a good subject”.*

P7 *“I think that it is one of the most important subjects at school because it guides the learners about what they can become after matric ... The guidelines provided are enough for the learners to continue”.*

P6 *“LO is good if taught properly ... LO is life. It is like speaking to your own children at home. It is not like teaching. It is a conversation with learners. The educator knows where the learners are in life. They truly enjoy it. They look forward to the LO chats that we have”.*

P3 *“LO is a good subject for the learners. It is an open subject that covers broad topics. It is of great assistance to the learners, especially the grade 12’s”.*

It thus appears that participants in this study are generally supportive of the content of LO CAPS but are dissatisfied with the implementation and treatment of it in schools.

### **Focus of LO CAPS: Theory vs Practical**

This theme speaks to the imbalanced practical and theoretical focus in LO, with theory seemingly receiving a greater percentage of LO teaching and learning time. This aspect contributes to the challenges faced by educators in teaching LO, as they feel that learners do not have an opportunity to apply the content practically and consequently are not able to internalise and learn from what has been presented to them theoretically. The uneven weighting between practical and theoretical tasks limits interest in LO by both educators and learners as substantiated in the following excerpts:

P9 *“LO is a good subject but lately they tend to complicate it so much. There’s too many heavy assignments. In 2020 the ratio was 80 /20 and in 2021 the ratio is 90 /10. The practical component is thus further reduced. This is the component that the learners actually love...LO is textbook bound rather than practical”.*

P6 *“The LO CAPS content is relevant, but they must make it more practical. The textbook has too much reading material and is too much”.*

P3 *“There is too much theory and little on what happens in the real world ... there is no opportunity for volunteering or job shadowing, but learners are also not prepared to work for free”.*

P1 *“There should be a bigger focus on practical implementation. Consequently, learners do not understand the importance of career choice. They require more physical engagement with happenings in the real world...The LO focus is too much on assessments (questions and answers) in the classroom and no interaction with the real world”.*

P4 *“Children feel the energy from the educator – if you make it excited [exciting] and practical.”*

Participants believe that learners prefer and participate much more when the lessons are practical and allow for discussions, as illustrated by (Griessel-Roux et al., 2005, p. 254) “What learners prefer to happen in LO classrooms is a stronger focus on practical driven approaches”.

### **Standardisation: Lack of continuity / Lack of cohesion / Variations in teaching**

Systemic challenges such as vacant posts, lack of funds to make School Governing Body (SGB) appointments, poor or lack of leadership and planning create the poor cohesion that is reflected in LO in schools. Schools are often forced to compromise and make contingency plans to ensure that learners receive contact time with educators in various subjects. These contingency plans are not always conducive to effective and efficient teaching and learning. One such a contingency plan is where LO is allocated to several educators, instead of one educator teaching one grade or across a phase as evidenced in this statement:

*P9 “No continuity. Every year educators tend to teach different grades because LO is a filler subject. This impact on teaching. If the learner had an educator that was working in LO in the previous grade, they might end up with an LO educator in the following grade that is not working. Currently at our school half of the grade 8’s have LO and the other half does not have LO as they do not have an educator. The school cannot afford to appoint an educator. The learners will go to the next grade with this vacuum. The message to the learners is that LO is not important because if it was important all of them would be receiving LO teaching.”*

Educators are allocated a certain number of periods per subject per week. The shortfall is covered by allocating LO periods to educators to fill up the educators’ teaching hours. This results in multiple educators teaching LO across one grade or phase and subsequently gives rise to the inconsistent teaching of LO, and at times even to the “non- teaching of LO”, since the educators tend to use the LO periods to teach their primary, examinable teaching subject. Inconsistencies and the discontent of participants with the implementation of LO in schools are depicted in the following comments:

*P3 “At school they place any educator in the LO class and sometimes these educators change per term. Educators are used as fillers for LO. These educators often do not want to teach LO”.*

Variations in the teaching of LO and the lack of adequate career support for learners in structurally disadvantaged public schools is depicted as follows by Miles and Naidoo (2017, p. 210).

While career guidance should ideally be an integral component of the education system, it is common knowledge that career guidance activities vary considerably from one school to another with many South African schools being unable to provide sufficient and comprehensive assistance to learners for subject or career choices.

## LO workload

As mentioned above, the theoretical focus of LO greatly increases the workload of educators. Some of the participants in the study teach what they see as a primary teaching subject as well as LO, and voiced that it is not an easy task, especially as LO requires extensive research for current and relevant information that speaks to the needs of their learners. The high demands that LO places on educators are narrated as follows:

P9 *"The workload in LO is too demanding. There are too many assignments and marking"*.

P3 *"Educators must do much pre-work before implementing the curriculum"*.

P7 *"The educator must go the extra mile to equip the learner if they need extra. The educator makes this decision while teaching. Sometimes we go beyond what the curriculum gives. We improvise"*.

Furthermore, it was noted that as an LO educator, there are "unwritten" additional commitments, initially unbeknown to the educator, that become part of their responsibilities. These include being the person that must deal with external organisations visiting the school, or people requesting information about the school, regardless of whether it ties into LO.

P3 *"The LO educator also seems to be the public relations officer of the school. External organisations offering any form of service, is referred to the LO educator."*

LO educators are also often required to fulfil a counselling role, as learners seem to prefer to ask for support from their LO educators, instead of other educators in the school.

P3 *"Learners will ask the LO educator for assistance than to ask educators teaching them the other subjects"*.

P3 *"LO also gives the educator an opportunity to support the learners with other life challenges"*.

P3 *"As the grade 12 LO educator I have contact with all of them. I know them well and provide input on the selection of school leaders"*.

P7 *"Learners confide in the LO educator. They feel free to open-up. It is almost like you are the Social Worker at school"*.

This scope-creeping creates much additional work for LO educators and is a turn-off to educators and is another reason for the lack of interest by educators in teaching the subject.

P6 *"I do my own research and join other groups where I can get information. Some educators will not go to the same extent to make things interesting".*

P7 *"The educator must go the extra mile to equip the learner if they need extra".*

Because of the heavy load that LO educators carry, especially in doing additional research to support learners with their personal and career exploration needs, educators tend to shy away from this subject. When compelled to take a few periods, they either do not cover the amount of work that should be covered or distribute hand-outs with no follow-up discussions. This does not contribute towards the effective teaching and learning of careers. Effective career exploration requires engagement and discussions by educators with learners.

### **Time allocation for LO**

As discussed in Chapter two, the allocated time for the teaching and learning of LO in schools is very limited. Career education requires sufficient time for discussion and exploration. With the limited time allocated to CCC, quality career education is unlikely. Participants described the nature of the LO workload and the pressure of having to cover the curriculum in the allocated time as follows:

P9 *"The weighting of LO is heavy. The workload is heavy. There are only a few periods for a lot of work".*

P2 *"There is a gap. We do not get to focus sufficiently on careers".*

Due to time limitations, educators adapt the LO curriculum and tend to focus on aspects that are most likely to be covered in the examination as illustrated below:

P2 *"It is impossible to cover LO CAPS in the senior grades due to limited time".*

P4 *"Time allocation in school is limited. The educator must think and decide what you going to teach and what you must leave out".*

P9 *"We have limited periods and many classes. Periods have been reduced further during Covid-19 time. What do you teach and what do you omit?"*

P5 *"In Grade 12 the focus is more on the content to be covered in the examination and then there is no time to focus on careers. The learners loose out".*

The question of inconsistent application of the curriculum surfaces once again when adaptations are made due to limited teaching time. Educators and schools may include or

exclude different aspects from the curriculum, resulting in inconsistent teaching of the subject and subsequent gaps in LO skills and knowledge.

**Lack of inclusivity: LO not responsive to the needs of learners with academic barriers**

Participants remarked that learners with learning barriers are excluded in the LO (CCC). The curriculum, according to the participants, does not address the needs of learners with learning barriers. Quotes below illustrate the participant beliefs and thoughts in this regard.

P2 *“The challenge lies in supporting the academically challenged learner”.*

P2 *“CAPS materials are available but not always relevant. It does not accommodate learners with learning barriers. The materials are more relevant to learners that are academically strong and can access tertiary institutions”.*

P2 *“The curriculum is not suited to the circumstances of the learners in the school. Learners exit schools in the community for ex-model C schools. The subject choice in the community school is compromised and very limited. Academically strong learners go to where there is more variety. Our school remain with the academically poor learners”.*

P2 *“Learners cannot complete assignments because of various learning barriers to learning e.g., poor reading and writing abilities, promotion of academically challenged learners, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome”.*

P1 *“There must be options for those with and those without finances, those that are academically strong and those that are not academically strong”.*

P5 *“The intellectual abilities of the learners affect career development”.*

Participants indicated that the LO CAPS (CCC) is tailored for learners whose strengths are primarily in the verbal and academic domain and that learners whose strengths are in the practical domain are excluded from career discussions as they often do not meet the minimum requirements for the tertiary avenues proposed in the curriculum. The same applies for tertiary institutions during their recruitment campaigns. The recruitment focus is often on learners that are academically able to access institutions of higher learning, hence excluding the learner with learning barriers.

P9 *“Learners cannot access other bursaries or scholarships because they do not meet the criteria. Academic learners exit the school to attend other, better resourced*

*schools. They are recruited and offered bursaries at schools for their achievements (academic, sport etc.). The school remains with a pool of learners that are mostly not academically strong. We occasionally have an exception”.*

Human-Hendricks (2017, p. 124) indicated that both internal and external factors should be considered for a curriculum to be responsive. Internal factors such as “learners and their attributes, teachers and their knowledge, skills, interests, materials, resources and perceived problems” should be considered in curriculum development.

### **Theme 3: Status of LO**

The participants indicated that LO is not rated as of equal importance to all other subjects offered in schools. Accommodations for other subjects are frequently made at the expense of LO. The low regard for LO is observed at various levels in education, including starting at the level of district officials, through educators, and consequently impacting the learners.

#### **Adverse Educator Perceptions of LO**

Participants indicated that educators in schools have adverse feelings and thoughts towards LO, which seems to mostly be rooted in the lack of support and resources available to LO educators as evidenced below:

P9 *“They have little regard for the subject. They feel that it is a waste of time”.*

P9 *“Educator attitude stems from no experience in teaching LO, no training and lack of support in teaching the subject”.*

Participants in this study are of the opinion that the allocation of LO to educators that lack the enthusiasm and drive to teach the subject, is more likely to obstruct than facilitate the effective teaching of LO, as reflected in the following statements:

P2 *“LO is allocated to educators that regard it as of low importance”.*

P6 *“It is sad that educators see LO as a subject to make up the school curriculum and tend to treat it that way”.*

P7 *“People’s opinion at school is that it is an easy subject”.*

P9 *“Educator behaviour does not promote LO and therefore learners perceive the subject as slap-dash. They must pitch the subject appropriately to the learners”.*

P9 *“...If the learner had an educator that was working in LO in the previous grade, they might end up with an LO educator in the following grade that is not working...The*

*message to the learners is that LO is not important because if it was important all of them would be receiving LO teaching”.*

*P6 “Educators see the content as nonsense. LO covers important topics such as citizenship”.*

*P7 “New teachers take LO as they see it, as an easy way to get a degree. They do not take advice from the older educators. They know it all and are not open for advice... I do not think the new LO educators have the love and passion to teach the subject”.*

The statements above illustrate indifference towards LO, which translates into how the subject will be taught and the subsequent adverse learner attitudes observed in schools. Educator attitudes as displayed in the statements are likely to constrain the career development of learners. This is concerning because learners in disadvantaged communities have very limited career resources, with the school being one of very few career resources that learners can access. Changing such educator attitudes towards LO is thus in need of urgent intervention. Hargreaves et al., (2000, p. 559, in Panday 2007, p. 8) points out that good teaching “is changed with” positive emotions, which need to be fostered in LO.

### **Adverse learner perceptions of LO**

Reference is made above to the belief by the participants, that educator perceptions of LO and their behaviour towards LO reflect in the behaviour and attitudes of learners. When learners receive LO from educators with a dismissive attitude towards LO, they are most likely to treat the subject in a similar manner. The following excerpts provided by the participants illustrate that learner perceptions about LO are likely to stem from the attitude and perceptions of educators.

*P9 “Learner attitude towards LO is not good. It stems from educator attitude. Previously, in the lower grades, the educators created the impression that LO does not matter. Minimal work is done. When the learner gets to Grade 12 and has to work, they express displeasure. I explain to the learners that LO is not a free period. We will be working in Grade 8”.*

*P2 “Learner perceptions are based on the attitude of the educator regarding the subject. Most think that LO is an idle period. Those that see the value of LO does not treat it as such. Some view it as a burden”.*

*P6 “The serious learners are much interested”.*

Based on learner attitudes and their subsequent behaviour towards LO, the participants are of the opinion that learners have little to no regard for LO, as illustrated below:

P1 *“LO is not rated high by learners. They are not serious enough about the subject. They view it as a “fly-by” subject”.*

P3 *“In most schools LO is not regarded as an important subject. Learners see it as a free period. The learners are not used to working in LO. When they do apply themselves in LO, they realise the importance of it”.*

P5 *“The learners think that LO is the period where they will relax. They have a wrong view of the subject. After career expo’s the learners have a more positive view of LO”.*

P6 *“Initially they see it as a free period...The perception in school is that LO is a free period”.*

P9 *“Previous years educators and learners were not serious about LO. Hence learners do not do well in the grade 12 examinations. Learners were not able to answer the questions and express themselves in the final examination.”*

P5 *“Educators tell learners that they cannot fail LO”.*

P8 *“Learners have no interest in the subject. They want to know why they must do the subject. You do not get much work from the learners in the LO period”.*

Negative learner attitudes towards LO diminish their chances of accessing tertiary institutions after Grade 12. Low learner regard for LO is further impacted by the exclusion of the subject marks towards the admission score for tertiary institutions, hence learners are even less motivated to participate in the subject.

P4 *“Some are very spoilt. I tell them that I can take you to the water but cannot make you drink. I remind them that I do not have a university in my backyard and that they must apply on time if they want to go and study”.*

P9 *“Higher institutions does not include LO in the APS calculation for admission purposes”.*

Participants are of the opinion that learners are more likely to demonstrate regard and respect for LO when they are taught by educators that have regard and respect for the subject. The previous paragraphs signalled that negative educator and learner perceptions obstruct the effective implementation of LO.

#### **Theme 4: Unjust treatment of LO**

Injustices towards LO, because of negative perceptions referred to above, are reflected upon in the following statements by participants:

P1 *“Educators take the shortest route with LO”.*

P2 *“With school guidance as it was known then, there were sufficient educators to teach other subjects and the school guidance educator could focus on this subject only. There was ample time to teach career education as well as basic counselling. There was time to work with external organisations such as Lifeline”.*

P3 *“As LO is not the educators’ main teaching subject, the LO that they offer to learners is diluted and scanty”.*

P3 *“To allow educators to do justice to the LO CAPS, LO educators should only be teaching LO. Not any additional subjects.”*

P5 *“LO is much needed, especially the career and career choices section. We do not spend enough time on this section. We touch on it in term 1 and in term 3. We do not do justice to the topic and to the learners”.*

P6 *“Educators ask learners to read the work. This does not do justice to the subject”.*

P6 *“LO is given to educators that have no clue to teach the subject. It becomes a free period because the educator does not know what to do with the learner in the period”.*

P6 *“It is sad that educators see LO as a subject to make up the school curriculum and tend to treat it that way”.*

P9 *“With Covid-19, learners are not going out for Physical Education, but marks are required by the LO subject advisor. How?”*

#### **Theme 5: LO as a filler-subject**

Educators are allocated a certain number of periods per week. At times the educators’ primary teaching subject requires less periods than what is allocated on school timetables, per educator. When this occurs, educators may be allocated LO periods to cover the shortfall.

P9 *“LO is a filler-subject. Educators shy away from it”.*

P2 *“The educators’ timetable is filled up with LO”.*

P3 *“At school they place any educator in the LO class and sometimes these educators change per term. Educators are used as fillers for LO. These educators often do not want to teach LO”.*

### **Theme 6: Resources**

The participants indicated that their task of teaching LO is further impacted by the lack of resources in their schools.

P1 *“Learners lack resources to expand their career knowledge therefore educators cannot discuss careers in depth with them”.*

Primary resources, such as textbooks are lacking and exploring alternatives, by means of media and technology is equally challenging due to financial challenges within the communities where the schools are located.

P4 *“Not all learners can visit tertiary institutions. When NMU send busses to collect learners to visit the institution, the school must select the learners that can go as they can only send fifty learners”.*

P6 *“I use the NMU career booklet for their career day. I use this booklet instead of the textbook. It is more relevant and works with the learners. The booklet covers topics on their personality and where it fits in. There is also a questionnaire that they must fill in”.*

P7 *“Career and career choices is there for the learners to make their ultimate choice when they leave school. Sometimes they struggle because they do not have all the resources available, especially in the community where the school is”.*

### **Inadequate, insufficient, and outdated learning support materials**

One of the primary resources in schools are textbooks. Educators in public schools predominantly use the textbooks recommended by the DoE to teach LO. Learners are supposed to access the textbooks during teaching time, as well as after teaching time, to either complete homework tasks, do further reading for better understanding or for test or examination preparation. Unfortunately, learners do not always have access to individual textbooks due to shortages in schools. Learners are frequently required to share textbooks in the classroom setting and may not have a textbook to take home.

P4 *“The school does not have many textbooks”.*

P7 *"We need proper resources, not just a textbook. We need other resources. School has a lack of resources. If we had more resources available LO would be more different in school".*

P1 *"Resources for career support are inadequate".*

P6 *"I seldom use the textbook in class. The learners do not use the textbook. They do not know what goes on in the textbook. I use something else, other resources. More relevant things".*

Furthermore, it was noted that the textbooks used in schools are old, in some instances editions are older than 20 years. The information therefore is outdated and no longer relevant, especially where careers are concerned. There have been multiple changes in the world of work over the years that does not reflect in these old textbooks. Outdated career information from outdated textbooks is likely to lead learners astray as the information acquired from these books may no longer be relevant, resulting in flawed career information and consequently flawed career knowledge and dismissive attitudes to the educators concerned. Outdated resources place notable constraints on the career education of learners with limited or no alternative career resources.

P1 *"I use the CAPS textbooks as they are available, but they are inadequate".*

P1 *"Educators should be encouraged to use current resources - media and technology in conjunction with lesson plans as well as the textbook. Using the textbook as the only resource is not effective. It is outdated".*

P1 *"Those that draft the curriculum should include aspects of shortfalls in the career market and adjust it as it changes in real life".*

P2 *"CAPS materials are available but not always relevant. It does not accommodate learners with learning barriers. The materials are more relevant to learners that are academically strong and can access tertiary institutions".*

P9 *"Textbooks are outdated. We have used the same textbooks for years".*

P9 *"I use the textbook which is outdated. I do not extend myself to find resources because LO is not my main teaching subject".*

P9 *"Resources must be current and relevant and must guide the learners in their discovery".*

### **Educator-learner ratios / Lack of LO educators**

There are insufficient qualified educators to teach LO. Participants indicated that few educators in schools have completed formal LO training or have been trained to teach the subject in schools. This was also evident in the educational background information of the participants in this study.

*P2 "More learners allocated per educator".*

*P9 "Educators are overloaded. Educators are negative about LO".*

*P9 "Classes are big. Difficult to manage classes outside".*

Because educators have not received LO training, they often feel ill-equipped to teach the subject. This results in fewer educators showing an interest, or willing to teach the subject which subsequently result in a heavier load on educators willing to teach LO. Willing educators are overloaded with several LO classes and hence find themselves in classrooms where the educator-learner ratios are skewed. Overpopulated classes further contribute to the ineffective teaching of CCC.

### **Technology**

Due to the lack of current and relevant resources in schools, educators try to find alternative ways of bringing career information to the learners. One such an avenue is resorting to technology such as the internet. Unfortunately, schools are also challenged in accessing the internet because schools either only have access for educators or access at all.

*P9 "I encourage learners to Google and do career exploration on their own. I post links and information on the WhatsApp group and learners must access it on their own. There are no internet facilities for educators or learners at school. If learners do not have internet at home or data, they will not access the information".*

An additional challenge in technology is that learners may not all have devices such as tablets, cell phones and laptops to access the career information recommended by educators, nor are they all able to access wi-fi at their homes. The DoE stepped in and provided Grade 12 learners with tablets and data, however not all schools received these resources and where schools received the resources, not all learners in the grade received them.

In schools where learners received tablets and data, not all learners use the resources in a responsible manner. Data is used for private matters, leaving learners with no data to do career research during teaching time. Some learners do not bring their devices to school, indicating that they have forgotten them at home.

It thus appears that the lack of technological resources per se is not in all cases the constraining factor in doing career exploration with learners, but instead, it is contextual factors from the learners' environments that constrain the career development of the learners because where access to technological resources were provided, it did not seem to translate into the desired outcomes that educators and the DoE had foreseen with the provisioning of these resources, as alluded by this participant:

*P2 "Access to technology, the internet, is minimal. Learners received tablets, but it is not used for schoolwork".*

In affluent public schools, where there is access to technology, it is used by educators as an additional resource during teaching time, allowing for career exploration and discussions in group settings. The same cannot be said for under-resourced public schools where technology is rarely accessible to all learners.

*P1 "Educators obtain information from the internet and pass it on to the learners as they do not have internet access. Information from tertiary institutions is of great help. Educators obtain these and pass it on to the learners.*

*P4 "I acquire career knowledge via U-Tube or videos".*

Educators who wish to support learners are required to do career searches in their free time and return to the learners with the information in the form of verbal feedback or written text on the blackboard as paper and photocopiers are also not readily available in all schools. When learners are required to copy information from the chalkboard that could have been provided as a handout, there is little to no time left for career exploration and discussions.

### **Lack of funds**

The schools in the study are classified between quantile 1 – 3. The lack of financial resources hinders the effective implementation of the CCC topic. Because funds are limited, schools are not able to secure essential technological resources to enhance the teaching and learning experience for educators and learners. Educators often make use of personal resources to collect information on behalf of the learners and then share the information with learners. Although it does provide learners with basic career information, it does not afford learners the opportunity for personal career exploration and per chance career discoveries and learning. In fact, it essentially denies learners the opportunity to self-engage with career materials and make prolific career discoveries on their own.

*P9 "I encourage learners to Google and do career exploration on their own. I post links and information on the WhatsApp group and learners must access it on their own.*

*There are no internet facilities for educators or learners at school. If learners do not have internet at home or data, they will not access the information”.*

Annual career expo's such as the *World of Work Extravaganza* and *The Nelson Mandela University Career Days* are platforms in the Nelson Mandela Bay where learners can gather essential career information. Although the furthest school in the study is less than fifty kilometres away from both exhibition venues, schools have difficulties in taking learners to the exhibitions due to the lack of funds to secure transport. None of the schools in the study have school buses and would have to hire buses or taxis to transport learners to the exhibitions, with costs to be carried by parents. For the NMU exhibition the university secures one bus per school, carrying approximately fifty learners. Although grateful for this support, the daunting task of selecting the learners that could attend rests on the shoulders of the LO educator resulting in learners with potential, but not in the top fifty academic positions, to be excluded from these career exploration opportunities.

*P4 “Not all learners can visit tertiary institutions. When NMU send busses to collect learners to visit the institution, the school must select the learners that can go as they can only send fifty learners”.*

Some schools source funds from corporate companies and in this manner make these career outings possible. Not all educators are keen to teach LO and may not have the time or the passion to go the extra mile for learners and source funds.

Affluent public schools with financial resources support their learners with career decision-making from as early as Grade 7 for school choice and in Grade 9 for subject choice. This is possible as the schools can secure career assessment opportunities through private psychologists or career practitioners. These are either paid for by the parents or from school funds allocated for this purpose. Similar opportunities cannot be accessed by the schools in the study due to the socio-economic circumstances in the community.

*P3 “Organisations sometimes offer assessment opportunities to the learners. Initially they come at no cost. The assessment for instance will be free but to follow through on the recommendations come at a cost. This does not work in our school where finances are minimal”.*

*P5 “We ask people from outside to help. A few years back an educational psychologist assessed our learners at R550 per learner. There is no money for these assessments”.*

The services that the schools occasionally access is often not sustainable and cannot be replicated. At the time of this study, schools had to prioritise PPE'S for preventing the spread

of Covid-19, which stretched schools financially even further and impacted on all services on offer at schools.

### **Inadequate support from the DoE**

The treatment that LO, according to the participants, receives from the DoE and the impact it has on the teaching and learning of LO, has been discussed in the previous paragraphs. Participants were concerned about the lack of attention and support that LO receive from the DoE.

P4 *“The DoE does not provide support. You must make your own way. We are forgotten”.*

P4 *“Previously we received thick career files. These were not updated, and we no longer get the files. The DoE previously provided packs, but these are also no longer available. The district fails to provide new information”.*

P2 *“The district psychologist has in the past assessed a few learners. This is not on-going”.*

Participants believed that the presence of the DoE in schools is limited to responding only in certain situations.

P4 *“When the learners do something bad, everybody knows about it and there is no support from the district. When the learners do good, the district want to take the praise for it”.*

Furthermore, the poor quality of support provided in terms of training, development, and mentoring, as well as learning support materials, were reflected in the following statements by participants:

P4 *“The subject advisor has been in the post for two years. I feel that she does not have the experience to teach LO as it seems that she was teaching History at a school before her appointment as LO subject advisor”.*

P7 *“No booklets from the DoE but those from other organisations help”.*

In the absence of career support materials from the DoE educators make use of whatever resources they can access, such as those noted below:

P6 *"I use the NMU career booklet for their career day. I use this booklet instead of the textbook. It is more relevant and works with the learners. The booklet covers topics on their personality and where it fits in. There is also a questionnaire that they must fill in".*

P6 *"I have the prospectus from different faculties. I update it annually. Learners use it to see criteria for courses".*

P7 *"Career and career choices is there for the learners to make their ultimate choice when they leave school. Sometimes they struggle because they do not have all the resources available, especially in the community where the school is".*

Participants therefore gave opinions that the DoE does not satisfactorily support educators with the implementation of LO CAPS and that the support for career education in public schools has dwindled over the years. They therefore had to make do with other resources as noted above.

### ***Theme 7: Contextual factors impacting on the career development of learners***

The literature review highlighted that career development in the SA context needs to be much more strongly focused upon the context of the learners, rather than rigidly applying westernised career assessment batteries. In this study the participants mentioned several factors that impact on the career development of learners in their schools.

P7 *"There is a range of psycho-social factors that affect the learners. We can't help all of them but can help some of them. The factors are overwhelming where I teach. There are major backlogs".*

The statements above illustrate the array of psycho-social factors within the community that impacts on the lives and career development of learners. A brief exploration will be provided below illustrating some of the factors that were mentioned by the participants.

#### **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement in affluent schools contribute significantly to positive teaching and learning experiences. From my experience with a few affluent schools in Gqeberha, psychometric assessments are included in the career development process at schools, which concludes with a written report and verbal feedback regarding the findings related to the subject choice or career assessments. Parents are thus fully included in the process. Participants in this study do not have similar experiences and reported that the level of parental involvement in their schools as being low and tending to dwindle.

Parents in the community are not always able to support their children due to work commitments. They often work long hours, leaving home at dawn, to return home late in the evening. Parents are also frequently required to work on weekends and as such parents have limited time to connect with their children regarding schoolwork. The role of parents was described as follows by participants:

P1 *“Contextual factors play a huge role in the decisions that the learners make. Parents are absent and learners must take care of their younger siblings. There is no time for learners to think about future aspirations”.*

P2 *“Poor parental support, lack of discipline, poor attitude, low aspirations all impact on the learners’ academic performance and careers”.*

Because of the demands in the home, parent and learner aspirations are at times not aligned. Some parents expect learners to seek employment immediately and earn an income after grade 12, whereas learners may aspire to pursue tertiary education. Learners consequently may not receive encouragement towards furthering their studies. Since furthering one’s studies is not a parent aspiration, no provision is made for tertiary education.

P7 *“Parents do not invest in their children. In affluent communities’ parents invest in their children. Learners in these schools, even if parents cannot afford to keep them there (they have bursaries). They are impacted by those around them. No negativity around them. It improves everything”.*

P7 *“The parents do not make provision for learners to pursue their careers. They are not at a level where they get motivated to do well to get to university”.*

P7 *“In matric only a few go to university. Parents do not plan for the children to go to university”.*

P3 *“Parents do not motivate their children. They often plant seeds that the children must go and work after school”.*

The participants noted that there are also parents that show little to no interest in supporting their children with academic tasks or meeting with educators for discussions about the academic progress of their children. These parents are however quick to contact or connect with the school about non-academic activities, such as the matric farewell.

P2 *“Parent support is low. Their interest is more in material matters such as the matric farewell than academics”.*

P4 *“There is a lack of interest from parents. They do not want what their children want to do. They are part-time parents. They are only there in the matric year”.*

Participants however also pointed out that there is a smaller group of parents that support their children and the school well. These parents connect with the school despite adversities that they face.

P6 *“In 2019 the Grade 9 Parent Evening was well supported by learners and parents”.*

Low parent education levels, poor career knowledge and the lack of skills to support their children academically, impacts on the career development of learners. Some parents and consequently some learners have unrealistic career expectations. At times learners may be better suited to pursue a career path via FET / TVET Colleges because they are challenged by the mainstream curriculum. Statements below summarise the above notion:

P4 *“Lack of knowledge of learners and parents, impact on the career decisions of the learners. Educators try to reach out to parents, but parents do not want the learners to exit at Grade 10 and be re-directed to TVET\_PE College. They do not understand that this learner can go and work with their hands, obtain a Grade 12 qualification and become more employable this way”.*

P7 *“Parents also have this idea that their children must go to university. It is not always the best option for the learner. You can't have someone go to the university and not cope”.*

Parents and learners are often not open for or accepting of discussions that suggest that learners may benefit most from being re-directed from the mainstream to TVET Colleges. Academically challenged learners or learners with a strong practical orientation consequently remain challenged in the mainstream and are often condoned to the next grade.

Parental education about alternative career development paths for learners is required, because the lack of, or limited knowledge about alternative career paths impact on the nature of career discussions parents may have with their children which consequently impacts on the career development of the learner.

### **Low socio-economic status and poverty**

Public schools in this study accommodate learners from the immediate areas and surrounding informal settlements. The communities are affected by various socio-economic factors that impact on teaching and learning in schools and eventually on the career paths of learners.

P8 *“Many contextual factors affect the learning ability of learners. Gangsterism, unemployment, poverty”.*

P4 *“There is poverty all over in the community. Families live in shacks. Others still make it”.*

P7 *“A lot of factors impact on the learners. High poverty level in the area, single parent house-holds - mothers only, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, unemployment, illiterate, socio-economic conditions”.*

Smit, et al. (2015, p. 121) indicate that “learners from challenging socio-economic circumstances face limited opportunities for further education and employment”. Due to unemployment or low-income households, parents are not always able to make financial contributions towards the basic or tertiary education of their children. Financial constraints in the home impact on the career development of learners. Learners from disadvantaged homes cannot always contribute towards educational and career excursions, they often have no access to technology to do career assignments or career exploration, they lack basic amenities such as electricity for night-time homework and studies, they may not have access to three meals a day and at times are absent from school because there is no money for transport to school.

Ex-model C schools (found in more affluent areas) with substantial learning resources, a broader curriculum, academic and sport scholarships; and smaller learner-educator ratio's, attract learners with academic and sports potential from schools in the communities. The exit of learners with good academic and sports potential impacts in various ways on the schools and the remaining learners in these schools e.g., some of the schools in the study no longer offer subjects like Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Science and Accounting as the remaining learners in the school do not have the academic potential to succeed in these subjects. The curriculum thus becomes very narrow for the remaining learners. The implications are that learners with academic potential, residing in this community and not recruited for a scholarship, will be required to travel to a neighbouring school that offer the above-mentioned subjects. This result in travel costs which families cannot afford or learners having to walk extended distances to school daily.

P8 *“There is a major drop-out rate in school from Grade 9. As we go upwards there is a decrease in learner totals. Drop out of boys and girls, but mostly boys”.*

Lack of financial resources is seen as a deterrent to career development.

*P7 Sometimes learners qualify for tertiary studies but then there is no bursary. It is frustrating for the educator as well as the learners. They opt to do nothing if they do not go to university”.*

*P3 “Finances play a huge role. They feel that there is no money so they cannot go to university. The culture in the community is poor”.*

*P5 “Social standing of the parents affects the career development of the learner. If parents are educated, they push the children”.*

It is therefore clear that financial constraints in the community pose multiple challenges on the career development of the learners, who often become frustrated, discouraged, uncertain about their career aspirations, stop dreaming about prospective careers and in extreme cases even drop out of school.

### **Role models: family, friends, community**

The dearth of role models who have been able to overcome the hardships of their circumstances were mentioned by a few educators.

*P4 “There is a lack of role-models. I tell them that I also come from this community. I attended this school, I worked hard, I was head-girl, my parents were not rich and that I applied for various bursaries for my studies. Because of the lack of role-models I came back to teach in my community, and I remind the learners that even though you come from School X, you need not live up to the label that others give to the community”.*

*P6 “We do have an alumni that we invite to assemblies but if we can have more of them coming, it would be nice”.*

Although there are limited numbers, there are some successful professionals and self-employed artisans who grew up in the same community and faced very similar challenges as the learners. By drawing from these professionals in the community, alumni and family schools can help learners to recognise the assets in their environment to instil positive future career aspirations and to plan and action more hopefully (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006).

### **Educators’ attitude, morale and aspirations**

Most learners in under-resourced communities are dependent on the educator for their career information and are likely to trust the information and feedback from the educator. Educators are in an influential position to help learners cope with societal problems and life-threatening issues (Panday, 2007), and therefore it is essential for the educator to be responsible in this

LO role and to treat the subject with the necessary respect and support learners optimally and honestly.

Educator morale and aspirations can either facilitate or constrain the career development of learners. Educators with positive career aspirations for learners are likely to create a sense of hope within learners that are affected by factors within their homes and communities that may restrict them from becoming their personal best. On the other hand, educators must be mindful to keep aspirations in check and not create unrealistic and unattainable aspirations in learners that may cause them to become discouraged because they are stretched in achieving these outcomes as illustrated in the participant statement below. Instead, the aim should be to assist learners in recognising that they can draw from their assets viz., family, peers, school, community, despite their barriers and make “useful future life choices and explore the alternatives (Smit, et al., 2015, p. 127) in their micro- and macro environments.

*P4 “Eagerness of educators must not give false hope to learners in Grade 9 when they choose subjects”.*

On the other hand, the educators’ role can be negatively impacted by factors such as large classes, workload, lack of teaching resources, poor parental involvement, and low learner aspirations. These may lead to educators presenting with burn-out and becoming discouraged and demotivated. Educators may consequently give up on learners. Excerpts below reflect on the morale of educators:

*P1 “Low motivation of educators”.*

*P6 “Sad that educators see LO as a subject to make up the school curriculum and tend to treat it that way.”*

*P7 “People’s opinion at school is that it is an easy subject”.*

*P8 “I was given a textbook. I had to go through CAPS and cover it in the way that I think it should be done. I am not very motivated as I do not know the content and lack the confidence with some topics”.*

*P9 “They have little regard for the subject. They feel that it is a waste of time”.*

*P9 “Educator behaviour does not promote LO hence learners perceive the subject as slap-dash. Must pitch the subject appropriately to the learners”.*

The DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) refers to the important role that schools, and by implication educators, play in the career development of learners. Panday (2007, p.19) indicated that

“Educators have an opportunity to influence children’s lives. It is the brilliance of the educator on hand to make the difference in the learners’ lives”. This was not evident in the reports above.

### **Influence of the community**

Participants noted that the activities within the communities where the learners come from also impact on the career development of the learners. As the community plays an integral part in the career development of the learners, they should be seen as key stakeholders alongside the school, when considering a CEP for learners.

P1 *“Communities set the standard...”*

P7 *“Society impacts on them. We must change the mindset of the community. They must help, it is not only the responsibility of the school.”*

Because of unemployment and poverty, communities tend to focus on the “here and now”. They focus on their immediate physiological needs.

P7 *“In this community it is about survival. They need to survive every day. You can’t still think about a child that needs money for this and that.”*

P4 *“There is poverty all over in the community. Families live in shacks. Others still make it. We must change the mindset of the children.”*

Thoughts about tertiary studies for children may seem too far in the future when there are immediate needs to be met. Learners are consequently sometimes discouraged to consider further studies. Educators therefore need to encourage learners with success stories from the communities and provide examples of others from the same community that reached their career goals, despite challenges faced in the communities where they were reared.

### **Crime, substance dependency and gangsterism**

Educators notice that there are learners that seem to look up to individuals in the community who attain their wealth by inappropriate and often illegal means. The learners, perhaps because of being caught up in impoverished homes for many years, want to have access to quick and seemingly easy cash.

P6 *“Gangsterism impacts. When you talk to the learners about careers, they ask why they must go and work when you can just sell things and become rich quickly. They do not see the need for honest living because of their mentors, the people they look up to in the community. These people have big houses, nice cars etc. They choose to*

*do what these people do, sell alcohol, and get rich. I tell them that other small children look at them. I ask them who is their role-models and what kind of role-models they want to be? Sadly, the successful people from the Northern Areas rarely come back to show learners where one can go to if you put your mind to it.”*

*P1. “Communities set the standard. Despite talent, the children still opt to be part of a gang rather than use their talent.”*

These community challenges provide examples to learners that are problematic. Alternatively, those who are successful tend to move away from the community and are subsequently not visible within the community to constructively influence and instill a sense of hope for learners.

### **Conclusion**

Participants expressed their needs for training. They believe that the lack of training in LO will continue to leave educators uncertain and uninspired to teach the subject. Redressing LO training and upskilling educators in teaching the subject could increase both learner and educator trust and confidence in the subject, possibly changing to more positive perceptions of LO than what currently exists. Participants also sought support from the DoE to provide the most basic needs required for teaching and learning of LO. Participants felt that their requests to the DoE fall on deaf ears and that their cries for help are not heard by the DoE.

The accounts showed that participants were acutely aware of the socio-contextual factors in the community and the impact these have on the career development of learners. Participants seemed to feel that they had limited skills to teach career-related content with learners whose career prospects are thwarted by a multitude of factors that are often beyond the learners' control. Foremost, participants portrayed the need for resources that are easily accessible, cost-effective, replicable and sensitive to the career development needs of learners in structurally disadvantaged circumstances.

## Chapter 6: Focus Groups (SoaPs) and Evaluation

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### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the focus group exploration of the DCF of career development (Vondracek et al.,1986), with FET-phase LO educators from structurally disadvantaged high schools in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha. The purpose of this chapter is to respond to research question 3:

According to participating educators, how did the career education programme evolve and what is the potential impact of the custom-developed programme on the career education of learners in disadvantaged public schools?

Data in response to research question 3 were collected from audio-recorded participant narratives from the seven FG sessions. In order to gather overall participant responses to their experiences of collaborating on the programme, a feedback questionnaire (Appendix M) was completed after the FGS and post-implementation of the CEP.

At the time of the focus groups, only six of the nine recruited participants attended the focus groups. Reasons for fewer participants in the focus groups follows:

- One educator went on maternity leave the day before the focus groups started.
- One educator indicated that she had taken on additional lecturing work after school but would like to continue to participate on the days that she was not lecturing. She however never attended any of the sessions.
- One educator accepted an invitation to the focus group sessions on two occasions but attended none. No reasons were provided for non-attendance.

To allow for anonymity, confidentiality, and open sharing, the group decided in FGS 1 to only invite the subject advisor to attend the final two of the seven FGS. Participants noted that the subject advisor was relatively new to the position and that a relationship with her beyond work was not yet established. They felt that having the subject advisor in FGS at the initial stages was thus likely to impact on open and honest sharing which was vital for the research, particularly regarding information pertaining to the DoE.

Data were collected by means of focus group discussions using a framework of AR. From FGS 1 to FGS 5 the researcher selected a topic based on the cycles of the DCF for discussion

(and these were illustrated in each session by a laminated card – examples in appendices including FG activities). Initial questions were prepared for each FGS. Topics for discussion were however further directed by the participants' responses, which transpired during each FGS. Data provided during sessions were tracked by means of audio recordings and a reflective journal. What will follow in this chapter will be a discussion of the implementation of Vondracek et al.'s DCF (1986) with participants, as well as the findings from these interactions and the post-intervention questionnaire.

The planning, actions, observations, and reflections from each session are presented as a summary on a page (SoaP) (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013), which is followed by reflective notes by the researcher. The aim of research question 3 was to determine and discuss with the participants how developmental-contextual factors from the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, as outlined in the the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF could be applied to develop a collaboratively designed CEP to facilitate the career development of FET-phase learners in their schools.

## **Focus Group Process**

### ***Focus Group Session arrangements***

The focus groups consisted of seven sessions that were presented on days decided upon by the group in each session. The initial plan with fixed times, as per the proposal, was not implemented as days of sessions were impacted by either people being infected or affected by the Covid-19 virus, as well as the demands on educators as backlogs resulted from school closures due to Covid-19 infections and the implementation of alternative school attendance days. Although actual dates could not be set too far in advance, participants decided on a fixed day of the week and time, namely Wednesdays at 15:00. Sessions were scheduled for the latter part of the day as educators could only attend sessions after the end of their normal school day, which varied from 14:00 –14:30 in schools.

### ***Focus Group Topics***

FG 1 was employed for the establishment of rapport amongst participants. Career-related topics, based on the micro-level circles of the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF of career development, were explored in FG 2 - 5. Suggested activities related to each topic of the FGS is provided below. A subsequent draft copy of the CEP that evolved, was provided and discussed with participants in FG 6 and in FG 7 participants provided feedback on the CEP and their experiences during the seven focus group sessions. Focus group dates and topics are illustrated below.

Table 10 Focus Group Dates and Topics

<b>Focus Group Sessions</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>FGS Topics</b>
<b>FGS 1</b>	04/03/2021	Who are we?
<b>FGS 2</b>	24/03/2021	Family of origin
<b>FGS 3</b>	14/04/2021	Child extra-familial network.
<b>FGS 4</b>	26/05/2021	Adult extra-familial network.
<b>FGS 5</b>	02/06/2021	Family of Procreation and the Distal Context
<b>FGS 6</b>	15/09/2021	Career Education Programme.
<b>FGS 7</b>	27/10/2021	FGS 7.1 Feedback on the Career Education Programme. FGS 7.2 Questionnaire: Feedback on participant focus group experience and the DCF.

Group discussions were guided by questions and activities based on the micro-level circles in the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF. The aim was to familiarise participants with each micro-level circle of the framework, to provide insight on how a specific circle's topic could be facilitated with learners, as well as to gather data about the relevance of the micro-level circle to learners' career development needs within their schools. The focal point in each FGS was to create awareness and discuss the dynamic relationship between the individual (learner) and their context (ever-changing environment) and its impact on career education in schools and the career development of learners.

Although the FG sessions had specific topics assigned based on the framework, the AR nature of the study allowed for information from previous sessions to be pulled into sessions, depending on the themes that transpired within a specific session and the need for further exploration. In addition, participants' suggestions and their collaboration meant that FGS did not always go as planned. Information that came to light in previous and current sessions was often informative, constructive, and relevant in that it reflected on what transpired within the community and schools, at a specific time. This also illustrated the increasingly collaborative aspect of the AR that unfolded over time. A brief narrative account of the planning of the FGS follows; and the ways that they transpired then follows in the SoaPs and reflections.

From the onset of FGS 1, a collaboration between myself and the participants was fostered to ensure equal participation in sessions. In sessions where participants were not as forthcoming

with input, I would direct the session to a potentially fruitful point where participants could latch on to the ideas or material and start to engage. Educators opted for FGS during the week, which meant that we met immediately after their school day. I could thus see and hear from their initial informal engagements when they had difficult days in school. I often gained insight into what was happening in schools from these casual chats by participants with each other whilst having their tea on arrival. They shared about their general workload in school, including the demands of delivering LO. Despite the nature of their day or week, the participants always came across as excited to see one another and keen to participate in the sessions.

A few drawbacks experienced overall with the FGS were as follows:

The FGS were planned for an hour. At times sessions went marginally over the scheduled time. Participants always allowed for 10 – 15 minutes grace as, due to school commitments, they would occasionally arrive a little late for sessions. This leeway allowed for us to complete most of the planned activities for the day, as well as time to schedule dates for upcoming sessions. The scheduling was done based on what was happening within schools: for example, school or departmental meetings, control tests or examinations and school holidays that would clash with our FGS dates. This input from participants was very helpful and ensured optimal attendance by the group which I believe had to do with the fact that they had a say in the scheduled dates and times.

Although participants actively engaged in and completed activities during contact sessions, performing homework tasks for sharing in the follow-up sessions seemed to be a challenge over the whole period of our engagement in FGS. Only one participant, despite several requests over a few FG sessions, completed the homework task on the sharing of a career lesson. Participants noted that as FET-phase educators and teaching final year Grade 12 learners, that they were generally challenged by the workload in schools and that backlogs created by Covid-19 stretched them even further, with the teaching of extra classes. They therefore could not complete the given homework tasks. It was however evident that participants did not refrain from completing tasks because they could not apply themselves to the tasks, but rather from being hard-pressed for time to complete tasks, as they provided enthusiastic input on the homework tasks in group discussions.

Invitations were forwarded to participants for each FGS, which took place over a period of seven months, with meetings occurring initially about three weeks apart, but then after a break FGS 4 and 5 were close together. The mid-year exam and vacation period then intervened leading to a delay in FGS 6, which required that participants had trialled some material, with FGS 7 following some weeks later (also due to an intervening school break). Six of the nine

participants generally attended sessions consistently, offering apologies in the event of having other responsibilities. Attendance of the participants is reflected in the table below.

Table 11 Participant attendance register

Participant	FGS 1	FGS 2	FGS 3	FGS 4	FGS 5	FGS 6	FGS 7
	04/03/2021	24/03/2021	14/04/2021	26/05/2021	02/06/2021	15/09/2021	27/10/2021
P2	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
P3	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
P4		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
P5		✓				✓	
P7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
P9	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
P10	Subject Advisor was only invited for FG 6 – FG 7					DNA	

In the initial individual interviews, participants mentioned that they required additional career resources for career lessons. As they were not specific as to which resources they required, I sourced career materials aligned to the topics of the FGS, but also provided resources in follow-up sessions based on their request. The personality career lesson presented by the educator was a one -pager. The participant indicated that she has used the lesson in previous years and can attest to the activity working well with learners within the 40 to 45-minute LO lesson time. I also observed that although participants did not complete homework activities, they would provide feedback on worksheets distributed in sessions that they have used for a career lesson. I realised that a customised CEP for use in disadvantaged schools should be based on this principal. Activities with learners should be practical, interactive and fit within the allocated lesson time.

### Summaries on a Page (SoaPs)

The summary on a page (SoaP) method for illustrating evolving AR cycles (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013), followed by researcher reflective notes at the end of each SoaP, was used to document the data from the FGS following the order of topics. Roberson (2018) recommended that it is best to introduce the Family of Origin topic after rapport was established amongst participants, instead of in the first group session (as might be implied by its position on the left of the DCF diagram), because participants may not yet feel comfortable in sharing sensitive information

about themselves with strangers. I therefore started with the “Who are we?” session to allow for participants to introduce themselves to one another and “break the ice” for follow-up sessions. In what follows, each SoaP, per FGS, is shown on one page, followed by explanatory notes that reflect on both the content and process of the preceding SoaP. The following questions (J. Akhurst, personal communication, 15 November, 2021) informed the reflective process that led to the SoaPs being created for each session.

Planning:

What was the message you wanted to get through / what did you want participants to take away?

What thoughts were in mind in preparing for the session?

Any pragmatic / housekeeping issues to start out the session?

Considerations in relation to your facilitation of the process / the content of the slides to be presented?

Anything from the previous session that needs to be followed up (re-read observations / reflections from previous session)?

Acting:

What unfolded step by step during the session (very briefly)?

Rationale for some of the techniques / tools used?

Observations:

How did it go, what did you think of or adapt as you led the session?

How did they respond?

What did you have in mind, if you changed direction / plans or shifted emphasis?

Did you feel any resistances from participants / “light bulb” type of “aha” moments / changes in their energy?

Reflections:

Thinking back over the session, what might you do differently (or not) next time?

What might impact on planning for the next session?

## SOAP 1 – FG 1: Getting to know each other – “who are we?”

### Planning:

- The objectives of the session were to establish rapport amongst participants, set the tone for future FG sessions, and gather information about the CCC resources participants used in teaching LO.
- Administrative tasks included the following:
  - Secure a “safe” venue and personal, protective equipment for FG sessions (Covid 19 regulations)
  - Email and WhatsApp invitations to participants for FG1.
  - Prepare FGS attendance registers and Covid -19 registers.
  - Arrange for refreshments.
- Content of session:
  - Getting to know one another. Participant and school.
  - Explore the quality of current LO career resources used in schools.
  - Determine what career resources participants thought they lacked and what was considered to be more appropriate career resources for use within their contexts?

### Action:

- Check venue for readiness. Ensure compliance with Covid-19 regulations.
- Check both recorders and place strategically to ensure that input from all participants is captured (Covid-19 social distance).
- Welcome participants to the 1<sup>st</sup> FGS. Participants briefly introduce themselves and their schools to the group.
- Clarify language for sessions.
- Remind participants about the aim of the study. Explain the multi-directionality of the sessions. Encourage participation for everyone to learn from each other’s experiences.
- Explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about current LO career materials used in schools, and the relevance of these materials.
- Discuss what they regard as applicable career resources for learners within their schools.

### Observation and Evaluation:

- Participants seemed to know each other. Being at ease with one another set the tone for an easy and relaxed session.
- Frustrations and dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of textbooks was evident from the discussion.
- Participants had very similar experiences and challenges regarding the prescribed LO CAPS textbooks.

### Review:

- I expected better attendance at the 1<sup>st</sup> FGS (four of the nine attended).
- Participants expressed themselves in Afrikaans and English interchangeably.
- Scheduled time exceeded by 10 minutes – Arrange to work in the time at the end due to a late start.
- Similar experiences and opinions of LO career resources and attitude towards LO by all the participants.
- Despite facing challenging contextual factors, participants did not seem discouraged.

***Researcher's reflective notes on the content and process: SoaP 1***

Finding venues that participants felt comfortable to access during Covid-19 was a daunting task. The venue for the FGS was a quintile 5 school that could access PPEs that participants' schools, which were initially considered as prospective venues, could not provide at the same level. Daily fogging and cleaning of the identified school made me feel comfortable to invite participants to this venue for sessions. Furthermore, participants' personal safety and the safety of their vehicles were provided because the school has additional security measures such as secure fencing, remote-control gates, and a high security patrol presence around the school. Participants were invited for the initial session and were encouraged to assess whether they were comfortable with the venue. Attendance registers as well as the mandatory Covid 19 registers, were now more important than ever for record-keeping, as well as for close contact tracking in the event of positive Covid-19 cases.

Participants attended the FGS immediately after their teaching day and hence it was essential that refreshments were served (for this and every future session). In this session it became evident that the participants on the day knew each other from their LO engagements with the DoE. Participants arriving early for the session spent time talking about their day, which provided valuable insights to me about how they were feeling on the day. I decided that I would pay close attention to participant conversations before the start of sessions in future engagements as I realised that I could draw from these conversations for the session of the day, but also obtain content for future FGS.

Although preference for English was indicated, participants comfortably used Afrikaans and English interchangeably. This did not pose any challenges as I and all the participants seemed to be fluent in both languages. Using both languages seemed to facilitate the flow of the session and allowed participants to express themselves in the colloquial language used by the community and learners, as well as for more exact descriptions for scenarios within their schools. Educator, parent, and learner anecdotes shared in the colloquial language created much laughter and seemed to promote ease of engagement in the session.

Participants expressed a great deal of displeasure with the noteworthy lack of current and relevant career resources in their schools. Indications were that the LO resources provided by the DoE were inferior and hence do not promote quality career education in schools. The lack of quality LO resources and support by the DoE is reportedly one of the reasons why educators shy away from teaching LO, because they are required to spend extensive personal time on finding suitable resources to teach LO.

I was a little discouraged that a number of participants had not been able to attend. However, although there were only four participants in the session, discussions seemed to unfold well because the participants were quite experienced and seemed knowledgeable about LO, sharing their experiences with ease. We consequently had a rich and fruitful discussion on LO resources, and the nature of career resources that they believed they needed to teach career education in their schools.

We exceeded the time in this session because we had waited for participants to arrive. We subsequently agreed that we would wait for 10 minutes before starting sessions in the next sessions, to ensure that most participants are present for the start of discussions. Participants agreed to make allowance for this time towards the end of sessions if necessary.

On reflection for me, the most encouraging aspect of this session was the persistence and perseverance displayed by the participants to continue to support and guide learners on their career journeys, despite the obvious lack of quality and relevant LO resources and support from the DoE.

In thinking ahead, and planning for the next session, it seemed that the group participants were relaxed enough with each other for me to focus on the “family of origin” micro-level circle in the next FGS. I also had to come up with ideas on how to encourage participants not in attendance, to come to the next FGS.

## SOAP 2 – FG 2: The Family of Origin - “A trip down memory lane”

### Planning:

- Introduce the DCF of career development using illustrative laminated cards.
- Explore the family of origin by reflecting on personal experiences with the “Trip down memory lane” activity.
- The objective with the activity is to do introspection and reflect on how easy / difficult it was for participants to make career decisions when they were in the same phase as their learners.
- Lead participants to discover how others e.g., family members or significant others may have played a role in their career decision-making.
- Questions are compiled to assist participants to reflect and share on their own career experiences when they were in Grade 10 – 12 (then termed standards 8 – 10).
- Provide participants with all the relevant hand-outs for the session viz. the DCF, examples of genograms - family tree and diagram representations, a subject choice questionnaire, and a career knowledge questionnaire (Appendix O).

### Actions:

- Briefly reflect on FGS 1.
- Participants close their eyes. Guiding questions is used to explore their family of origin. Participants open their eyes and share with the group what role their immediate families or significant others played in influencing and shaping their career decisions.
- Discuss the role of the Family of Origin and significant others in career development, alongside the Developmental-Contextual model. Brainstorm the role of the Family of Origin in career education.
- Discussion on how the genograms could be applied in a CCC lesson. Encourage participants to apply the activity in a lesson at school to provide feedback in the next session.
- Homework: Prepare or share a career lesson that works well for them, with the group.

### Observation and Evaluation:

- Two additional participants joined the FGS. Five participants in attendance.
- The “Trip down memory lane” activity was stimulating and fun. Initial career aspirations of participants created many laughs. They seemed to identify with the uncertainty, self-doubt about future careers and constant changes regarding prospective careers of their learners.
- Identifying career information shortfalls and expectations in the participants’ lives, provided opportunity for introspection and possible empathy with the career indecisiveness of learners.
- Career stories emphasised that, if not for the concern and intervention of significant others, they also may not have been where they are now – qualified educators, some holding post-graduate degrees.
- Participants were able to identify where the career hand-outs could be applied in the CCC lessons.
- The “new” participant provided valuable input and insight on orphan children and foster care families.

### Review:

- Draw from participants’ stories in future group sessions. Their stories provided much insight about their learners and the communities that they serve.
- Participant stories reflected their interests, personalities and values. Learner stories are likely to provide the same useful information for constructive career discussions with learners.
- Refer to the DCF through the illustrative cards in all sessions and facilitate familiarity with its micro-level circles, the macro-level circle and their inter-connectedness.

***Researcher's reflective notes on content and process: SoaP 2***

There were five participants in attendance (not counting me). One participant attended the FGS for the first time. A participant from FGS 1 provided an apology for FGS 2. One participant was on maternity leave and two participants did not respond on either the WhatsApp or E-mail invitations sent to the group. As indicated in the reflective notes of FGS 1, paying attention to casual discussions by participants before or after sessions gives insight that may not be shared during sessions, as the guiding questions of the day may not touch on these aspects. It was for example evident from casual discussions that participants and the subject advisor had different views on how LO should be implemented in schools. Educators believed their knowledge of, and experience with LO and their recommendations regarding implementation within their context, was not valued and that the rigid plan prescribed by the DoE, was not suited to their environment and specific learner needs. The lack of flexibility with the DoE approach to the implementation of LO CAPS impacts on their creativity and joy for teaching LO but even more so on the teaching of CCC. With the ever-changing demands in the world of work, flexibility in teaching CCC is essential.

The exploration and reflection activity on participants' career journeys highlighted that they had very similar experiences and behaviours as their learners which corresponds with discussion points for follow-up FGS, viz.: aspirations, vision, attitude, peer influence, financial constraints, self and career knowledge, self-doubt, uncertainty, constant deviations, family support, self-esteem, job shadowing, values, support. The activity emphasized career information shortfalls and expectations during similar phases in the participants' lives, and therefore reminded them of the importance of having understanding, patience, and tolerance with learners on their career exploration journeys.

The participant who had missed the previous session provided valuable insights, as her family story was different from that of other participants and led us down the path of exploring how the family of origin lesson could be applied on learners that come from orphanages, youth and childcare centres, foster homes and different or dysfunctional family structures.

Children in foster care, due to being orphaned, abandoned, or neglected, is not uncommon in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the community of research has four children's homes, with learners attending public schools within the community and the greater Gqeberha. Hence, it is highly unlikely that educators will not encounter learners from this group in their LO classes. The participating educator reflected on how dependent she was on the school and educators for personal and career support. It may thus be common for learners from the above-mentioned group to resort to the school and educators (extra-familial child network) for

support. By sharing her story and the lack of security and stability due to frequently having to change homes, the participant provided an opportunity for educators to discuss a career approach with learners from similar backgrounds. Educators should be aware and mindful of how career prospects of these learners are further impacted by their family structure.

The group proposed and discussed the possibility of compiling a career resource file with various career lessons that participants can use in their career lessons. Based on the request by participants for additional resources, I decided to provide them with career resources with every FG lesson or activity. Participants were however encouraged to also contribute to the file (in which I collated all the material) with the homework activity that they were given. Activities could be shared amongst each other which thus had the potential of adding seven lessons to the file, one lesson from each of the participants in attendance on the day and one lesson from me. Because of time challenges in school, as well as work demands due to backlogs created by Covid, participants were given the option to either prepare a new career lesson or bring along an existing lesson that works well with their learners.

### SOAP 3 – FG 3: The child extra-familial network

#### Planning:

- Explore the child extra-familial network. Delve into the role of peers, part-time work, and the school in the career development of learners.
- Facilitate familiarity with the model. Briefly recap on the micro- and macro-level circles. This will be actioned in all FG sessions, to facilitate familiarity with the model.
- Recap on relevant content from the previous two sessions. In FG 2 participants touched on aspects in the child extra-familial network with the story of the participant that was in foster care (AR).
- Prepare career handouts. Plan activities and draft questions for discussion alongside the career handouts.
- Check-up on career lesson homework from FG 2. Allow for one lesson to be presented. Other lesson presentations will be photocopied for career files and spread across follow-up FG sessions. Extra time for this should be negotiated with participants.
- As part of the group, I am also required to prepare a lesson. If participants did not prepare lessons, I will share my planned career lesson and explain how to use it with learners.

#### Action:

- Reflect on the Developmental-Contextual model. To familiarise participants with the model, and aid in the understanding thereof.
- Introduce the child extra-familial network. Explore the network with reflections (AR) from participant experiences during a similar phase in their lives as the FET learners. Discuss its value, as well as share ideas about learner experiences and behaviours within this network.
- Reflect on the impact of this network on career development and its constraints or facilitative aspects.
- Explain my career lesson. Demonstrate how to use it with learners. Props (backpacker bag, flashcards with the following words: interest, personality, values, abilities/talents) for a career backpack journey is introduced to demonstrate how the lesson can be made more concrete for learners.
- Participants are encouraged to continue preparing career lessons for sharing in the next FGS.

#### Observing and Evaluation:

- Apologies were provided by three participants on the day of the FGS. Only two participants arrived. Because both are quite experienced in LO there was input on the topic. Being only three (myself included) provided an opportunity for in depth discussion on the topic. The input of others was however missed.
- The role of peers, the school and part time work are aspects participants are familiar with and covered within the curriculum. What seemed to be lacking was tying it up into a career lesson with learners.
- Participants identified with the journey analogy and the notion of building on essential career lessons to add to the backpack.
- The homework task from FG 2 was not completed. Participants indicated that it is a busy time at school.

#### Review:

- Demands on educators in schools are high. Most participants teach multiple grades and subjects.
- Work demands increased due to Covid-19 and school closures. Participants seemed exhausted on the day but was in attendance despite their evident fatigue and participated. I wondered whether attendance was impacted by homework tasks.

**Researcher's reflective notes on content and process: SoaP 3**

Due to Covid-19, schools and educators are required to be even more flexible and adaptable than ever before within school settings. Adjusted curriculums, timetables and school hours have caused much strain on educators. On this day the participants' fatigue was tangible. One participant noted that "*it is getting to us*". This exhaustion however did not seem to affect how the session unfolded.

Elements of discussion within the child extra-familial network seemed familiar to participants. Whilst there is awareness of the role of the school and peers, career messages and information happen informally. Part-time work, however, is incorporated into the LO curriculum but primarily only in theory because learners in disadvantaged public schools are afforded little to no practical experience in the workplace. Within the micro-level circles (child and familial networks), participants also reported that job-shadowing opportunities for learners from their schools were impacted by the lack of financial resources, but also because parents and learners from disadvantaged communities may not have the same reach and access to professionals or organisations as individuals that are from a better socio-economic group.

Financially stable and advantaged public schools include the practical week of job shadowing into the curriculum where learners are afforded an opportunity to experience what it feels like to accompany someone within their prospective careers. Learners in those settings are thus likely to get a sense of whether there is congruency between how they perceived the career, and the realities about the career. Due to financial constraints of traveling costs to workplaces, as well as lack of connections to professionals by parents, who must facilitate the process in more advantaged schools, this career exploration opportunity is rarely accessible to disadvantaged learners. In the absence of learners accessing places of employment and professionals, perhaps schools can organise their own mini career days, inviting professionals and artisans from the community or alumni to address learners about the realities of their work, as well as student advisors based at tertiary institutions and corporate companies. The concept of "Bringing the Profession to the Learner" resonates with me for inclusion into the contextualised CEP. If cost implications are too high and impact on the attendance of career expo's, LO educators from schools in close proximity could pool their resources together to facilitate a career expo within their schools, and by rotating annually they could give each school an opportunity to host the expo.

The impact of the broader community on the career development was illustrated by stories of learners within their schools. Participants mostly shared on the negative impact of the child

extra-familial network. This led to discussion about the compensatory role played by schools. A participant indicated that “*the parents often fail the kids, the responsibility falls on the educators to step up and support the learners*”. Another participant stated that “*The learners need us more than ever before in school. The learners identify the school as the place where we will receive help*”. This statement highlights the important role that the school plays in the career development of learners. The school, as highlighted by Vondracek et al.’s (1986) DCF for career development can therefore not be more emphasised as a key component in the career development of learners. However, participants noted that schools are also currently failing learners, parents, and the community at large with the promotion and progression criteria applied particularly up to the General Education and Training Phase (end of grade 9), where learners are condoned despite poor academic performance and high absenteeism. These promotions create a false sense of success for learners whilst in school. When these learners exit school, they are rarely able to enter TVET colleges due to limited literacy and numeracy skills, nor can they enter the formal world of work due to poor literacy and numeracy skills.

The lesson in this FGS was aided by practical props with objects that represents skills required for a career journey. I used a backpacker’s bag and cards with words of the elements which are required to make an informed career decision. The backpackers bag resembles the individual and the flashcards in it (interest, personality, aptitude, values, adaptive skills), represent the traits within the individual. With this lesson one can demonstrate to learners that most of the resources required for career planning are already within them and merely need to be sharpened and expanded with career exploration. In terms of the content in this FGS, interest shown in the lesson with visual props, led me to decide that content for the CEP could be in a similar format. With limited teaching time, lessons must be visual and concrete for quicker understanding and easy recall by learners.

Participants noted that they can teach about most of the characteristics required for career development (mentioned above) but found teaching values to learners very challenging because of the influences from the community where crime is portrayed as “*the way to go*” for financial success. It was also evident that there were a multitude of factors within the child extra-familial networks that discourage learners from actively participating in career exploration. Although there are resilient learners that persist and succeed despite these challenges, other learners “*give up and often even drop out of school*”. From this focus group session, it appears that resilience is an important aspect and should be covered in the career education of learners and thus be included in the CEP.

Planning dates for FG 4 highlighted that we would only be meeting again after the June holidays because participants were getting ready for examinations, marking and then the mid-year vacation. The break between FG 3 and FG 4 will thus be very long and a recap would be needed before continuing with FG 4. We negotiated for an additional 15 minutes in FG 4. This would be communicated to the participants not in attendance to ensure that it will suit everyone. I made a note to send out invitations for the next FGS on the following day and to follow up with reminders a week after the re-opening of schools, to ensure good attendance. Despite the small group (only three of us, me included) the FGS was vibrant and very informative. The potential inputs from participants not in attendance were however missed.

## SOAP 4 – FG 4: The adult extra-familial network

### Planning:

- Aim 1: Highlight the significant role of contextual factors in career development.
- Aim 2: Identify and discuss how career resources (adult extra-familial network) in the environment could be used to increase the self- and career knowledge of learners.
- Aim 3: Deconstruct to re-construct the framework with participants so that they can visualise how career lessons in the LO CAPS can fit into the components of the framework.
- Recap the child extra-familial network and content from FGS 1 to 3.
- The backpacker's metaphor resonates well with the notion that "career development is a lifelong journey". Cards from the framework (roadmap) will be discussed and placed in the backpack. Visual aids used to facilitate better understanding of the framework and the concept of packing for a journey.
- Demonstrate that the application of the framework in LO lessons do not create additional work but can be aligned to existing LO CAPS lessons – align to Annual Teaching Plans (ATP's).
- Additional career resources were shared.
- Check-up on homework from FG 2.
- Homework: Write a motivational career letter (subject choice, career choice) to learners for the next session.

### Action:

- Discuss each card (self-knowledge, career knowledge) and place them into the backpack (the learner).
- *Visual prop 1* – Career Backpack. Explain the metaphor of a career journey. Discussion follows on this concept and its suitability for learners in their schools.
- *Visual prop 2* – Our road map – Recap on the systems in the Framework, indicating where we come from (FG 1) and where we are heading (increased self – and career knowledge).
- Discuss and align existing CCC lessons from CAPS to the framework.
- *Visual prop 3* – The Child Extra-Familial Network – recap and reflect.
- *Visual prop 4* – The Adult Extra-Familial Network – Discuss the nature and impact of the network on learners.

### Observing and Evaluation:

- Four participants attended FG 4. Participants seemed rested after the term break.
- Although schools are situated in different areas in the Northern Areas, child and adult networks and experiences across schools appeared to be very much the same.
- Participants seemed to grasp how networks could be applied in the CCC lessons.
- Homework on previous career lessons were still outstanding.

### Review:

- Reminders about the career lesson and letter to be sent a week before the next focus group.
- School LO lesson plans were due for submission to the LO subject advisor. FG 2 homework could possibly be included as a lesson. In FGS participants engage in discussions, providing rich input. They however fail to follow through on the homework task. Must check on their view on homework activities.

***Researcher's reflective notes on content and process: SoaP 4***

The time span between FG 3 and 4 was six weeks. Participants were focused on term examinations and marking, which would then be followed by the term break later in June. As such, I decided to briefly recap and refresh content from the previous FGS. The session was better attended, with 5 participants (me included), compared to the previous session where we were only 3 (me included) in attendance. Low attendance in FG 3 was a further reason for recapping content from the session to ensure that participants had knowledge of that which was covered in the child extra-familial network and the role that peers, the school and part time work play in career education and development.

The homework from FG 2 had still not been completed, notwithstanding the possibility of time available during the school holidays. Since we had decided as a group to compile a career resource file, I decided to continue to request them to provide examples of lessons, so that participants would acquire some career lessons for use in schools, as well as get to shared lessons and facilitation ideas on these lessons. I was hoping that we would thus compile a career resource file with career lessons compatible with learner needs within their schools, by the time that we completed all the FGS. I however reminded myself to check with participants whether homework tasks allocated in workshops are or would be a drawback for participation and attendance in workshops.

I found that it initially took me a while to fully grasp the Vondracek et al., (1986) DCF and its value for contexts where learners may never access subject or career assessments to assist with their career decision-making, I decided to "break" the framework up into components and present these components to participants on colourful cards (see Appendix P). I was hoping that the placement of these "components" and accompanying career content, into the career "backpack", would create memorable props for participants and help them to see and understand the value of the DCF for career education in disadvantaged public schools. I believe that this did have an effect, as I noticed that participants spoke much more to the framework in discussions. They also seemed to identify more with the analogy of a career journey.

Participants reminded me about the demands that they would be experiencing with the upcoming mid-year examinations and mid-year vacation break through June into July. They suggested that we have a FGS the following week and then to plan to only meet again after the mid-year break. It seemed to be a good suggestion to have only one week between this session and the next, as the next FGS was to focus on the final aspect of the micro-systems

within the DCF, that is The Family of Procreation, as well as the more distal influences at macro-systemic level. Planning to have covered the whole model before participants go on their mid-year break, meant that participants would have experienced and provided input on all aspects of the inner circle of the framework.

With the above in mind, I would thus be able to include their input from all the FG sessions in the draft CEP, which I would be working on during the school holidays. This would allow for the group to meet in FG 6 during the third school term, when I planned for us to discuss the proposed content and facilitation of the draft CEP.

I was hoping for more career lessons and implementation by the participants for the drafting of the CEP. Furthermore, participants initiated the idea of a career resource file, which should be compiled by all participants in the group. Going forward I will focus on discussing and completing activities within the group because homework was still outstanding. I need to explore the reasons for this in the next FGS because despite indicating that they may share a lesson or activity that they have already implemented, only 1 participant provided a copy of a lesson and a second participant verbally shared a career lesson that worked well with her learners.

## SOAP 5 – FG 5: The family of procreation and distal contexts

### Planning:

- Recap the developmental-contextual framework (roadmap). Introduce The Family of Procreation and the Distal Contexts (macro-level circles).
- Explain the micro-level circles and place these cards in the career backpack.
- Discuss how The Family of Procreation and the Distal Context (macro-level circles), influence and shape the career development of learners.
- Draft questions on career dreams and aspirations. Discuss its impact on the career development of learners.
- The Family of Origin family tree activity is introduced as a dream / fantasy tree and provided as a hand-out. Its use as a career lesson is discussed.
- Further explore the following:
  - The impact of traditional family careers within the community.
  - The impact that parent and learner attitude towards tertiary education could have on career development.
- Check on homework tasks, the career lesson and motivational letter from previous FG sessions.

### Action:

- Discuss The family of Procreation alongside the following questions. “Do learners have career dreams / career aspirations?” “Based on their context and situation, do they still allow themselves to dream /aspire, despite their living conditions?”. “What is the impact of career dreams and aspirations or the lack thereof, on learners’ career development?” “Where, when, why, do learners stop having career dreams for themselves?”
- Participants share experiences about factors that impact on career dreams / aspirations of learners. Lack of parental support, poor financial planning, low parent and learner expectations and teenage pregnancies were described as key debilitating factors. The impact of the distal context on career development is discussed. Participants note that Covid-19 has intensified challenges in communities, with schools also experiencing additional financial strain.
- Opportunity to share homework lessons. I prepared my motivational letter to share.

### Observing and Evaluation:

- Participants were enthusiastic and interactive about the dreams / aspirations topic. Shared views indicated resounding similarities across schools about learners’ career dreams / aspirations.
- Family of procreation discussions led to awareness of how much smaller (in years) the gap between this micro-level circle and the adult extra-familial network has become due to teenage pregnancy.
- Participants seems to be very knowledgeable about the factors that impact on the career aspirations of the learners and seem to go the extra mile to support learners in overcoming challenges.

### Review:

- Teen pregnancy derails tertiary education. De-stigmatisation of teen pregnancy by family and friends and the allocation of accompanying child support grants impact on the career development of learners.
- Financial constraints in the home determine learner and parent attitude towards tertiary education.
- Positive verbal feedback on one completed lesson, suggests that verbal, instead of written feedback on homework may possibly suit participants better.
- The lay-out and length of the participant lesson gave me an idea of the nature of the lessons for the CEP.
- The subject advisor will be invited to FGS 6 and 7 for input on the CEP, as agreed on in FG 1.

***Researcher's reflective comments on content and process: SoaP 5***

The aim of this FGS was to explore the Family of Procreation as well as the Distal Context (macro-level circles) of the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF for career development. I decided that we should consider the career dreams and aspirations of learners, to determine to what extent learners continue to pursue their dreams, despite facing adversity in their homes and community. With the career dream exploration activity, I was hoping that we, in the FGS, would get a glimpse of and gain greater understanding of learners' hopes, beliefs, and aspirations under challenging circumstances. We explored the factors that were likely to impose limitations on the career development of learners alongside the guiding questions. The resilience of learners from disadvantaged communities was quite evident in discussions.

In FG 1 we had explored the role that families play in the career development of their children. In this FG, parent and community work roles and the impact of traditional work roles were further explored. It appears that when financial struggles are very prominent, families tend to lean towards the traditional community career path of finding employment upon leaving school, rather than studying further. Tertiary studies are thus not encouraged as families need the financial relief that another employed person could bring to the home. Opting for further education is also likely to add further financial strain on already struggling families. In the absence of bursaries or other forms of financial assistance, learners often have no choice but to enter the world of work immediately. The lack of financial resources from home, as well as a shortage of bursaries, often cause learners to give up on their career dreams and aspirations, because even though they may want to continue with tertiary studies, they often also want to assist in bringing financial relief to their families. Parental support and their attitudes towards further education play a very influential role in children's career development.

Participants pointed to another deterrent to career dreams and aspirations, namely teenage pregnancy. Females are more affected than males, because the females are inclined to de-register from school until after giving birth, whilst the prospective fathers continue with uninterrupted schooling. Females also tend to deregister to avoid the ridicule of peers, or because of feelings of shame. Concerns highlighted by participants were that multiple pregnancies, that is more than one pregnancy by one learner, has also started to be more prevalent in schools. They believe that a contributing factor might be the de-stigmatisation of teenage pregnancy, with "stork parties" given by relatives and friends, which they think sends a wrong message to learners. Teenage pregnancy may however cause learners to drop out of school, or delay their career dreams, or it even prevents them from pursuing their dreams if there is no assistance with the care for and raising of the baby. This discussion highlighted

that when looking at the DCF, where the family of procreation may have in the past featured more prominently several years down the line; however, this circle seemed to have shifted closer to the child and parent extra-familial network circles, with a seeming increase in teenage pregnancies in schools. Girls are thus required to think about aspects pertaining to the family of procreation, at a much earlier stage than perhaps the framework implies.

As a further contextual factor contributing to lack of aspirations, learners also see their siblings and friends sitting at home with a National Senior Certificate (the school-leaving qualification), unable to find employment. Participants noted that learners often indicate that there is no sense in staying in school and completing Grade 12, because they are not going to find employment; and that in the event of finding employment, it is likely to be at a low level and low paid employment, such as manual labour. Learners become discouraged by the number of unemployed people that they observe in their communities, and consequently give up on their career dreams and aspirations.

The impact of the distal context (macro-level circle) was implied in the above discussions and then further expanded upon by the participants in giving examples of exo- and macro-systemic influences. For example, it was reported that parents are often employed in environments with unpleasant labour conditions and would report on these at home. The purpose of parents sharing this information may probably be to encourage children to persevere and work hard in school, so that they do not end up in similar situations. However, learners seem to use these messages rather to inform their decisions to quit school. Performing hard and long hours of physical labour for a low income is not viewed as an employment option for learners who aspire to other opportunities. Instead, some learners opt to pursue criminal avenues that may provide quick cash, but of course these are not acceptable by societal norms and standards. Gangsterism and criminal activity was one of the themes previously highlighted in interviews with participants. The prevalence of gangsterism and crime in the wider environment of these communities and the impact thereof on the career development of learners is discussed in Chapters 1 and 5.

With regard to the group process and responses to the previous FGS, one career homework activity (FGS 2) was provided. Participants did not complete the motivational letter activity. I thus decided to read (as an example) my motivational letter to the participants (see Appendix T) because I realised that perhaps participants find doing homework tasks challenging because they either found the requested activity difficult; was unsure of what was expected from them or were over thinking the homework and perhaps think that what they are using is too simple. I hoped that in my reading my example, it would illustrate that simplicity makes for

better understanding. Copies of the letter (Appendix R ) that I had written were prepared as a handout at the end of the session. The requests from participants for a copy of the letter pleased me. My thoughts were that the value and multiple uses of such a career motivational letter were not completely understood when it was given in the last FG as a homework activity. I hoped that seeing this example might enable participants to notice its flexibility, as several career topics could be addressed with the letter.

The career homework that the educator presented in this FGS was a one-page document (Appendix R) that was well suited for discussion on the role of personality in career education. The participant indicated that she teaches this lesson to all FET-phase groups. She explained that a hand-out is provided to each learner, followed by instructions to learners. She use herself as an example by identifying an animal that portrays the most traits suited to her personality. Once the learners have completed the activity, she follows up with discussion about traits and the workplace. Participants share their preferred animal and provide reasons why they identified with the specific animal. The lesson is concluded by linking it to careers. The lay-out and length of the participant lesson gave me an idea of the nature of the lessons for the CEP – viz. that they should be visual and compact.

At the end of the session I reminded the participants that as per our earlier agreement that the subject advisor would be invited to FG 6 and 7, as discussed in FG 1.

## SOAP 6 – FG 6: The Career Education Programme (CEP)

### Planning:

- Due to school holidays, participant workload and occasional Covid-19 cases FG 5 and 6 were just over 3 months apart.
- Debrief with participants. Check in on how they are coping with alternative teaching methods and timetables.
- Recap the framework because FG 5 and 6 were so far apart.
- Reflect on the purpose of the research (to develop a CEP).
- Check in on the career lesson and letter homework. One participant e-mailed a lesson prior to the FG.
- Provide an opportunity for the sharing of the lesson. Allow time for questions and input from the group.

### Action:

- Seven participants (including me) were in attendance. Perhaps because the subject advisor was invited. She however did not respond on the invitation and was not in attendance.
- Recap the framework by referring to the backpacker's bag with its content (visual props).
- Participants are provided with a draft copy of the customized CEP with accompanying resources.
- Discussion on the relevance of the CEP to career education needs of learners in their schools.
- Discuss the CEP lessons. Participants share their version of lessons on similar topics in the LO CAPS.
- Discussions followed on the outline of the CEP, facilitation strategies and the application of resources.
- Participants also received the extended DHET Career Pack resources for grades 9 - 12. Participants can draw from the DHET Career Pack and further adjust the CEP lessons for use with their learners.
- Participants are requested to use lessons from the CEP, review its content, and provide verbal feedback in FG 7.
- Career lesson presentation by one participant.

### Observing and Evaluation:

- Participants seemed interested in the CEP materials. They highlighted topics as per the curriculum where CEP lessons could fit in. They also shared with each other how they implemented similar topics in lessons.
- Participants were pleased with the DHET materials, especially as these were grade specific and could be adapted for use with their learners, with little effort.
- Only one career lesson was provided in this FGS. The participant shared the lesson with such ease and expressed how well her Grade 12's received the lesson.

### Review:

- Although we went slightly over time and managed to cover what was planned for the session, I would have loved to have another half an hour to allow for more discussion.
- Based on how the participants received the materials, it appeared that they prefer actual lessons which they can use as is or adapt based on the grade and time available.

***Researcher's reflective notes on content and process: SoaP 6***

I was pleased that all six participants attended the session, we were thus a total of seven participants, including me. The subject advisor however did not attend the FGS, even though I had invited her. In this FGS the draft CEP, with career resources used in the previous FGS, as well as career materials sourced from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), were shared with participants. The DHET materials were the most recent career materials and not yet available in print. The materials that I had generated and collated were LO (CAPS) aligned and thus appropriate for use within public schools.

I was hoping that the homework lessons by participants would provide ideas of participants' preferred format and styles in career lessons. Since only one written lesson was received at the time of writing the materials, the task of developing the CEP was quite daunting as information to draw from was limited. I subsequently resorted to drawing from my previous experience of developing life skills materials for educators in disadvantaged communities and combined this with information received from participants during the interviews and earlier focus groups. Awareness of time constraints, limited LO periods, and even fewer career periods, suggested that lessons should be concise and to the point; and if possible, captured on one page. The lack of technological resources during teaching time further informed the decision of presenting lessons in a format that would be easily accessible, replicable and interactive. In Appendix P the reader can see examples of activities as well as the facilitator guidelines that I developed because of my experiences.

The participant did not provide a handout but shared how she employed a collage in her career lesson with learners. She indicated that she asks her learners to compile a goals-chart at the beginning of the year which they revisit during the year to determine whether they are still on track with their goals for the year. Changes are plotted throughout the year and adjustments are made accordingly. Discussions regarding reasons for changes were shared with the rest of the class. The lesson was well received by participants, with comments from two educators that they apply a similar concept with their learners. This was described as a helpful activity when learners need to decide on whether to continue with a subject, despite being challenged, or drop a subject.

In this session I provided the participants with a handout of the CEP with accompanying activities for lessons. Participants were also encouraged to use other activities when they use the materials with learners and during feedback sessions in FGS 7 share those activities with the group. Because the CEP was based on previous content from FGS 1 – 5, it allowed for

easy facilitation of materials, since participants were already familiar with the content of the document. I also focused on discussing the facilitator guidelines with participants. It is crucial that educators are sensitive to the needs of learners in learner engagements. The guidelines create awareness about aspects that may impact on career engagements with learners. Participants appeared to be pleased with the career materials provided.

Participants indicated that career lessons should be interactive and provide a platform where the “voices” of learners can be heard. Currently LO educators are required by the LO subject advisor to focus on the submission of learner notebooks that result in there being little to no time for discussion, which does not sit well with educators. The rationale for this may be to ensure that teaching and learning in LO actually takes place in schools (so that the subject advisor can see evidence). Based on information provided in the interviews regarding educators’ attitudes towards LO, and that little seems to be happening in LO despite the request for learner workbooks, suggests that the subject may be even further neglected, with less work completed by LO educators. The participants were however of the opinion that learners want to engage verbally during the LO period and that key information about learners’ needs are articulated during these discussions. The focus on notebooks therefore takes the fun and fulfilment out of career education in schools and may contribute to the low regard and poor attitudes of educators and learners towards the subject. Participants feel that what they perceive as the mechanistic approach towards career education “*is killing the subject*”.

Data obtained from the interviews and the focus groups suggest that there are multiple intrinsic (micro-cycle level) and extrinsic (macro-cycle level) factors impacting on the nature and quality of career education in schools. These factors include the lack of career training, limited teaching and learning time, inconsistencies in teaching LO, educator-learner attitude, lack of career resources, socio-economic conditions in the community and homes of learners and lack of support from the EC (DoE). FGS engagements, as well as interview data confirmed the multiple contextual factors in disadvantaged communities that impinge on the career development of the learners and that it is therefore crucial that these factors are considered in the development of the contextualised CEPs for use in disadvantaged public schools.

In planning for the final session, I decided not to invite the subject advisor because it was the last session and since she did not attend this FG workshop, where the content from the draft CEP was discussed, she was not going to add much value to the next feedback session, without having looked at the contextualised CEP. I decided rather to include a separate face-to-face session with her to discuss the CEP.

## SOAP 7 – FG 7: Educator experiences of the DCF and Feedback on the CEP

### Planning:

- Obtain feedback and input from participants on the draft CEP provided in FG 6.
- Invite a representative of *Vision for Women* at the FGS to share their career programme, and the impact thereof with learners in Townships in Gqeberha.
- Arrange to meet with the LO subject advisor face to face in place of her attending the FGS.
- Discuss lessons that participants used in school. Obtain their opinions about the lessons.
- Collaborate with participants on the draft CEP. What content should be added, removed, or retained?
- Complete the feedback form on experiences on the developmental-contextual framework in FGS.

### Action:

- Only four educators attended the session.
- Explain the structure and format of the CEP, bearing in mind that time allocations for CCC is limited.
- Discussed the lessons and resources in the draft CEP and asked for opinions on suitability and relevance for learners in disadvantaged public schools.
- Assess the content of the CEP and indicate which lessons are likely to work and which lessons should be reworked. Indicate which content should be added or removed based on LO ATP's.
- Check on participants' views about the DHET Career Packs as a resource.
- Assessment of experiences of the FG sessions and the DCF.

### Observing and Evaluation:

- The representative from *Vision for Women* was unable to make the FGS. They were in their peak season. She was however prepared to share learnings and experiences via Zoom/ Skype at a later stage.
- Participants indicated that they worked through the CEP materials. Four educators were not able to implement lessons because of the time of the year, and the structuring of the LO ATPs, where Grade 11 and 12s had already completed the career curriculum. They however indicated that these materials will be helpful for 2022 based on the subject advisor's request for new career resources. Two educators indicated that they used worksheets from the CEP for career lessons with learners in the GET band.
- The feedback questionnaire suggested that participants understood the impact of contextual factors on the career development of learners and the value of the DCF.

### Review:

- Covid-19 derailed my data collection process significantly and consequently the opportunity for implementation of the CEP was not aligned with the ATPs. As such participant feedback was mostly based on their scanning of materials, or the implementation of a worksheet or two instead of the actual implementation of a more comprehensive lesson.
- Tight schedules of guests require requests for attendance to be made weeks in advance. Guidelines by *Vision for Women* will be helpful for the development of a similar initiative in Northern Areas schools, where they have Saturday and holiday career programmes for learners in the community.
- Participants indicated that they would like for the focus group to continue to meet as a LO Peer Support Group. I am hoping that participants would continue to use the contextualised CEP as a career resource and provide further input when I engage again on career engagements of the DoE.
- Time spent with the participants since the start of the study and listening to the career development needs of learners has confirmed my interest in working in the area of career development of learners.

***Researcher's reflective notes on content and process: SoaP 7***

FG 7 was five weeks after FG 6 and after the September school break. Four educators attended the session. One participant, in attendance in most of the sessions provided an apology, indicating that she had to meet tight deadlines at school. This illustrated how busy educators become towards the end of the year, when they are required to focus on commitments in their school. The end of year examinations and marking (with some of the group doing grade 12 final examination marking) were their key priorities at this stage. These pressures also indicated that should one wish to do any training and development with educators, that it is best to do these in either term 1 or term 3. There were longer gaps than I had hoped for between sessions when learners were writing examinations and educators were required to do marking. Casual participant engagement prior to the FGS, suggested that participants were under immense pressure with the final examinations for grade 12's looming, perhaps more so because of how Covid-19 had impacted on teaching and learning in schools. Participants teaching other subjects shared that they had the additional pressure of having to draft final examination papers for multiple grades and in some instances both an English and Afrikaans paper for each subject.

Supporting learners by providing career education was highlighted as a very difficult task across all the FG sessions, however participants indicated that having to support learners with learning barriers in literacy and numeracy was an even greater challenge. Participants indicated that the LO CAPS CCC does not cater for learners with learning barriers, or for learners with a more practical orientation. Participants reported that it is very difficult to keep these learners motivated and engaged in career lessons, as they perceive the content as unrealistic and not applicable to them. Although training needs in career education were highlighted in the interviews, participants indicated that they are even more challenged in supporting learners with educational barriers and that they require support with career lessons applicable to these learners.

Furthermore, it was noted that schools that cater for large numbers of learners with learning barriers have been compelled to adapt their curriculum to meet the pass rate criteria of the DoE and ensure that learners are able to obtain the NSC, which may give them a chance to be admitted at TVET colleges. Schools have adapted the curriculum and removed certain subjects, compelling learners to take specific subjects. Although learners may then possibly obtain a NSC, this impacts on limiting their choice of the subjects that they wish to take in schools.

I noticed at the focus group sessions that participants would share with each other what they were busy with in schools, including subject information and suggestions for activities. A LO peer support group could be a helpful platform for developing skills and acquiring career knowledge to support learners in schools; and this idea was well-received by participants. In the absence of adequate support from the DoE, participants could use this platform to become resources for one another. Because they had enjoyed their group interactions so much, participants requested that the group continue to meet to share LO information with each other. This suggests that they had positive experiences in the group sessions and possibly benefitted from getting together and sharing in the group, but also from knowing that their counterparts at other schools in the community, experience similar challenges.

Overall, the group discussion showed that career education training for educators who teach learners with a multitude of developmental-contextual challenges from micro to macro level, is critical. With the relevant training, educators could acquire the knowledge and skills to support learners optimally with their subject and career choices, which ultimately could result in fewer dropouts, improved matric results and learners that will be better equipped to enter the world of work or tertiary institutions of their choice.

### **Summary of experiences of the FGS**

The FGS provided much more information than what I expected. The LO experiential knowledge of the participants reflected in our group engagements. Most of the FG participants have been teaching Guidance (prior to LO) or LO for more than two decades. They subsequently have observed trends and patterns in LO as well as in learner, educator and parent behaviours that influence the teaching and learning of LO (CCC) that is not as obvious to educators that teach other subjects. Although participants indicated in the interviews and the FGS that they were lacking in career teaching skills and resources, I observed from their success stories how many learners they have, and are supporting in schools, despite their lack of training. These LO educators were also the individuals that were involved with the Grade 12 Holiday Study Program, again giving of their time to the learners, which is aligned their reference in the initial interviews that LO teaching requires passion. Koestler (1967, p. 226, in Panday, 2007) refers to teaching as “a passionate” vocation and emotions as being central to teaching. I have, through the LO educator lens, gained extensive knowledge about the multitude of factors impacting on the career education of learners in disadvantaged communities within our focus group sessions.

## **Purpose of the CEP**

The purpose of developing the CEP was to provide the educators with an additional career resource when teaching the career and career choices topic in LO. The aim of the CEP was to provide educators with a career education model that considers influences from their environment on their career development. McMahon and Watson (2009) suggest that sensitivity for the contexts of learners is essential for career development. This is even more critical when working with learners facing a multitude of socio-economic challenges. LO educators feel that they are not adequately trained to provide career education, nor are they provided with adequate, relevant and relatable career resources to do justice when teaching the LO CCC topic. The intention with the customised CEP was not to replace the prescribed LO CAPS of the Department of Education, but rather to complement what is already in place in the LO by providing educators with training and a potentially relevant career resource that allows for greater engagement with opportunities for the sharing of their stories. Overall, the purpose with the CEP was to demonstrate to LO educators that career education with learners is possible, despite the lack of psychometric assessments and limited resources.

Educators commented that they have learnt and gained valuable insights on how to approach and engage with their learners when doing career education. Although most educators did not contribute examples of additional activities from their own teaching, or complete most of the homework tasks, they nevertheless were open to sharing information for career lessons with one another in the FGS. They even shared ideas on the LO workplans in schools and activities. This highlighted the benefits of increased collaboration that results from an AR approach but could be further encouraged through the educators being courageous enough to develop their own planned activities, described on a page and to present their own work. An evaluation of the CEP was completed with participants in the study and a summary of the findings follows.

## **Summative Evaluation**

The aim of the summative evaluation was to determine whether educators currently teaching CCC in LO regarded the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) that was applied in the CEP, as a resource that can be utilised in the teaching and learning of careers with FET phase learners in their schools.

In the final FGS, participants were requested to provide written but anonymous feedback providing their experiences with the DCF that informed the focus group sessions and was applied in the CEP, described in detail earlier in this chapter. Based on the feedback from participants it seemed as if the DCF-based discussions and suggested activities can add value

to career lessons, particularly as this approach can be used in larger groups, such as the group sizes in the public schools where they teach. Of the nine participants in the focus groups, only five attended the last session and completed the evaluation forms. Because the aim was to obtain honest feedback, anonymity was encouraged within the group. Contacting the other five for feedback would have impacted on anonymity, as well as the nature of the feedback. The programme was evaluated as follows by the participants.

Table 12 Evaluation of the Career Education Program (CEP)

Questions	Responses
Which aspects of the DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) was most useful for use with learners in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The multitude of factors from the learners' environment that impact on their career choices.</li> <li>- Diminished factors from the environment can influence career choice both positively and negatively.</li> <li>- The role of the family of origin and how it links up with career choice.</li> <li>- The family of origin "<i>took me back to how I chose my career</i>".</li> <li>- How the FG faced similar challenges when they had to choose a career.</li> <li>- The role of interpersonal relationships in career choice.</li> <li>- Noticing how the model is interlinked.</li> <li>- Allowing to learners to look beyond the traditional, popular careers.</li> </ul>
Which aspects of the DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) highlighted your greatest concerns regarding career education with learners in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The role that the family support structure plays in the career choice of learners. Concerned about how important a role it plays, and the limited support that learners in the community receive from the family structure.</li> <li>- Lack of support from the family and the economic conditions. This is the main cause for the struggles of learners.</li> <li>- The lack of family involvement makes it more difficult for educators and learners to guide learners with their career choices.</li> </ul>
Indicate the topics that we discussed that were most helpful for career development with learners in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All the topics were helpful.</li> <li>- The topic where educators were allowed to share their experiences when they had to make career decisions. Sharing their own stories.</li> <li>- The journey metaphor (Jake's story). An interesting introduction to start a career lesson.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpersonal relationships. Always interested on how to address the relationships between learners and parents.</li> <li>- Learning how educators can link family and real life to careers.</li> </ul>
Indicate the topics that we discussed that was least helpful for career development with learners in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>"I don't think there was any topic that was not useful to me".</i></li> <li>- All information and help were regarded as adding to personal growth. All information counts.</li> </ul>
How could educator awareness of developmental-contextual factors in the communities of learners impact on attaining the career and career choices outcome of the LO CAPS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It empowers educators not yet knowledgeable in teaching the career and career choices topic.</li> <li>- Helps educators to share with learners on how to choose careers.</li> <li>- Educator awareness of issues in the community is crucial as it impacts on teaching.</li> <li>- Awareness of the developmental context of learners helps educators to link the career and career choices topics to what is happening in the community. Can see the role of the community. Add to the educator's knowledge.</li> </ul>
How could a customized CEP impact on learners from disadvantaged communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CEP will be helpful and impact on lessons with learners from under-resourced communities. Educators have limited resources and have to improvise.</li> <li>- Learners from under-resourced communities do not have enough information about careers. The CEP will assist with providing career information to the learners.</li> <li>- A contextualised programme will show learners that there are other resources in their communities that they can use to help them with their career choices. It will show learners that even though they do not have money to attend professional career guidance sessions that they can be assisted by other resources. A contextualised CEP will be very helpful.</li> </ul>
In your opinion, would the training of LO educators on the developmental-contextual model constrain or facilitate the teaching of the career and career choices topic in LO? Elaborate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training will be very helpful as it will empower educators for teaching career topics. The challenge is that there is no stability in LO staffing because it is a "filler" subject, and it is not seen as equally important to their major subject which can be demanding.</li> <li>- Training in teaching careers will help educators to see how important career development is.</li> <li>- Training is necessary as educators will be better equipped to teach the career and career choices topic.</li> </ul>
What are your thoughts about career education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is important as educators have different ideas of career education, and it is essential to share the ideas and information.</li> <li>- Love the idea.</li> </ul>

<p>support groups for LO educators?</p> <p>Would you be interested in joining such a group? If so, why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It will be great so that ideas and resources can be shared.</li> <li>- It would be very helpful. Educators are consumed with the workload in other subjects, so support in teaching careers is needed.</li> <li>- It will be helpful to LO educators</li> </ul>
<p>Personal interest in joining a career support group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interested but retiring soon. Suggest that new LO educators join such a group.</li> <li>- All others interested in joining such a group.</li> </ul>

The above responses to the evaluation questions thus highlighted the following points, to be taken further in the next chapter:

- It is important to acknowledge and address the contextual factors that impact on learners.
- They valued reflecting on their own challenges as adolescents, and by whom and how they were supported in their career choices, allowed for more tolerance of learners' challenges.
- They also noted the value of the inter-connectedness of the framework.
- Since a number emphasised the role and influence of parents, idea arose to invite parents for awareness-raising and to participate in career education.
- A contextualised CEP could be a useful resource, especially for educators new to LO.
- They liked the idea of career support groups and peer meetings for LO educators.

### **Programme strengths**

The approach, particularly the “Trip down memory lane” activity helped educators to have a better understanding of learners’ uncertainty when having to choose subjects or a career, their career-indecisiveness and what appears to be a lack of interest regarding future career prospects. Putting themselves in the shoes of the learners and remembering and reflecting on personal challenges with careers when at the same age and stage, increased the empathy of the educators.

The DCF allows for educator to get to know their learners and understanding the role that their environments play in their career development. It also allows for learners to know each other better, from sharing about themselves in class. Of course, the educator needs to monitor such sharing and feedback to make sure that learners do not feel intimidated by others or receive negative input. With limited teaching time for LO, and having to reach all the learners, working

in groups is likely to help in reaching more learners than working individually. The DCF seems to lend itself well to working in groups. The value of group work is that many learners may be experiencing similar challenges. Group discussions help in that most learners' needs could be covered in class, thus reducing the need for individual learner contact for the educator. Group sessions also allow for peer learning by exploration and courageous conversations with their own peer group. Being challenged by their peers may be less intimidating than being challenged by educators or parents. Learners realise that they have much in common with each other and may be encouraged by other learners in similar situations, but persevering.

My first contact with the LO subject advisor was by telephone. She was accommodating from the onset. We initially planned to do the semi-structured interview via Skype, but due to network challenges agreed to meet face to face. She availed herself over a weekend, on a Saturday for the first consultation. Our first engagement was positive, and she responded to all the questions from the interview schedule and even provided me with Grade 10 – 12 ATP's to use in the planning of the career lessons in the CEP. Due to her workload, we were not able to have a follow up face to face engagement during the FG period, but we consulted telephonically regarding the ATPs after FG 4.

In FG 1 the group decided that the subject advisor will join the group in FG 6 and FG 7 because participants were going to share sensitive information regarding the implementation of LO in schools and the nature of support from the DoE (NMB District). Having the subject advisor in the group could have impacted on the openness of participants and hence the quality of the input that educators were willing to share. Because the last two sessions were primarily focused on the content and activities of the CEP, it was deemed appropriate sessions for her to join the group and perhaps share current LO information from provincial and national levels, as well as provide input on the draft CEP. The subject advisor did not attend FG 6 but indicated that she did not access communications because of her workload. She however volunteered to be available for a follow-up consultation session. Because participation in FG 7 was dependent on knowledge of content from either previous FG sessions or information from FG 6, I decided not include her in the FG 7, which was the feedback session. It was noted that the input from the participants was more suited for use in the CEP, perhaps because of their direct engagement with learners. Participants mentioned that their number of years of LO experience exceeded those of the subject advisor, who at the time was serving her second year in the LO position, which may affect the LO relationship between school, educator and district official.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the seven FGS allowed for detailed exposure to aspects of the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) and its value in contexts where formal and structured career assessments are not likely to happen. Initially, the FG sessions were going to be held more frequently / regularly over a shorter period, but with Covid-19 and its challenges, the FG sessions stretched across seven months. In hindsight this benefitted the group, as our being together over an extended period created a group coherence that seemed to allow for easy and comfortable sharing. Sessions over the extended period allowed ample time to reflect and ponder on previous sessions and to come up with ideas of simplifying the model for better understanding.

In addition, the reflective time over the months allowed for my ideas to coalesce into the development of the “backpacker career journey”, which participants took to very well. I personally also developed in my understanding and value of the DCF, whilst journeying with the participants.

## Chapter 7: Discussion

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### Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to contribute to the literature by offering evidence to support the relevance of alternative, culturally and contextually sensitive career intervention approaches for learners in structurally disadvantaged public schools, who are impacted by the environments in which they live. The study was based on and expanded upon previous research on the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF of career development, as conducted by Stead (1996), Spencer (1999), Roberson (2018) and Phala (2019).

As noted in Chapter 1, the overarching aim of the study was to determine whether FET-phase learners from disadvantaged public schools could benefit from a contextualised career education programme. To respond to the above question, the following were explored with LO educators in the FET-phase in disadvantaged schools: LO educator perspectives on the teaching and learning of career and career choices; contextual factors and the influence thereof on the career development of learners; and to design a contextualised career education programme to influence the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools. The theoretical framework of the study is underpinned by a constructivist approach acknowledging that amongst participants there will be multiple realities and that what is true for the one may not necessarily be true for the other (Wasserman, 2014). The career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools was promoted with LO educators; and the research project was guided by the implementation of a DCF to career development.

In Chapter 1 the overarching research aim and research questions, directed by the theoretical framework of the study were provided. The overall goal of this study was to respond to the impact of environmental factors on the career development of learners that are structurally disadvantaged and in under-resourced public schools, by developing a culturally sensitive and contextually relevant career education programme to augment career resources in public schools. Amidst the call from various career researchers (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Buthelezi et al., 2009; Maree, 2009; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016; Stead, 1996; and Watson & Stead, 2017) and LO educators in schools, to contribute contextually relevant career information to career settings of learners in disadvantaged communities, I aimed to explore the DCF for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986), based on its use by other career researchers mentioned above, with individuals from structurally disadvantaged communities. Stead (1996, p.74) indicated that “the developmental-contextual model endorses a multidisciplinary approach to career research” and hence recognises that both the individual and their multilevel

environments are important influences in the career development of disadvantaged learners. Furthermore, Phala (2019) described the model as contextually relevant and affordable for use within marginalised environments. She further noted that the model is not only useful within diverse contexts, but is also inexpensive, hence lending itself to be replicated for use in schools with larger learner numbers, with minimal costs.

I attempted to answer the research questions by obtaining LO educators' perspectives about career education in disadvantaged public schools and engaging with them in the development of an appropriate intervention for their use. The overarching research aim was explored through three research questions that provided direction to the current study. In chapters 5 and 6 aspects of the findings that emanated from the analysis of the narratives from the interviews and records of focus group sessions are depicted. A summary of the findings to the research questions follows.

### **Findings in response to the research questions**

#### ***Research Question 1: What are the perspectives of FET-phase LO educators in disadvantaged public schools on the teaching and learning of career and career choices outcomes in LO CAPS?***

This aimed to explore educator perspectives on the LO CAPS in disadvantaged public schools, to develop a deeper understanding of the implementation of LO CAPS (career and career choices) in public schools; gain better insight into the role that learners' contexts play in career development and to determine whether the LO CAPS is perceived to address the career education needs of the learners. Participants indicated that teaching career education in disadvantaged public schools is overwhelming and at times disheartening, due to a multitude of challenges that impact upon their teaching plans. Difficulties are related to many educators' limited understanding of the LO curriculum and the lack of resources to ensure that meaningful teaching and learning transpires in this learning area, findings supported by Diale et al. (2014). Discussion of emergent themes, reflecting evidence from the interviews, focus group sessions and the theoretical framework follows. These illustrate particularly the contextual constraints experienced by educators in the system.

#### **Quality of LO CAPS**

Quality is an ambiguous term (Hooley & Rice, 2019) but in its simplest form, it alludes to services or goods that are delivered at a high standard. Participants revealed that the quality of the LO CAPS (CCC) prescribed by the DoE is of a good standard but that although the career topics were relevant, the activities linked to the topics were not applicable to learners in disadvantaged schools. They felt that these were not aligned to specific learner needs

common to environments that are structurally disadvantaged. It seems that the assumption of the inclusion of activities in the curriculum is that these can be implemented across various settings. This does not display sensitivity to the needs of individuals that are faced with structural and contextual difficulties. The primary difficulties with LO CAPS (CCC) were thus described as rooted within the implementation of the curriculum.

The participating educators also ascribed some of their difficulties to the lack of training by the DoE in how to implement the curriculum appropriately in schools. In addition, I am mindful that the LO curriculum is developed for all South African public schools, advantaged or disadvantaged. Should LO content be developed specifically for disadvantaged public schools? I do not think so, because then the curriculum would once again be skewed, with LO educators in advantaged schools probably feeling that the content, particularly regarding the nature of the contextual difficulties experienced, are not applicable to learners in their schools. Instead, the solution possibly rests in providing a more flexible framework such as the DCF, in the training and development of educators, to be discussed in the recommendations in Chapter 8.

### **Lack of LO training and career knowledge**

Systemic stakeholders, which include the DBE, DoE, career practitioners, educators, people in school management teams, parents and community and cultural leaders, share the responsibility for achieving positive outcomes for the youth and therefore have a duty to provide resources to learners who may be at risk for negative life-outcomes (Theron, 2016). Van Deventer and Van Niekerk (2008, in Van Deventer, 2009) found that LO educators were inadequately trained. Then, both Diale (2016) and Modiba and Sefotho (2019), in their research with LO educators, identified that additional in-service training is critical for the career development of educators. Participants revealed that LO educators have limited or no career knowledge (often because of their own experiences of careers), and hence find teaching the topic relatively difficult. With limited career training, LO educators may limit possibilities for learners to attain positive life-outcomes.

Vondracek et al. (1986) indicate that the school is, after the family, next in importance to prepare adolescents for future employment. The school is thus a critical career development resource, and with career services that are limited or non-existent for most black youth (Phala, 2019), the school, and particularly educators, play a fundamental role in the career development of learners who are not able to access alternative career resources, such as career expo's, job shadowing and career assessments. When LO educators lack career knowledge, it impacts on the career development and career decisions of learners, because educators may provide incomplete or incorrect career information and consequently misdirect

the career decisions of learners. This is evidenced in schools when learners make subject or career decisions without adequate career support. In the absence of constructive career discussions and guidance, learners continue to choose subjects unwisely, which may result in failure, and the subsequent changes of subjects between their grade 10-12 years, which have the following implications for learners:

- A national senior certificate that may not be aligned to the admission requirements of tertiary institutions;
- A national senior certificate that has little market value, hence challenges to access work with this certificate;
- Learners experiencing academic difficulties, due to being challenged by subjects;
- Learners repeatedly failing in school, due to challenges of subject content;
- Escalation in the number of learners that are progressed, due to repeated failures;
- Escalation in the learner dropout rate due to struggles with subjects, adding to the out of school youth totals;
- Citizens that cannot contribute to the economy of the country due to unemployment.

Suggestions by the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study*, in which South Africa was placed last, emphasised that subject choices of South African students should be enhanced, as career information on offer in schools influences the career decisions of learners (Ajayi, et al., 2022).

Low confidence and motivation in teaching LO (CCC) was mentioned by participants, often the consequence of inadequate career knowledge amongst educators. Prinsloo (2007 in Aloysius et al., 2022) indicated that the DoE was not really troubled by problems that educators experienced and occasionally provided non-comprehensive LO workshops. Participants in this study had similar opinions, and whilst a few indicated that career training is provided infrequently by the DoE, others explained that they had never been invited to career workshops. Participants' views were contradicted by the LO subject advisor in the study who indicated that LO workshops are scheduled by the DoE, but that educators often do not respond to invitations for workshops. Contrasting viewpoints regarding training for schools appear to be rooted in the inconsistent communication between schools and the DoE. Poor communication between schools and district officials, poor facilitation of workshops, poor training materials and disregard for LO by some educators and school management, were considered as contributing factors to the poor attendance of workshops. LO workshops facilitated by the EC DoE were described as a waste of time, and not particularly useful for teaching and learning of LO careers due to the following:

- Inadequate communication between schools and district officials;
- Poor facilitation of workshops;
- The quality of workshop materials is poor;
- Workshops do not provide new information;
- Disregard for LO by educators because it is not their specialised area of teaching;
- LO workshops focus on the marking and moderation of LO examinations, rather than on the content and teaching of the learning area.

A noteworthy observation by participants was that the quality of resources provided by the DoE seemed to differ markedly between provinces. Participants highlighted the poor quality in career resources by pointing out their perceptions of discrepancies between better quality Western Cape (WC) and the EC DoE resources. WC career resources were regarded as more relevant and helpful than EC resources, hence participants opt to source on-line resources from the WC DoE website, instead of attending workshops presented locally by the EC DoE. The discrepancy noted between EC and WC resources suggests that LO training and support by education departments in South Africa is not uniform. This discrepancy may be attributed to the EC being more impoverished than the WC and hence structurally more disadvantaged because of seemingly limited financial resources. However, despite financial differences between provinces in the country, career training and development and resources should be aligned and standardised at a national level, to ensure that basic career development opportunities for career educators and learners in South Africa is more consistent. A number of authors (Seherrie et al., 2022; Diale et al., 2014; Modiba et al., 2019; Phala, 2019; and Wasserman, 2014) indicated that professional training and development is required for LO educators and career practitioners; and that LO training should impart skills on how to make LO lessons more dynamic by engaging learners in discussion and activities.

Furthermore, the DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) indicates that the school (especially educators) provides career resources used by learners for career development and as such, as a critical resource it makes sense to ensure that educators are adequately trained in career education. The present study however revealed that educators are not compliant in terms of the continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) requirements stipulated by SACE. Inadequate teaching of LO (career and career choices) is a result of non-compliance with regulations *viz.*, that educators are required to obtain 150 CPD points over 3 years. Although the participants reported training in other learning areas that they teach, none of the participants were registered on the SACE portal for CPTD points. LO educators that are not abreast with current career developments are not likely to provide useful career resources for learners. Although the “blame” for not being skilled in LO, seems to be placed on the DoE, it

should be noted that the onus for personal and professional development is a shared responsibility, and that both the DoE and educators are responsible for professional development. Training and development do not only imply the attendance of formal workshops. Since WC DoE resources were rated as of good quality, articles and webinars from this website could be applied for peer learning and development of LO educators at schools, which might somewhat improve the quality of career lessons. Wasserman (2014) refers to educator competence as the most important precondition for the improvement of quality lessons.

### **Lack of stability in the teaching of LO**

Participants noted that insufficient and inadequate support from the DoE at district level, the lack of interest in LO by the leadership in schools, vacant educator posts, and poor organization, creates the inconsistencies noted in the teaching of LO and contributes to the fragmented image observed in schools by participants. Depending on the educator, LO may vary in terms of lesson content, teaching style and genuine teaching of the learning content, which all impact on attaining the LO learning outcomes, in the case of this study, specifically the CCC choices outcomes. Furthermore, when LO is allocated to multiple educators teaching the same grade or phase, continuity and consistency of messages are impacted. Diale (2016) indicates that it is the lack of stability in LO that undermines the successful implementation thereof in schools. Standards are not adhered to at implementation level with schools, and even educators within schools operating differently. When LO teaching does not happen in a particular grade or phase, or when the teaching is of poor quality in a specific grade or phase, educators in the following grades or phases are challenged because they are required to fill the career vacuum created in previous grades or phases, often with resistant learners. Inconsistencies in teaching LO consequently causes discontent amongst LO educators because it increases an already existing and demanding workload on those who are actively working in and committed to this learning area.

### **LO as a “Filler Subject”**

LO, unlike other learning areas in schools, is not examined externally in Grade 12 and is not therefore taken seriously by educators and learners (Ngoepe et al., 2017), thus it seems to be treated very casually in schools. Seherrie and Mawela (2022) found that many teachers are not sufficiently trained in LO and lack the expertise to teach the subject but are basically forced to teach the subject. The erratic allocation of LO to educators that are not adequately trained, merely to fill up people’s teaching timetables, contributes to the demise of LO, as the status of this learning area is affected by it (Jacobs & Frantz, 2014). Both Panday (2007) and Jacobs and Frantz (2014) note that when educators are not adequately trained to teach LO, they

obstruct effective teaching and learning of this subject. Participating educators mentioned that the practice of filling up educator timetables with LO leads to educators who are not keen on teaching the subject, or educators that are not adequately trained for career education, impacting on the continuity that is crucial for the career development of learners. The lives of learners are impacted when they are deprived of access to quality career education, and therefore prevented from acquiring the necessary self- and career-knowledge required for effective career decision making.

Six participants in the study did not have an LO qualification but had been LO educators within their schools for between two and thirty-three years, suggesting that LO educators without an LO or career-related qualification, but with passion to teach the subject, should not be excluded from teaching LO per se, but could be supported with experiential training and mentoring to acquire the skills to support learners in career education. The participants in the study with less LO experience indicated that they were also initially required to teach LO with no experience but had benefitted from the support of more experienced educators in their schools. Passion and enthusiasm seem to have been a driving force for the participants to continue to support learners, despite the multitude of challenges faced when teaching LO.

### **Weighting of LO: Theory vs Practical**

The LO curriculum in schools is predominantly theory-based. This does not suit the teaching of career and career choices, which calls for practical engagement and discussion. A curriculum that is intensely theory-based denies learners the opportunity to acquire information through peer learning or from real world experiences, consequently depriving them of opportunities to internalise theoretical information learnt in class. Participants communicated that learners learn best when they engage in discussions and can apply what they have learnt on each other or within the real world. According to Griessel-Roux et al., (2005) learners prefer a stronger focus on practical approaches in their LO classes. Barnhardt (2006, in Wasserman, 2014, p.25) indicated that a subject-matter approach to curriculum content “results in static, discrete knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing and expanding social and cultural environment”, hence career information that is detached from real life. Practical engagement with learning content, such as that suggested in the CEP proposed in this study, encourages educator and learner participation and promotes peer learning because learners draw from the energy that educators bring to the lesson. This implies that if the educator is poorly prepared, uncertain and with low energy when teaching, learners can feel it and are likely to reciprocate the same feelings and behaviours. Career exploration with family, peers and educators, as well as in different work environments, via part time work, imply practical engagement by learners and is aligned to the child extra-familial network in the

Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF, suggesting that the model may be suited and beneficial to career exploration with learners in schools.

### **Workload**

LO is a demanding learning area that adds to an existing teaching workload, as educators often also teach in other learning areas. Diale (2016) indicated that constant workload reviews and adjustments to the LO curriculum contribute to the unresolved tensions experienced by LO educators. As noted above, LO educators are required to follow a theory-based curriculum weighed down by written assignments; do continuous research for current and relevant career information that is responsive to the needs of their learners; and take on additional responsibilities not necessarily linked to their LO roles, despite lack of competence or skill. Lesson preparation, research, grading of papers, and consultations brought on by additional responsibilities are often to be completed in the educator's personal time, as they rarely have "free" periods in school. The demanding LO workload, combined with limited teaching time discourages many educators from teaching LO and may be one of the sources of the perceived resistant approach when this subject is allocated to educators, leading to them minimising the work they do or paying little attention to what is needed.

### **Time allocation**

Allocated hours prescribed by the NCS for LO are reported to be insufficient, not allowing for quality career discussion and exploration by learners. In addition, educators reportedly are coerced by circumstances to reduce the curriculum to focus on content that may feature in examinations, which often results in the exclusion of career topics.

In addition, this study was conducted during the Covid-19 period. Educators indicated that the school curriculum was adapted due to the loss of teaching and learning time in schools. LO was significantly impacted, being even further reduced and, in some schools, LO periods were used for what participants referred to as the "killer subjects" (in other words time was taken for subjects perceived to be more difficult for learners or more important). It therefore became evident that although career and career choices may be a planned activity as per the curriculum, it often does not get equitable attention in schools.

### **Inclusive education**

Inclusive education asserts that everyone has the right to education that is directed at strengthening human rights and freedoms (UNESCO, 2005). It therefore maintains that learners with disabilities should be within mainstream education (Smith & Arendse, 2016). Participants indicated that the LO CAPS for career and career choices is not fully inclusive

and does not make allowance for the career prospects of learners who may be academically challenged by the mainstream curriculum. Content in the LO (CCC) curriculum is not aligned to the needs of intellectually and academically challenged learners, who may be better suited to practical skills training. Career discussions with learners and parents should focus on redirecting learners to schools of skills or TVET colleges, where they can explore practical careers.

Participants' perceptions are that the LO CAPS (CCC) is tailored for learners whose strengths are primarily in the verbal and academic domains, and having a very limited focus on learners whose strengths are predominantly in the non-verbal, practical skills domains. The DoE's progression and promotion policy results in learners that are not academically strong being condoned or promoted to subsequent grades. Instead of promoting learners, who may not acquire relevant skills that will make them employable in the process, allowance should be made in the LO CAPS for career exploration with these learners. Participants noted that it is extremely difficult to support and engage learners with academic barriers when doing career education in school, as the career choices content does not address those needs. Whilst reference is made to TVET colleges in the curriculum, learners with intellectual or academic barriers are excluded from career discussions, on the basis that they often do not meet the minimum requirements for the tertiary study avenues proposed in the curriculum. The same applies when tertiary institutions visit schools for recruitment purposes. The focus of institutions is often on learners who are academically able to access these institutions. SA requires a skilled labour force, and the apt and timeous re-direction of learners with academic barriers, can prevent the growing "out of school youth" statistics noted in recent years due to learners dropping out of school.

### **Career resources and services**

#### **Textbooks**

Participants in the study by Diale (2016) referred to the lack of various resources required for effective LO teaching. Lack of essential resources in schools affects the quality of the career education on offer to learners in disadvantaged public schools. Educators cannot do justice to career education without primary and pertinent resources such as up-to-date textbooks, technological equipment, data, and funding.

The editions of prescribed LO textbooks by the DoE found in schools are outdated and reportedly older than twenty years. These outdated textbooks are used, but educators are required to make adjustments to the content, to make it current and applicable to learners. The burning question is: what happens when educators get the career content wrong? It is alarming that career education is happening alongside outdated resources as such resources

are not aligned to changes occurring in the world of work. Content within these resources is likely to be a misrepresentation of the current careers situation, and misleading to learners, resulting in them being off the mark with their career decisions. Outdated resources may thus obstruct the career development of learners. Furthermore, the shortage of LO textbooks in schools requires learners to share during teaching time, and return books to the educator after the lesson, for use by other learners. Opportunities to re-visit classwork in their own time by referring to the textbook at a later stage, is consequently limited or non-existent. Participants reported that most learners do not have access to other resources at home, such as electronic devices, to do further career exploration on their own.

#### Technological devices

The DoE provided mobile devices and data to grade 12 learners in selected disadvantaged public schools for classroom teaching. Poor management of devices and data by learners however restricts educators from using technology as a teaching and learning resource, since learners do not bring their devices to school; learners and extended families use the data for personal matters, such as playing games, watching movies, and being on chat groups; or devices are reported as stolen. Whilst technology lends itself well to being a teaching and learning medium, it is an expensive resource that the DoE cannot replicate with ease due to financial constraints. In hindsight, it appears that it was not a sustainable exercise from the onset, as not all matriculants in the participating public schools, despite coming from the same community and having similar demographics, were awarded devices.

#### Educator vacancies

The lack of people resources also impacts on the teaching and learning of LO. Delays to replace educators that are no longer in the education system result in educators being allocated more learners and bigger classes, which impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Time allocation for LO is limited and with larger learner totals, career education that requires engagement, discussion and exploration is adversely impacted.

#### Finances

Poor financial resourcing by the DoE, combined with meagre financial resources in the communities deter the effective implementation of the LO career and career choices topics in schools. Due to the lack of funds, schools are not able to secure essential technological resources such as computers, wi-fi and data to enhance teaching and learning experiences for educators and all learners. Educators often make use of personal resources to collect information on behalf of the learners. Although career materials sourced by educators on behalf of learners provide learners access to basic career materials, it does not afford learners the opportunity for personal career exploration and per chance career discoveries and

learning. These factors essentially deny learners the opportunity to self-engage with career materials and make career discoveries on their own.

The annual career days scheduled by tertiary institutions and companies in the EC provide learners with some critical career information and resources, but not all learners from participating schools can access these due to insufficient funds to secure transportation to the respective venues. The academic performance criteria that may be applied when transport is sponsored, excludes learners with academic potential, who just miss being included due to total allocations. Learners with academic barriers and perhaps a more practical orientation are often completely excluded.

Furthermore, lack of financial resources excludes learners from disadvantaged public schools from any form of psychometric career assessments by private practitioners, which could provide valuable information for further career exploration and career discussions.

#### Tenure / Educator migration

Due to the “filler subject” practice referred to earlier, educators’ time span in an LO position in a grade is often brief due to changes occurring within a specific grade (i.e., migration between grade 10 classes); migration between grades within the same phase (i.e., migrate between grades 10, 11 or 12); or migration between different phases (i.e., migrate between the GET and FET phases). Movement may occur within the same academic year. This practice has a debilitating effect on the career education of learners as educators may be inclined to make limited effort in acquiring the necessary skills to teach this subject because they are often moved between grades or expected to co-teach a grade with one or more other educators, which entails constantly re-working lessons.

Moreover, three of the participants with teaching experience ranging from between thirty-two to thirty-five years will be retiring within the next two years. These educators possess essential experience about the growing pains of this subject, as it evolved in SA schools across many years, to the current LO CAPS version. They also have a wealth of experiential LO teaching knowledge, particularly concerning teaching LO in disadvantaged communities, which may not be accessed in textbooks. Focus group discussions revealed that these educators are highly perceptive of and sensitive to the needs of their learners, for example including giving every grade 12 learner a chance to acquire their NSC, by providing for the most basic needs of learners, such as availing school facilities for study purposes; educator time for extra classes in the afternoons or during school holidays; ensuring that impoverished learners receive a meal before writing their exams; or providing transport for learners that may be challenged in order not to miss the 30-minute grace period to enter the exam venue. These

educators have learnt to “see” their learners, acknowledge the environments where they come from and cater for their specific needs. Unfortunately, challenges posed in teaching LO limits the transferring of critical knowledge or skills between educators. These skilled educators will leave education with all their knowledge because the DBE does not seem to do exit interviews or have succession plans for individuals leaving the education system, subsequently adding to the levels of educator incompetence and lack of skills observed by participants.

Overall, the study illuminated that LO in schools is not regarded as an essential learning area by the EC DoE (NMB), the school management teams, educators and learners. It is regarded as less prestigious and of lesser importance than all other learning areas in school, hence the “unjust” treatment thereof. LO periods are sacrificed to catch up in other learning areas. Because career and career choices is embedded in LO, it consequently is sacrificed alongside all other LO topics. Even within LO itself, career and career choices will be sacrificed for other LO topics that are more likely to feature in the examination. Participants felt that the perception that LO is not an important subject permeates down from district level, as they were required to teach LO without the support and guidance of a subject advisor for an extended period, upon the retirement of the previous subject advisor. Upon replacement, the newly appointed subject advisor reportedly was a subject expert in history at school level, had no experience of working at district level and they felt lacked skills to engage and support LO educators. Participants felt that the subject advisor had inadequate LO experience to support educators in schools, particularly educators in this study with extensive LO experience. Participants believed that the lack of understanding of the application of LO with learners in the classroom and the inflexible theory-focused approach by the subject advisor, affects the nature of support provided to learners and gets in the way of teaching LO, particularly in the teaching and of career and career choices, which due to environmental changes, requires constant adjustment. The Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF acknowledges the impact of all the factors in the distal domain *viz.*, economic conditions, social and educational policy, technological advances, job opportunities, organizational context, environmental conditions, labour law and the socio-cultural context, on the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools.

***Research Question 2: How might an approach including contextual and situational factors be developed and implemented to shape the career development of learners in disadvantaged public schools?***

Previous research by career scholars (described in chapter three) illustrated the important role that contextual factors play in the career development of individuals. Hence it would be, as phrased by this study’s participants, unrealistic to do career education with learners from

disadvantaged schools without consideration of the multitude of contextual factors within their immediate environments, that impact on their immediate and subsequently their future lives. Participants in the study reported that learners disengage when they cannot identify with lesson content. Self-concept is enfolded in what a person is able to see and achieve, so when lesson content is too far-fetched or idealistic, learners become discouraged, feeling that what is presented is “pie in the sky” and not attainable. They tend to feel that what is proposed (as in some of the textual examples) seems impossible and unlikely to happen for them, because of their circumstances.

### **The inter-related and recursive context**

Since decision-making is impacted by ecological interactions between individuals and their interrelated contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), all individuals, regardless of whether from affluence or poverty, are likely to be impacted by the occurrences within their environments and consequently make decisions based on these interactions between themselves and their immediate or distant environments. The Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF reflects on how various micro- and macro-systems are interrelated and recursive, feeding from one system into another and consequently providing crucial information that individuals use to base their career decisions on. Phala (2019) noted that the education system impacts on the career aspirations and prospects of learners from disadvantaged communities.

The socio-contextual factors highlighted by participants evidenced that inadequate or dysfunctional systems in disadvantaged communities’ impact on the career education of learners, either in a progressive or adverse manner. One participant noted that she taught two siblings, who were both exposed to the ridicule of peers and the community because of their parents’ substance dependence and subsequent inappropriate behaviour in the community, and frequently at the learners’ school. The one learner used their family circumstances to propel forward by pushing for academic excellence, whereas the other could not bear the ridicule, and presented with anti-social behaviour in school and academic under-performance. When this learner was transferred to a neighbouring school where the family background was not known to others, academic progress was reported. The transfer of schools was facilitated by the participant in the study, which once again reflects on how perceptive, and in-tune experienced LO educators are able to be, and the potentially influential role that they play in the career development of learners.

### **Parental involvement**

Parental involvement in the career development of learners is a concern. Participants reported that although neglect contributes to the lack of parental involvement, parents are not always

absent due to neglect. It was noted that low education levels; poor career knowledge of parents and lack of skills to support their children contribute to the poor parental involvement observed in schools. Participants indicated that most of their parents are required to work long hours or hold down several jobs to make ends meet in their households. This then implies that learners are required to take on responsibilities within their homes, leaving them with little to no time for career exploration or to think about future aspirations.

Moreover, financial demands within the home may skew parental career aspirations for their children, as learners are required to enter the world of work relatively early to assist with supporting the home. This hinders career development because learners may be required to put their career aspirations aside or on hold for the greater good of the family. The misalignment of parent-learner aspirations also results in parents not encouraging their children to actively engage in career exploration and the need to plan financially for tertiary education, whether by parents saving towards studies or parents supporting learners, by sourcing bursaries and study loans.

What stood out in the study is that parents were described as selectively absent. Parents are absent to matters pertaining to the learners' academic progress and development but would report to school on their own accord or for scheduled meetings regarding matters such as the matric farewell. Exorbitant amounts of money may be spent on securing outfits for the matric farewell (to signal status) but the same parents are often not prepared to finance a career exhibition outing, or to contribute towards application fees for registration at tertiary institutions. In contrast, participants were grateful to those parents who, despite similar adverse circumstances, engaged and supported the school with the overall development of their children.

### **Unemployment**

Due to unemployment, low-income households, or irresponsible spending of income on alcohol and drugs, parents from the community are not always able to contribute towards basic primary, secondary and tertiary education for their children. Many learners in impoverished communities can access basic education because of the Quintile system, discussed above, which considers the socioeconomic status of communities where schools are located (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019) and SASSA grants.

### **Poverty**

The study by Nortje (2017) regarding the effect of poverty on education in SA, indicated that the country has high levels of poverty impacting upon the affordability of, and accessibility of education. Nortje (2017) also revealed and corroborated findings of other research mentioned

in the current study in that “the cost of education, capabilities of teachers, infrastructure and resources” (p. 47) are contributing factors to the high levels of poverty observed in the country. The socio-economic status in the home and community, depending on the resilience of the learner, and support received, may hinder the career development of learners. Resilience in South African youth is fuelled by behaviours of being hopeful and goal-directed (Theron, 2016). With poverty being so widespread in South Africa, educators should therefore make a concerted effort to keep the “gonna make it mentality” (Harley, 2011, p. 105) of disadvantaged learners high, as it cultivates a sense of hope.

The current study has illustrated how financial constraints in communities impact on career development in that critical resources that afford the learner access to career information are often lacking; this would include the following: electronic devices; data; electricity to watch television or movies that may promote career insights, or being able to listen to career talks on the radio; learner transport to ensure regular school attendance and even basic requirements such as food, clothing and items to maintain their hygiene. The DBE has various initiatives in place to support learners with basic needs, such as school nutrition programmes that provide a daily meal at schools for learners, a learner transport initiative that provides transport for those that are required to access public schools elsewhere, because there are no schools within their immediate living areas, and a school uniform initiative, to ensure that learners have school attire. These initiatives are accessible at schools in the lower quantile range.

### **Migration of Learners**

The evident migration of learners from impoverished communities to ex-model C schools in more affluent areas, and the implications thereof on the career development of the migrating learners, as well as the learners that remain in the community schools, was a further noteworthy influence discussed in this study.

The exit of academically stronger learners to schools with better teaching and learning opportunities and a broader curriculum, which include a variety of learning areas, is linked to the exploration and aspirations of parents and learners for better education and career prospects. Although such migration may lead to improved career prospects for those learners, it adds to financial challenges at home, as learners access schools with a higher quantile ranking, where school fees are required and transport costs to school must be factored into existing constrained family budgets.

Learner migration also impacts on the consequent career development of learners that remain within community schools in that it results in a narrower curriculum, where learning areas such

as Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting are phased out at certain schools. Learners with a good aptitude in these subjects, whose parents cannot afford to send them to ex-model C schools, remain in the community schools and are advised to either transfer to schools within the community where these subjects are offered or choose alternative subjects, which are often not aligned to their interests. Should learners transfer to other schools within the broader area, they may require public transport to these. The implications are that parents must cater for transport costs, and where parents cannot afford the costs, learners are required to either walk to school, or remain within their current schools following a narrower curriculum that limits their career prospects. When learners transfer to schools that are further away from home, higher absenteeism is also noted because parents do not always have money for transport to school.

Participants in the study also indicated that absenteeism brings about backlogs in schoolwork that learners are often not able to address on their own. When they become too challenged by the backlog, they tend to drop out of school, which gives rise to an increase in the “out of school youth” statistics in South Africa. Furthermore, the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) stipulates that after an absence of ten consecutive school days, a learners’ record in the school register may be cancelled, once the school has made attempts to consult with parents about the continuous absenteeism.

### **Role models**

The support of internal and external structures provides relief to most LO educators (Diale, 2016). Participants indicated that although the environment, and stakeholders within the learners’ environment, play a critical role in their career development, they can also facilitate or constrain the career development of learners, as evidenced in the responses by participants on the impact of role models on career development.

Public schools in the community have delivered many successful professionals and artisans, who despite adverse challenges in their homes and the community, attained success. Regardless of these success stories, some learners prefer to model themselves on individuals in the community whose financial resources are attained by inappropriate and often illegal means. Unemployment and poverty force learners in directions where they can access quick cash to take care of immediate and often basic needs within their homes. Some learners equate success to financial and material resources and reportedly indicate that they do not care about attaining success through further studies or skills training. Instead, they mention to educators that they do not want to study for many years and end up earning a small salary or driving a small car. Participants also noted that learners are often discouraged when siblings

are in possession of a NSC school leaving certificate yet are unable to find employment. This paints a bleak picture for siblings who are still at school and does not instil hope for their future.

### **Gangsterism, Crime, Substance Dependency**

Gangsterism, crime and substance dependency are rife within the community where the schools in the study are situated, with drug-houses reportedly near schools. Learners in schools are exposed to these substances daily. Reports are that learners that drop out of school, often falling prey to gangs and various substances, subsequently being excluded from entering the formal employment sector and adding to the unemployed youth statistics. Goliath (2014) indicated that the future of our country is compromised by substance dependence, since potential future leaders become the victims of drug addiction.

Based on observing the flashy lifestyle of gangsters and criminals in the community, learners entertain performing what is known as an “Office Job” which according to participants means that they consider obtaining money by illegal and often criminal means. Caution from educators about the consequences about a criminal lifestyle, which may result in jail time or even in the loss of lives due to gang fighting, does not deter all learners from following through with such criminal “career” paths. What concerned the participants was that some learners have sound academic or sport potential, but due to challenges in the home, drop out of school to engage in criminal activities. De Klerk (2020) indicated that a sense of community, which refers to the idea of belonging, mutual support, and commitment, is a key value in community psychology. If community is an essential resource in career development of learners in disadvantaged communities, then it is critical to work at improving the sense of community between community members and to strengthen and develop the community through “effective and constructive collaboration and networking” (De Klerk, 2020, p. 174).

### **Morale of Educators**

Camp (2011 in Foster, 2019) highlights the importance of educator-learner relationships and their impact on learning. Educators play a key role in the career development of learners (Vondracek et al., 1986). Most learners in disadvantaged communities are dependent on the support of educators, therefore, besides from being competent in the teaching of careers, as mentioned earlier, educators are also required to ensure that they are emotionally and practically able to support their learners. The study indicated that the attitude of educators towards LO, and educator morale in general, affects learners negatively. It was reported that the morale of educators is low because they lack confidence in teaching their learning areas. They are consequently not motivated to apply themselves and prepare lessons for learners, which impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. Negative feelings of educators, impact

on the relationship between educators and learners, and consequently on teaching. When trust between the educator and learner is low, learners are not likely to open themselves up to share essential information pertaining to their home circumstances, that is vital for career discussions, with educators. Low morale and poor attitude of educators thus constrains the career development of learners.

***Research Question 3: How did the career education programme evolve and what is the potential impact of the custom-developed programme on the career education of learners in disadvantaged public schools, according to the participating educators?***

Swarts et al., (2018) suggest that learning experiences should reflect local realities, but also remain sensitive to global requirements. According to the authors, LO educators should thus adapt their teaching styles to make learners' experiences more relevant and meaningful. Research question three was constructed for this study to determine the impact of the design of a career education programme, based on the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF for career development, that reflected on learners' environments and realities. The LO educators indicated that a contextualised career education programme could be useful in their context as learners tend to enjoy LO when they have discussions, share their experiences and talk about personal difficulties. It thus appeared that educators were already contextualising aspects of learning materials, but due to the theoretical approach called for by the DoE, which focuses on written work, they were not able to spend much time on discussions in lesson time.

Participants stated that the practical activities attached to the CEP provided them with different ideas and ways of providing career education. They particularly liked the idea that career development was similar to a journey that required a backpack with essential items that may be required, which would include aspects such as aptitude, ability, interest, personality, values, self- and career-knowledge. The CEP was developed alongside topics in the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF, with the input of participants regarding learner needs and developments in schools, for example, the impact of learner migration or learners with special needs, on the curriculum in schools.

The aim of the CEP was to provide educators with a career education resource, sensitive to the context of learners. The intention with the CEP was to complement career resources prescribed by the DoE with career resources that accommodate the life stories of learners in career discussions. Overall, the purpose of this aspect of the study was to join forces with LO educators and work together to explore an alternative career resource, in the absence of psychometric assessments, and amidst a multitude of challenging contextual factors. The participants and I explored the application of aspects of the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) as a potential career resource, with FET phase learners in their schools.

Feedback from the participants regarding the DCF was that it shows potential as a career resource within public schools that are structurally disadvantaged because it:

- lends itself for use within large groups settings;
- caters for exploration via small and big group discussions;
- is flexible; and
- is contextually sensitive to learners' needs.

It was encouraging to observe that the participants were acutely aware of contextual factors in the community that impact on the teaching and learning in schools and attempt to acknowledge and address the factors that mostly impact on learners within their schools. Although participants have awareness of these factors, they lacked career training and skills as well as accessible career resources to effectively support learners that are faced with so much adversity, with their career development needs.

The “trip down memory lane” activity in focus group 1, where participants were required to reflect on their life stories when they were adolescents, was an eye-opener for participants. Remembering what their challenges were as adolescents, and by whom and how they were supported with their subject or career choices, enabled them to have more tolerance of the career indecision that learners present with. One participant indicated that the family of origin activity reminded her of how challenged she was to make her career decision in school and that she also registered for a course post-school but was forced to drop out in her first year. She indicated that were it not for the discussion, she would not have remembered that career uncertainty upon exiting school was also high for her.

Participants valued the inter-connectedness of the model, as one can move forward and backward in the model. When discussing the adult inter-familial network, one can reflect and draw from discussions in the family of origin or the child extra-familial network, or move forward to the family of procreation, as if joining career dots.

Referencing the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF model in the focus group discussions, participants indicated that the lack of parental involvement (as noted earlier) was a key concern, described as posing difficult challenges in the career development of learners. Inviting parents to the career education table, where parents themselves experience workshops on career education may assist parents in understanding their role in the career development of their children.

Participants suggested that a contextualised career education programme could be a useful resource for LO educators that have just completed their teaching qualification, as well as to educators in schools that were not trained to teach careers, as this provides them with a career resource to form the basis of their teaching of careers in school. Participants indicated that they access career workbooks, such as *Khetha* (DHET, n.d), and the workbooks that are occasionally provided by the DoE. They felt that these workbooks are good resources, guiding them in how to plan career lessons and provide practical activities to use with learners. Participants however reported that, due to time constraints, they are required to improvise and trim the lessons from these workbooks, to fit into a 45 to 50-minute period. They therefore advised that a CEP should be sensitive to the particular needs of learners and include ample practical activities that preferably could fit within one lesson period. Training of educators on the implementation of the career programme was considered as vital.

The idea of career support groups for LO educators as a platform, where career information could be shared was supported by the participants. Participants connected well with one another in the focus groups, and it was noted that when participants were early for focus group sessions, they would discuss schoolwork and share ideas and thoughts with others in the group. The notion of creating a career platform for LO educators where career information could be shared, and career discussions could take place was presented by the participants. They seemed to have enjoyed being engaged in the focus group sessions and suggested that the format for a career platform with LO educators should take on a similar format.

However, participants were not always compliant with completing homework tasks from the focus groups in their schools and reporting back on experiences in follow-up sessions. They however were able to provide rich information during discussions about topics that they were planning to implement. It thus appears career education training should focus more on discussions and implementation within the training session, rather than to expect educators to do homework or prepare activities. It was encouraging to observe that despite not having implemented activities or completed homework, participants did not skip attending the focus group sessions. In the planning of career workshops and activities, time constraints and the workloads of LO educators should be considered.

It is also important to reflect upon the utility of AR as the basis of my development of the FGS and the associated value of working on making this ever more collaborative (Akhurst, 2022) as the FGS unfolded. This started with participants deciding on when to meet and being fully involved in scheduling and the way that the FGS extended over the period. Then another

example is that through the discussions with participants it was decided that a resource file should be compiled, resulting in participants benefitting from the research materially.

The resultant evolution of the CEP, through AR, is clear from the details provided in the SoaPs. Applying AR and the SoaPs was unique to this study, because I could not source research that applied a similar technique on the development of adequate career education programmes for disadvantaged and under-resourced schools. The analysis and write-up (synthesis) of the SoaPs were very useful as they provided much needed information that informed and guided subsequent SoaP sessions. Without this reflective, co-constructive approach to the FGS, it is unlikely that I would have been able to create the career backpack and journey analogies that hold the resultant CEP together, bringing it to life for participants.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter eight focused on a discussion of the findings of this study, in response to the research questions. Literature in the field of life orientation and career development was linked to emergent themes and themes were, where applicable, linked to the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter three. Discussion of findings from interviews and focus group sessions with participants as portrayed in chapters five and six was also presented. The resultant career education programme was developed in response to the research questions of this study, which focused on the perspectives of LO educators about the LO CAPS, contextual factors impacting on learners' career development in structurally disadvantaged public schools and the exploration of a contextualised career education programme with LO educators.

Exploration of the DCF for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) with LO educators emphasised the contextual and demographic factors that impact on these learners' lives and consequently on their career development. Participants' reflections in interviews and focus groups sessions on the LO CAPS (career and career choices) and the living environments of learners, supported findings from the literature (Phala, 2019; Roberson, 2018; Spencer, 1999; Stead, 1996) that career development should reflect the realities of learners; and that career teaching should be adapted accordingly, or in such a manner that "learning experiences reflect local realities ... relevant and meaningful for the learner" (Swarts et al., 2018, p. 63). In the following chapter, the strengths and limitations, and recommendations for practice, further training and future research, based on this study, will be presented.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

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### Introduction

Career development in South Africa has been influenced by Western career constructs, centred predominantly on individualistic theories and approaches whose validity is questionable because they do not serve the needs of the diverse, multicultural South African population (Watson & McMahon, 2009). Western career models and approaches do not account for the influences of the multi-levelled contexts of individuals, and the impact thereof on the career decision-making of individuals. Hence the calls for culturally sensitive, indigenised approaches by South African authors (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Maree, 2013; Stead, 1996; Watson & McMahon, 2009;). Maree (2020) described the socio-economic conditions within vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups, such as those living in townships, rural areas and informal settlements, as devastating and suggests that career counselling should “target and be guided by the unique needs of these populations” (p. 115).

In the light of the above, this research study sought to explore and develop a CEP for FET-phase learners from the historically marginalised communities in the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, by employing the DCF for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986). The authors indicate that career development is best understood when the developing individual is placed within context. The DCF perspective was therefore selected for this study as it emphasises the dynamic unidirectional relationship between the distal and proximal environments of individuals that include for example, the family, peers, school, and socio-economic contexts (Stead, 1996).

The CEP that was developed was informed by LO educators' perspectives on the implementation of LO (career and career choices) in public schools, as well as their perspectives on the developmental-contextual factors impacting on the career development of learners. The central aim with the study was to enhance LO educators' understandings of the extensive impact of contextual factors on the career development of learners and to equip them with skills and alternative approaches in the teaching and learning of careers. Findings from collaborations with educators in the study served as the premise for the co-constructed career education program.

Furthermore, besides being impacted by subjective career assessment approaches and multiple contextual factors from the environment, the quality of the LO (career and career choices) offered to learners in public schools constrain the career development of learners in

structurally disadvantaged schools. Implementing the career and career choices topic, embedded in Life Orientation, was shown to be challenging for LO educators; as noted in previous research with LO educators that asserted that they are not adequately trained or skilled to support learners with their career development needs (Diale, 2016; Diale et al., 2014; Panday, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009 and Wasserman, 2014). The DCF of Vondracek et al. (1986) states that the school is a proximal context to the learner and therefore what transpires within the school environment is likely to impact on the lives of learners. When LO educators are not competent and skilled in teaching careers in schools, there will be a negative impact on the career development of learners. I was therefore motivated to propose a contextualised career approach that LO educators could be trained in; and that could potentially be used to address the career development needs of learners in disadvantaged public schools.

The resultant programme is summarised in (Appendix M). Whilst it was designed in collaboration with the educators in the focus groups, it remains to be trialled more widely. I hope that some of the educators involved will use the material that resulted and further research will be necessary to report on its implementation.'

### **Strengths and limitations of the Study**

Identified strengths and limitations of the current study are discussed below.

#### ***Strengths***

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on developmental-contextual approaches, the bi-directional relationship between the individual and the context, and the impact thereof on the career development of marginalised learners. It emphasised the impact of contextual factors, in the teaching and learning of LO (CCC) and the importance of considering these factors in the career development of learners.

Although the research was limited to a small sample size, the findings were aligned with 1) previous research on educators' perspectives on the implementation of LO in disadvantaged public schools (Diale, 2016; Diale et al., 2014; Panday, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009 and Wasserman, 2014); as well as 2) research on the developmental-contextual framework for career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) in disadvantaged communities and research with the DCF by South African researchers (Phala, 2019; Roberson, 2018; Spencer, 1999; and Stead, 1996) and with disadvantaged learners and students within the South African context.

Fifteen schools were invited to participate in the study and schools could identify more than one participant for the study. Covid-19 impacted on the availability of participants and hence reduced the number of participants to nine, and then at the time of the FGS, six participants.

Seven FGS were conducted for the study. Based on the allocated time for FG sessions, it may have been a challenge to do justice to topics if the group had been bigger. The smaller group allowed for elaborate and rich input from participants.

The DCF approach was demonstrated to be a suitable career development approach for the diverse South African context because it underscores the dynamic context of individuals. Because of its collectivist approach, it is likely to be suitable and sustainable for use in disadvantaged public schools in response to the diversity of learners per class. The contextual approach accommodates discussions within big classroom settings, but also allows for small group discussions within the bigger classroom group. LO educators indicated that learners seem to enjoy LO when they have discussions, as opposed to when they are required to do theoretical work. The activities planned in the programme are well suited to interactive learner discussions, which provides opportunities for probing, debating, exploring and challenging learners about their career knowledge or views. In addition, learners can discuss a topic within a small group and provide a summarised version of their discussions to the bigger group, hence sharing critical information, answering questions, or affirming information that may not have surfaced within other smaller groups. Career discussions are likely to facilitate career awareness, enhance career knowledge and clarify career information for learners.

Besides being an applicable approach for diverse and structurally disadvantaged communities, the developmental-contextual approach has few resource requirements, being low-priced and therefore can be implemented in large group settings, such as with groups in disadvantaged public schools. The approach can be replicated in big class settings with relative ease.

The study developed a set of facilitation guidelines (see Appendix P) within the CEP for educators to ensure that learners feel safe and comfortable to share their stories, when and if ready, within the groups. Guidelines were verified by participants and adjusted based on their input.

The study illustrated the value of the DCF (Vondracek et al., 1986) for the career development of learners. This research highlighted that the developmental-contextual perspective can be used in public disadvantaged schools to augment the limited career resources available in these schools. Educators should however be trained in the implementation of the approach, since as indicated by Ngoepe et al., (2017) many educators lack adequate specialisation in career guidance; and that subjects in schools should be taught by educators that are qualified and knowledgeable.

Participants in the study requested that the WhatsApp sharing group created for the purposes of the study, be maintained and that a career peer group should be established to meet quarterly, to share career information and ideas to enhance the teaching and learning of careers within their schools. Since completing the focus group sessions, participants have continued to share or request career-related information on the group.

### ***Limitations***

Several limitations to this study, to be addressed by future research, were identified.

The sample size of the study was small and only included high school LO educators from the Northern Areas of Gqeberha, which limits generalisations of the findings to other groups across other regions in South Africa. Even though the findings do not reflect the opinions and experiences of all LO FET-phase educators, the study generated findings that I hope will contribute to literature on the career development of high school learners in disadvantaged public schools.

It was challenging to ensure that participants remained committed to the study due to the challenges imposed by Covid-19, which occurred in the second term of 2020, when I was due to start with data collection. The study was prolonged by twelve months, as group meetings were discouraged during Covid-19 and venues for group work, including most schools, could not be accessed by individuals that were not part of those schools. When the study was resumed, participants with several years of LO experience had withdrawn from the study. Interviews and FGS were conducted during the Covid period. On-line interviews were scheduled based on the availability of data or the stability of networks for participants. Time pressures imposed by on-line interviews did not allow for extensive probing, as opposed to my experiences of the face-to-face interviews, which allowed for more in-depth discussions and probing. The advantages and disadvantages of using mobile phones for interviews is described by Azad et al., (2021, p. 1) as follows “advantages allow for flexibility, balanced anonymity and power relations, as well as a positive effect on self-disclosure” and disadvantages result in “the loss of human encounter, intense listening, and worries about technology, as well as sounds or disturbances in the environment”.

Covid-19 further impacted on the teaching and learning of all subjects in schools. Due to limited teaching time, other subjects were prioritised, and LO consequently did not receive its allocated time in schools. Accommodations made in the condensed LO curriculum focussed on examination topics and not on careers. Educators' workloads also increased due to school closures during the pandemic. The above impacted on the implementation of the practical activities that participants were required to complete with learners, where some participants

could not complete our agreed-upon homework activities, impacting the collaborative aspect of the program design. Participants might have been able to trial more of the career lessons and materials from the CEP, if all curricula in schools had not been adapted.

Time constraints affected the focus group sessions. We occasionally were required to wait briefly for participants at the start of sessions. Negotiations to participate for the full allocated time were accepted well by participants. Although there was no resistance to go over the scheduled time, sessions during the training of educators could have been increased to 90 minutes to do justice to discussions.

Participants were not keen on including the subject advisor in the FG sessions due to transference issues. Although participants conceded to the LO subject advisor's attendance for FGS 2 and FGS 7, the subject advisor was not in attendance for those respective sessions. Time was however availed for two face-to-face meetings, and two telephonic sessions for me to consult with the subject advisor and to obtain relevant LO information pertaining to the study and to discuss the CEP. Based on participants perspectives it seems that relationships between district officials and educators may negatively impact on the quality and delivery of services to learners in schools. Although the subject advisor availed extensive time for interviews and subsequent consultation sessions, engagement in the identified FGS may have provided district and provincial level LO input when the draft CEP was presented.

### **Further Research and Practical Implementation**

The following recommendations are suggested, for this study to be taken further in the future.

Continued research with the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF model for the career development of disadvantaged learners, with a larger sample group of high school LO educators across a wider geographical area with similar deprived contexts, is recommended. With a larger group though, additional time would be required.

It cannot be assumed that the findings of this study would be the same for all disadvantaged public schools, hence similar research with educators working in similar schools from other geographical areas should be conducted.

It might also be useful to do further research with the suggested program from this study, with FET-phase learners from disadvantaged communities themselves, to 1) obtain immediate and direct perceptions and experiences of learners with the materials; and 2) to obtain learners' perspectives on how proximal and distal factors in the communities further influence their career development. Hence to hear the learners' voices, and not only the perceptions of educators, perhaps also over a longer period.

Participants referred to the low regard and negative attitude of learners towards LO. Learners subsequently choose not to participate in LO and consequently deny themselves opportunities to access and acquire critical life skills and career information. The impact of personal traits and attitude, in conjunction of contextual factors, on the career development of learners should be further investigated.

Following on from the previous point, career education in schools needs to become more interactive, therefore better alignment between theoretical and practical career education is recommended, with educators paying less attention to theory from outdated textbooks and focussing more on the practical implementation of the curriculum. Outdated career-resources in schools should be addressed by the DoE.

Research into the career guidance training needs of LO educators (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019) underlines the acute training needs of LO educators in South Africa. The DoE should therefore consider upskilling educator knowledge and skills. As such a “train-the-trainer” programme to address LO educators’ lack of career knowledge and skills is recommended. A further refined version of the proposed CEP could be considered for use for future training. This recommendation is further supported by participants’ positive responses to the developmental-contextual model that was used, to facilitate the CEP.

Although there was no exclusion by gender for participation in the study, there were no male participants in the study. Only two schools in the study indicated that they have males teaching LO. The male voice may require further investigation and is likely to need to be fostered, so that careers work is not seen to be relegated to female-only voices.

Initiatives that will bring parents and other interested community members to the career education table should be implemented. The study revealed that parents and the community as part of the proximal context of learners, impact strongly on the career development of learners.

### **Concluding Thoughts and Reflections**

The current study established that the career education of FET-phase learners in the identified public high schools is lacking in many ways. The study further corroborated findings in the literature (e.g., Diale, 2016; Diale et al., 2014; Panday, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009; and Wasserman, 2014) that LO educators are not adequately trained to support learners with their career development needs, nor are they equipped with reliable career resources for the teaching and learning of the LO CAPS (CCC). Trialling the Vondracek et al. (1986) DCF for career development with LO educators to develop and explore a contextualised career

education programme was an attempt to address the career resources gap in structurally disadvantaged and under-resourced public schools. The study revealed that the programme that resulted has the potential to address the career development needs of learners from disadvantaged public schools, but educators should be adequately trained in the application of the model. The study therefore proposes that career exploration with learners from disadvantaged public high schools, that are financially constrained; considerably impacted by multiple socio-economic factors; and significantly under-resourced, is possible with the application of relevant, accessible and culture-appropriate career resources. The study underlined that consideration of the embeddedness of individuals within their contexts and the impact of various contextual factors on career decision-making, should be considered in career education programmes, particularly with learners from disadvantaged environments.

Shumba and Naong (2012, in Ajayi et al., 2022), found that educators were a major influence on the job choice and goals of learners; and that they had an important influence on the career aspirations of learners. The stories shared by the participants, as well as my own personal story of career education in public schools, all emphasised the critical role that educators potentially play in the career development of learners, hence the urgent need for LO educators to be empowered with the relevant career skills and knowledge to provide adequate career support to learners in public disadvantaged schools.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX A RHODES UNIVERSITY PROVISIONAL ETHICAL APPROVAL



Human Ethics subcommittee  
Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee  
PO Box 94, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa  
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e ethics-committee@ru.ac.za

[www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics](http://www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics)  
NHREC Registration no. REC-241114-047

11 December 2019

Prof Jacqueline Akhurst

Email: [J.Akhurst@ru.ac.za](mailto:J.Akhurst@ru.ac.za)

Dear Prof Jacqueline Akhurst

Re: Developing and exploring a career programme for disadvantaged FET-phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth: A developmental-contextual approach.

Principal Investigator: Prof Jacqueline Akhurst

Collaborators: Mrs Antoinette Horan

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee and **PROVISIONALLY APPROVED PENDING GATEKEEPER PERMISSION**.

Gatekeeper permission is required from:

Department of Education

School Principals for the selected schools

Once the Gatekeeper permission letter/s have been received please forward to the Ethics Coordinator, ([s.manspele@ru.ac.za](mailto:s.manspele@ru.ac.za)) in order to finalize your ethics approval.

Sincerely

**Prof Joanna Dames**

**Chair: Human Ethics sub-committee, RUESC- HE**

## Appendix B DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (EC) GATEKEEPERS APPROVAL



STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES  
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape  
Private Bag X0032 • Bisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4691/4773 • Fax: +27 (0)86 742 4942 • Website: [www.ecdoe.gov.za](http://www.ecdoe.gov.za)

Enquiries: B Pamla

Email: [babalwa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:babalwa.pamla@ecdoe.gov.za)

Date: 04 March 2020

Mrs. Antoinette Chaelotte Lucy Human

21 Groningen Street

Kabega Park

Port Elizabeth

5601

Dear Mrs. A.C.L. Human

**PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE DOCTORATE STUDY: DEVELOPING AND EXPLORING A CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR DISADVANTAGED FET – PHASE LEARNERS IN THE NORTHERN AREAS OF PORT ELIZABETH: A DEVELOPMENT - CONTEXTUAL APPROACH.**

1. Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research involving all grade 11 learners, 15 educators and 15 principals in the jurisdiction of Nelson Mandela Bay District in the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
  - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
  - b. you will make all necessary arrangement concerning your research;
  - c. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
  - d. all ethical considerations are adhered to;
  - e. you seek parents' consent for minors;
  - f. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and task;
  - g. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, including school breaks, but an arrangement to do research at the school after school hours may be arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher/s;



- h. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
  - i. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
  - j. your research will be limited to those institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
  - k. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.
  - l. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.
  - m. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.
  - n. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.
  - o. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form)
  - p. You submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation
2. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.
  3. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
  4. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Director, Ms. NY Kanjana on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email [nalisakanjana@ecdoe.gov.za](mailto:nalisa.kanjana@ecdoe.gov.za) should you need any assistance.



**NY KANJANA**  
**DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY AND RESEARCH**  
**FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION**



## Appendix C RHODES UNIVERSITY ETHICAL APPROVAL



Human Ethics sub-committee  
 Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee  
 PO Box 04, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa  
 t +27 (0) 46 803 8058  
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 NRESC Registration no: REC-341114-013

19 March 2020

Antoinette Human

Email: [g18h8626@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g18h8626@campus.ru.ac.za)

Review Reference: 2019-1019-3188

Dear Ms Human

**Title:** Developing and exploring a career programme for disadvantaged FET-phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth: A developmental-contextual approach

**Principal Investigator:** Prof Jacqueline Akturst

**Collaborators:** Mrs Antoinette Human

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloging number allocated.

Sincerely,

**Prof Arthur Webb**

**Chair: Human Ethics Sub-Committee, RUESC- HE**

**Appendix D DISTRICT DIRECTOR DOE (NELSON MANDELA BAY DISTRICT) –  
NOTIFICATION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS**

Rhodes University

Drostdy Road,

Grahamstown,

6139

Mr. E. Gorgonzola

District Director: Nelson Mandela Bay District

18 March 2020

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN NELSON MANDELA BAY

DISTRICT SCHOOLS



My name is Antoinette Human and I am a PhD student in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape (South Africa). My supervisor is Prof. Jacqui Akhurst. As part of the requirements of my degree, I am conducting research that plan to develop and explore a career education programme for disadvantaged FET – phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth.

The primary objective of the study is to develop a career education programme based on the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework for Career development. The model focuses on supporting individuals in constructing their careers from their own experiences within their contexts and environments. The career education programme will be workshopped with educators, who in turn will workshop it with learners. I am hoping that the collaboration between the researcher and the participants would allow for the development of a developmental-contextual career programme that would provide learners in disadvantaged communities with the relevant self- and career knowledge for effective career decision-making.

I am hereby requesting permission to conduct research in the Nelson Mandela Bay Schools (Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth). Please note, that although I am a Psychologist in the Nelson Mandela Bay district, my research will solely be conducted in the capacity as a student and not as a representative of the Department of Education. To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached to the following documents to this communication:

- (a) A copy of an ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy of the research instruments I intend using in my research project

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor should you have any queries, concerns or require additional information. You can reach us on the following contact numbers or e-mail addresses:

Researcher: 082 353 1188 / humanacl@gmail.com

Supervisor: j.akhurst@ru.ac.za

Please sign the attached permission form to conduct research if you are in agreement with me recruiting participants from Nelson Mandela Bay District Schools (Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth)

Yours sincerely,

---

Mrs. Antoinette Human

Ph.D. Counselling Psychology

Cell :082 353 1188

Email: humanacl@gmail.com

---

Professor Jacqui Akhurst

Project Supervisor

Tel :046 603 7084

Email: j.akhurst@ru.ac.za

## Appendix E PRINCIPAL NOTIFICATION FOR RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS



Rhodes University

Drostdy Road,  
Grahamstown,  
6139  
The Principal  
XXXX High School

Date:

Dear [Name of Principal]

### NOTIFICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Antoinette Human, and I am a PhD student in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape (South Africa). My supervisor is Prof. Jacqui Akhurst. As part of the requirements of my degree, I am conducting research that plan to develop and explore a career education programme for disadvantaged FET - phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth.

The primary objective of the study is to develop a career education programme based on the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework for Career development. The model focuses on supporting individuals in constructing their careers from their own experiences within their contexts and environments. The career education programme will be workshopped with FET LO educators, who in turn will workshop it with learners. I am hoping that the collaboration between the researcher and the participants would allow for the development of a developmental-contextual career programme that would provide learners in disadvantage communities with the relevant self- and career knowledge for effective career decision-making.

I am hereby requesting permission to conduct research with participants from your school (LO Educators and Subject Educators that support learners with career matters). Please note that although I am employed as an Educational Psychologist in the Nelson Mandela Bay District, my research will solely be conducted in the capacity as a student and not as a representative of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE). To assist you in reaching a decision, I have attached the following documents to this communication:

- (a) A copy of the ethical clearance certificate issued by the University
- (b) A copy of the ethical clearance certificate issued by the DoE (EC)
- (c) An outline of the proposed activity schedule for the research
- (d) An indication of the research instruments I intend using in the research project

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor should you have any queries, concerns or require additional information. You can reach us on the following contact numbers or e-mail addresses:

Researcher: 082 353 1188 / [humanacl@gmail.com](mailto:humanacl@gmail.com)

Supervisor: [j.akhurst@ru.ac.za](mailto:j.akhurst@ru.ac.za)

Please sign the attached permission form to conduct research if you are in agreement with me recruiting participants from XXXX High School

Yours sincerely,

---

Mrs. Antoinette Human  
PhD Counselling Psychology  
Cell :082 353 1188  
E-mail: [humanacl@gmail.com](mailto:humanacl@gmail.com)

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Professor Jacqui Akhurst  
Project Supervisor  
Tel :046 603 7084  
E-mail: [j.akhurst@ru.ac.za](mailto:j.akhurst@ru.ac.za)

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**Appendix F PRINCIPAL CONSENT****INFORMED CONSENT (PRINCIPAL)**

I, (please print) \_\_\_\_\_ principal of  
(name of school) \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher about the nature, risks and benefits of the research study. I have received written information about the study and was provided with an opportunity to ask questions about the study. I, of my free will, declare my school prepared to participate in the research study.

School principal's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G INFORMATION LEAFLET (EDUCATORS)

Project Title: Developing and exploring a career education programme for disadvantaged FET - phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth: A developmental-contextual approach.

Dear Potential Research Participant

My name is Antoinette Human and I am a student conducting research as part of the requirements for a PhD degree in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University under the supervision of Prof Jaqueline Akhurst.

You are invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study that will form part of my PhD (Counselling Psychology) studies. The attached information leaflet can help you decide whether you would like to participate in the study. It is important that you fully understand what the study will entail before making your decision. You may therefore ask questions about aspects of the study that may not be clear and agree to participate once you are completely satisfied.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to:

- sign the informed consent form that accompanies this letter
- to participate in a semi-structured interview
- to participate in focus group sessions
- to implement the proposed developmental-contextual career education programme
- to provide feedback after the implementation of the programme
- to complete a questionnaire at the end of the study

What is the aim of the study?

The study aims to develop and explore a career education programme for disadvantaged FET-phase learners in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. This will be done by applying the developmental-contextual framework of career development by Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenburg (1986). The model focusses on the dynamic relationship between an individual and the everchanging environment and how they influence each other.

Has the study received ethical clearance?

Yes. Ethical clearance was received from the Rhodes Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC). The Eastern Cape Department of Education (EC DoE) also provided approval for the research to be conducted in the schools.

Is the researcher qualified to conduct the research?

The researcher has been a registered Educational Psychologist for 24 years and has been working with learners on various aspects of career development, including subject and career choice. She has experience working with learners on career matters e.g., student counsellor at the University of Pretoria. As a private practitioner she conducted Subject and Career Assessments on Learners, as well as Recruitment and Development Assessments for various corporate companies. She will be closely guided and supervised by her supervisor, Prof. J. Akhurst.

Who are the participants?

Participants in the research study would be:

- FET-phase LO Educators
- LO Subject advisor from Nelson Mandela Bay District (as an external consultant only, not part

of the focus group sessions)

What are the rights of the participants?

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage during the study, you may do so without any negative consequences from either the DoE or the Research Institution.

Can the study result in physical discomfort?

The study itself does not pose any foreseeable physical discomfort. You will however be required to avail yourself for a few of sessions after schools between 15:00 – 16:00 viz.:

- A one-on-one interview session (45 – 60 min min) with each participant, conducted at school / telephonically / Skype / Zoom.
- Five (5) focus group sessions
- One workshop on the career education programme (1 ½ hours), may require an earlier start than 15:00.
- One (1) feedback session after implementation of the career education programme
- Complete a questionnaire after the research study.

Will there be any form of compensation?

There will be no compensation for participating in the study. Participants will however be provided with refreshments as the workshops will commence at the end of the school day.

What are the potential benefits from the study?

- Participants will contribute towards the teaching and learning of the career and career choices outcomes in the Grade 10 – 12 Life Orientation Curriculum. The aim is to develop a career education programme that would address the diverse career needs of learners in disadvantaged schools.
- The study could impact on the LO CAPS career and career choices outcomes where the significance of contextual factors from the learners' communities for career development could be realized and considered for inclusion in the curriculum (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenburg model).
- Participants would acquire a fun, interactive, replicable and low-cost technique for supporting learners with their career decisions in school.
- A summary report of the findings and the career education programme will be made available to the participants for future reference.

What about confidentiality and anonymity?

Despite the very best efforts of researchers, no researcher in the world can guarantee confidentiality and anonymity in an absolute sense. However, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, at all

times throughout the process of data collection, analysis of the data and the completion of the doctoral degree. Only the researcher, the supervisor and the designated appointed examiners will have access to the data. Personal data and responses will be securely stored on a password protected computer. Please note that data collected will only be used for the purpose of the research, and perhaps for publication in scientific journals, but no personal information will be divulged. The study will make use of audio-recordings, video-recordings and transcribes. All of these, together with any other data obtained for the research will be appropriately destroyed after five years. Furthermore, participants are required to maintain confidentiality, at all times, and may not divulge sensitive information about schools from the focus group discussions.

Who to contact should you require additional information about the research study?

Should you require and additional information or wish to clarify anything regarding the research study, please do contact me on my cellphone (082 353 1188) or email at [humanacl@gmail.com](mailto:humanacl@gmail.com).

#### Conclusion

Your participation in this research study will be greatly appreciated. I hope that you will enjoy the experience with myself and other participants. If you agree to participate in the research study, please sign the attached consent form. Should you agree to participate you will be provided with a copy of this information leaflet, as well as a copy of your signed consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Antoinette Human

PhD Counselling Psychology

Researcher

Prof. Jacqui Akhurst

Department Psychology: Rhodes University

Research Supervisor

## Appendix H information leaflet (LO subject advisor)

Project Title: Developing and exploring a career education programme for disadvantaged FET - phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth: A developmental-contextual approach

Dear Potential Research Participant

My name is Antoinette Human and I am a student conducting research as part of the requirements for a PhD degree in the Department of Psychology at Rhodes University under the supervision of Prof Jaqueline Akhurst.

You are invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study that will form part of my PhD (Counselling Psychology) studies. The attached information leaflet can help you decide whether you would like to participate in the study. It is important that you fully understand what the study will entail before making your decision. You may therefore ask questions about aspects of the study that may not be clear and agree to participate once you are completely satisfied.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be required to:

- sign the informed consent form that accompanies this letter
- to participate in a semi-structured interview
- to provide input on the LO CAPS (career and career choices outcomes) for the FET-phase
- to provide input on the proposed developmental-contextual career education programme
- to provide feedback after the implementation of the career education programme

What is the aim of the study?

The study aims to develop and explore a career education programme for disadvantaged FET-phase learners in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. This will be done by applying the developmental-contextual framework of career development by Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenburg (1986). The model focus on the dynamic relationship between an individual and the everchanging environment and how they influence each other.

Has the study received ethical clearance?

Yes. Ethical clearance was received from the Rhodes Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC). The Department of Education (Eastern Cape) also provided approval for the research to be conducted the schools.

Is the researcher qualified to conduct the research?

The researcher has been a registered Educational Psychologist for 24 years and has been working with learners on various aspects of career development, including subject and career choice. She has experience working with learners on career matters e.g., student counsellor at the University of Pretoria. As a private practitioner she conducted Subject and Career Assessments on Learners, as well as Recruitment and Development Assessments for various corporate companies. She will be closely guided and supervised by her supervisor, Prof. J. Akhurst.

Who are the participants?

Participants in the study would be:

- FET-phase LO Educators

What are the rights of the participants?

Participation is entirely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage during the study, you may do so without any negative consequences from either the DoE or the Research Institution.

Can the study result in physical discomfort?

The study itself does not pose any foreseeable physical discomfort. Some discomfort may be experienced as you will be required to avail yourself for a few hourly sessions (15:00 – 16:00) viz.:

- A one-on-one interview session (45 - 60 minutes) conducted telephonically/ Skype / Zoom
- Five one-on-one sessions (Input and feedback on the CEP)

Will there be any form of compensation?

There will be no compensation for participating in the study.

What are the potential benefits from the study?

- You will contribute towards the teaching and learning of the career and career choices outcomes in the Grade 10 – 12 Life Orientation Curriculum. The aim is to develop a career programme that would address the diverse career needs of learners in disadvantaged schools.
- The study could impact on the LO CAPS career and career choices outcomes where the significance of contextual factors from the learners' communities for career development could be realized and considered for inclusion in the curriculum (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenburg model).

- The research study will provide you as subject advisor, with knowledge about alternative career measures (beyond formal assessment instruments) that could be applied in all school settings regardless of financial status.
- You will have access to a summary report of the findings and the career education programme will be made available to you for future reference.

What about confidentiality and anonymity?

Despite the very best efforts of researchers, no researcher in the world can guarantee confidentiality and anonymity in an absolute sense. However, confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, at all times throughout the process of data collection, analysis of the data and the completion of the doctoral degree. Only the researcher, the supervisor and the designated appointed examiners will have access to the data. Personal data and responses will be securely stored on a password protected computer. Please note that data collected will only be used for the purpose of the research, and perhaps for publication in scientific journals, but no personal information will be divulged. The study will make use of audio-recordings, video-recordings and transcribes. All of these, together with any other data obtained for the research will be appropriately destroyed after five years. Furthermore, participants are required to maintain confidentiality, at all times, and may not divulge sensitive information about schools from the focus group discussions.

Who to contact should you require additional information about the research study?

Should you require and additional information or wish to clarify anything regarding the research study, please do contact me on my cellphone (0823531188) or email at [humanacl@gmail.com](mailto:humanacl@gmail.com).

Conclusion

I would greatly appreciate your involvement in this research study. If you agree to participate in the research study, please sign the attached consent form. Should you agree to participate you will be provided with a copy of this information leaflet, as well as a copy of your signed consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Antoinette Human

Prof. Jacqui Akhurst

## Appendix I INFORMED CONSENT FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH STUDY

### (EDUCATORS)



I, (Name and Surname of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_, voluntary

give my consent to participate in a research study to be conducted by Antoinette Human who is presently completing her thesis at Rhodes University, Department of Psychology as a requirement for the Doctoral Degree in Counselling Psychology.

I have read the information letter that explains the nature, risks and benefits of the research study and confirm that I have been adequately informed about the nature of the study in a language that I understand. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and voluntarily declare myself prepared to participate in this research study. I understand that I can contact Antoinette Human on 082 353 1188 for any further information about the study.

\_\_\_\_\_

(Please print) Research participant's name Research participant's signature.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J INFORMED CONSENT FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH STUDY

(SUBJECT ADVISOR)



I, (Name and Surname of Participant) \_\_\_\_\_,  
voluntary give my consent to participate in a research study entitled: Developing and exploring a career education programme for disadvantaged FET - phase learners in the northern areas of Port Elizabeth: A contextual-developmental approach, to be conducted by Antoinette Human who is presently completing her thesis at Rhodes University, Department of Psychology as a requirement for the Doctoral Degree in Psychology.

I have read the information letter that explains the nature, risks and benefits of the research study and confirm that I have been adequately informed about the nature of the study in a language that I understand. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and voluntarily declare myself prepared to participate in this research study. I understand that I can contact Antoinette Human on 082 353 1188 for any further Information about the study, or to withdraw my participation or data at any stage (until the data collection is complete).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print) Research participant's name Research participant's signature.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix K SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: EDUCATORS

### Part A. Personal Details

The questions in this section focus on obtaining relevant personal background information about the participants, as well as to establish rapport.

1. How many years have you been in education?
2. What are your qualifications and what were your majors?
3. What subjects are you teaching at school?
4. How many years have you been teaching LO?
5. Do you enjoy teaching LO? Elaborate?

### Part B. Information regarding the training of LO educators on careers.

The questions in this section are geared to obtain information about the participants' knowledge and experience with the LO CAPS (FET -Phase), specifically the career and career choices section thereof. Questions also aim to determine whether participants feel they are adequately equipped to teach the career and career choices topic in the LO CAPS.

6. What are your impressions about the career and career choices section of the LO CAPS for FET- Phase learners?
7. Do you think that the learners experience the LO CAPS (career and career choices topic) as stimulating? Elaborate?
8. Do you think that you are currently adequately equipped or trained to provide the career education that learners require for effective career decision-making at school? Elaborate?
9. How many career workshops have you attended in the last 2 years?
10. If you have attended career workshops, how did you find the career materials on offer?

### Part C. District-level support to LO educators

The questions in this section are geared to obtain information about the career resources that educators access to support learners in school; to determine how they feel about contextualized career education programmes; and how they feel about further training and development in career education.

11. In the absence of professional career assessments in disadvantaged schools, what resources do you use to support learners with acquiring career knowledge? Do these resources address the learners' career needs adequately?
12. Do you think that it is important for educators to be involved in the development of LO programmes that they would be teaching? Why?
13. What are your views about the inclusion of contextual factors in career education programmes?
14. Could educators benefit from further education and training in career education? Elaborate?

## Appendix L SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: SUBJECT ADVISOR – LIFE

### ORIENTATION (LO)

#### Section A. Personal Details

The questions in this section focus on obtaining relevant personal background information about the participant, as well as to establish rapport.

1. How many years have you been in education?
2. What positions did you hold at school-level?
3. What subjects did you teach at school?
4. What are your qualifications and what were your majors?
5. How many years have you been the LO subject advisor?

#### Part B. Information regarding the training of LO educators on careers.

The questions in this section are geared to obtain information about the subject advisor's knowledge and experience with the LO CAPS (FET -Phase), particularly the career and career choices section thereof. Questions also aim to determine whether the DoE facilitate career education workshops (Continuous Professional Development) for educators.

6. What are your impressions about the career and career choices section of the LO CAPS for FET- Phase learners in schools?
7. Are educators adequately qualified or trained to provide current and relevant career education in schools? Elaborate?
8. In the last two years, approximately how many LO-related Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshops did educators attend? How many of these were career education workshops?

#### Part C. District-level support to LO educators

The questions in this section are geared to obtain information about the nature of support provided by the DoE as well as to get a sense on whether schools could benefit from customized career education programmes.

9. In the absence of professional career assessments in disadvantaged schools, what is the nature of support that the DoE provide to LO educators to assist with career education in schools.
10. If any gaps in the LO CAPS (career and career choices), what would it be?
11. Do you think that it is important for educators to be involvement in the development of LO programmes that they would be teaching? Why?
12. What is your opinion about the use of contextualized and customized career education programmes that speak to learners' specific needs?
13. What is the DoE's stance on train-the-trainer career education programmes for educators?

## Appendix M EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

FOCUS GROUP SEVEN: Feedback Questionnaire on the implementation of the Vondracek et al., 1986 DCF

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE
FGS 7
Which aspects of the DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) was most useful for use with learners in your school?
Which aspects of the DCF (Vondracek, et al., 1986) highlighted your greatest concerns regarding career education with learners in your school?
Indicate the topics that we discussed that were most helpful for career development with learners in your school?
Indicate the topics that we discussed that was least helpful for career development with learners in your school?
How could educator awareness of developmental-contextual factors in the communities of learners impact on attaining the career and career choices outcome of the LO CAPS?
How could a customized CEP impact on learners from disadvantaged communities?
In your opinion, would the training of LO educators on the developmental-contextual model constrain or facilitate the teaching of the career and career choices topic in LO? Elaborate?
What are your thoughts about career education support groups for LO educators? Would you be interested in joining such a group? If so, why?
Personal interest in joining a career support group?

## **Appendix N FACILITATION GUIDELINES**

### **My Career Backpack**

#### **About the CEP and Facilitation Guidelines**

##### **Why this Career Education Programme?**

Career education resources and interventions available to educators for the teaching and learning of career education in resource-constrained public schools in South Africa are often based on westernized models that are rarely suited to the diverse cultural needs of the learners. There is a scarcity of career education resources and interventions that consider developmental- contextual factors of learners in resource-constrained communities in career education.

The aim of this manual is to provide educators with a career resource, the developmental-contextual framework for career development (Vondracek et al.,1986) and skills to facilitate it within the overarching framework of Action Research, using focus groups. Educators in interviews noted that a “one-size fits all” approach is not working in teaching LO because it does not address the specific needs of learners within their schools.

The flexibility of the developmental-contextual framework allows for it to be tailored to the specific needs of the diverse cultural context of learners in resource-constrained public schools. The framework is also very suited to working in larger groups and interactive discussions in groups.

##### **What is the Career Education Programme (CEP) about?**

The career education programme programme was compiled to be used as an additional resource to the LO CAPS for the teaching of the career and career choices topic with FET-phase learners in resource-constrained public schools. The developmental-contextual framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) was utilised because of its potential benefits viz.:

- Developmental-contextual factors in resource-constrained communities poses significant challenges on educators and learners in the teaching and learning of the career and career choices topic of the LO CAPS. This framework recognises the impact that developmental-contextual factors have on the career development of these learners. The framework is fitting for the exploration of career topics and career decision making of culturally diverse learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in South Africa.
- The framework is conducive to group work and allows for supporting more learners within the limited allocated teaching and learning time available to educators and learners as per the LO CAPS guidelines.
- The framework allows for interactive discussions about the experiences and life stories of the learners. The sharing of stories contribute to the knowledge of learners informing their career decision-making.

- It is a low-cost model and can be replicated with ease and is therefore well suited in schools that are financially constrained.
- It is a flexible framework, and the sequence of the lessons can be customised according to the dynamics, demographics, learner needs and most importantly according to the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) of the LO CAPS.

### **Structure of the Career Education Programme (CEP)**

- The CEP can be used in various settings, one-on-one, small groups (small group discussions in the class) or large groups (lesson with the whole class).
- The lessons can be divided into lessons of 40 minutes. Lesson time may be extended in settings where more time is available eg. when it is applied as an afternoon or holiday programme.
- The order of the lessons, except the introductory lesson, may be varied according to where it is required as per the learner needs or the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP's).
- The CEP consists of an educator guide as well as learner worksheets that can be used during lessons or as homework activities.

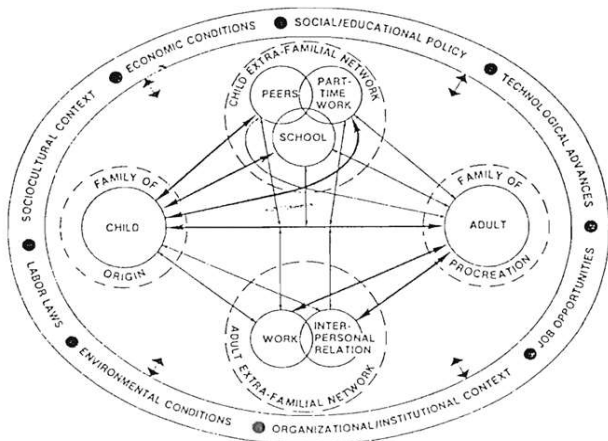
### **Setting the tone**

- **Protection of participants**
  - Agree on ground rules eg. active participation, listening, respect the views of others, mutual respect. Make a poster to be used in all sessions as a reminder for learners.
  - Learners may be embarrassed to share certain content within larger group settings, particularly on the Family of Origin lessons. Encourage learners to either speak to the educator in private or to place their questions / concerns in writing in the "Career Journey Question Box". These may be anonymous. The box must be sealed and placed in a safe and secure space and the educator must access the box frequently. A response could be provided in a one-one setting or it may be addressed in a group setting if the response may benefit the larger group. This should be done in a sensitive manner so as not to cause discomfort for the learner that posed the question.
  - Apply the Protective Interrupting Strategy to protect learners from possible insensitive or unhelpful feedback from others or over-sharing of very personal information.
  - Learners must be encouraged to use the reflections pages. These allow for self-discovery that will increase self-knowledge and career knowledge.

**Facilitation guidelines**

- Keep the Vondracek developmental-contextual\_framework in mind as discussions with learners may provide essential developmental-contextual information that can be reflected on in follow-up career lessons, but also in other LO CAPS lessons. Identified learner needs will inform follow-up lessons and help keep the learning content relevant and real.
- Get to know your learners – you will get to know them better from the activities that they complete.
- Determine self-knowledge, career knowledge and learner requirements (BCQ)
- Clarify lesson goals with learners.
- Clarify educator and learner expectations.
- Adapt materials according to the developmental-contextual needs of the learners, as well as their developmental level. It must be Grade appropriate.
- Encourage learners to share their skills, knowledge and experiences with each other – guide sensitively when information is incomplete or incorrect.
- Encourage feedback and check what skills were learnt during career lesson.
- Typical of focus group sessions and Action Research, draw from previous lessons to inform follow-up lessons.

**Appendix O FOCUS GROUP 2**



Though this is a SARP simple family tree, I am including other words in this word bank just because they can be put in simply used as a reference sheet!

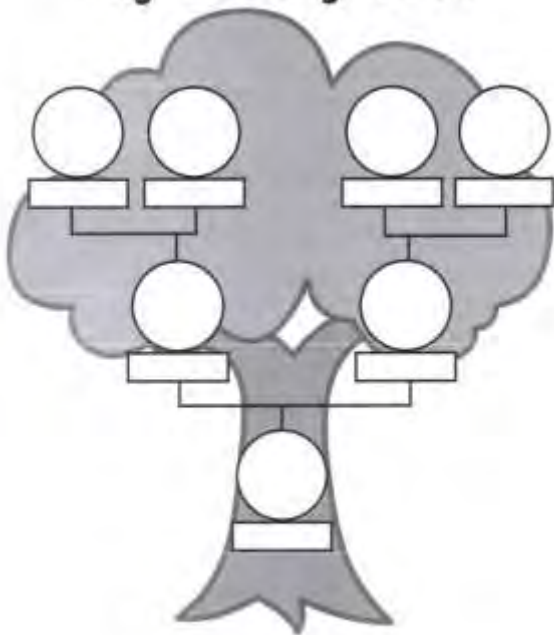
**Words for Tree**

Mom	Dad	Mother	Father
Grandpa	Grandma	Grandparent	Grandparent
Grandpa	Grandma	Grandparent	Grandparent
Me	Myself	Parent	Parent

**Other Family/People words**

Step-Mom	Step-Dad	Step-Brother	Step-Sister
Half-Brother	Half-Sister	Brother	Sister
Aunt	Uncle	Great Aunt	Great Uncle
Cousin	Niece	Nephew	Cousin
Adoptive Mom	Adoptive Dad	Foster Mom	Foster Dad
Relative	Ancestor	Descendant	Extended Family
Twins	Triples	Foster Child	Friend
Great-Grandpa	Great-Grandma	Grandson	Granddaughter
Husband	Wife	Bride	Groom
Kn	Offspring	Orphan	Related
Son	Daughter	Widow	Spouse

**My Family Tree**



## FOCUS GROUP 2 CONTINUED

CAREER KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE	
I have had previous career education and/or counselling.	
I have adequate self-knowledge to choose a career.	
I have an adequate understanding of the career planning process.	
I am satisfied with my knowledge of careers and the world of work.	
I am knowledgeable about career-related resources.	
I am knowledgeable about online career-related resources.	

### Biographical Career Questionnaire (BCQ)

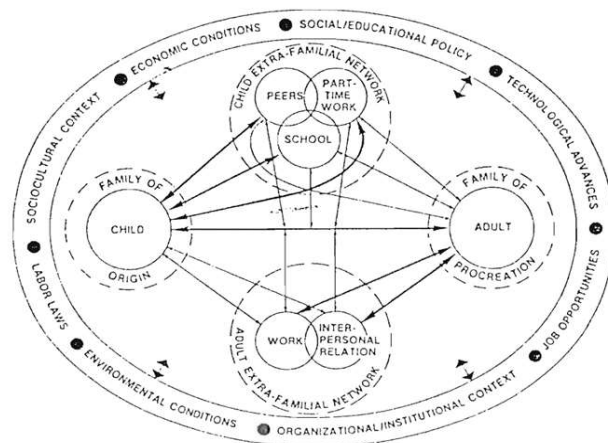
Poor or limited self and career knowledge is likely to impact negatively on career decision-making. The BCQ will help you in the acquisition of self and career information needed to make more informed career decisions. Please complete the questions below. Note that there are no wrong answers. Honest responses will provide a more accurate reflection of your self-knowledge and career knowledge.

1. Use the rating scale below and rate your subjects. Indicate why you feel this way about the subject?

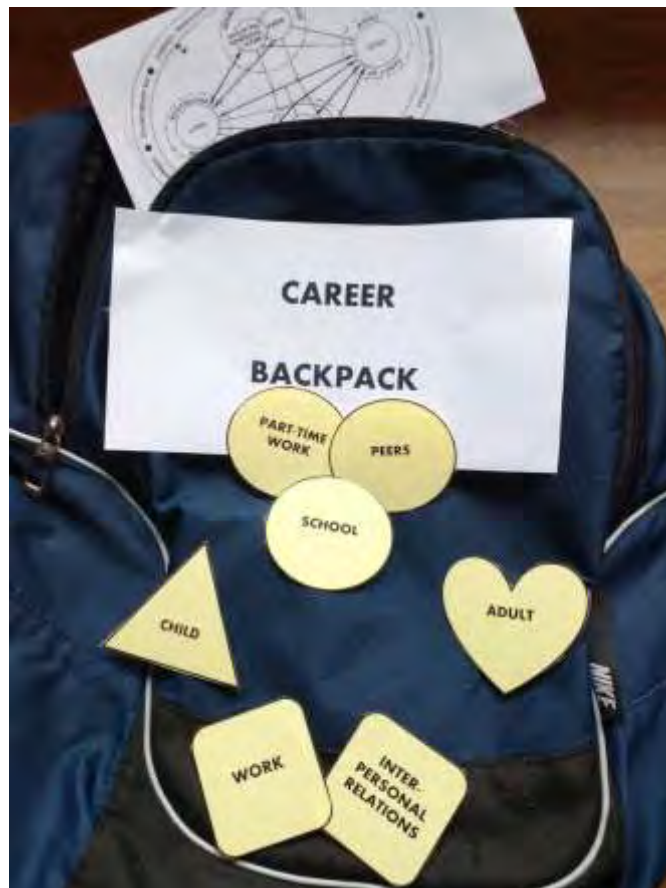
Rating	Description for the rating
1	Really love this subject
2	Like this subject
3	Neutral about this subject (don't mind it either way)
4	Don't like this subject
5	Really dislike/hate this subject

Subject	Rating	Approx %	Reason
Home Language			
1 <sup>st</sup> Additional Language			
Maths/ Maths Lit			
LO			

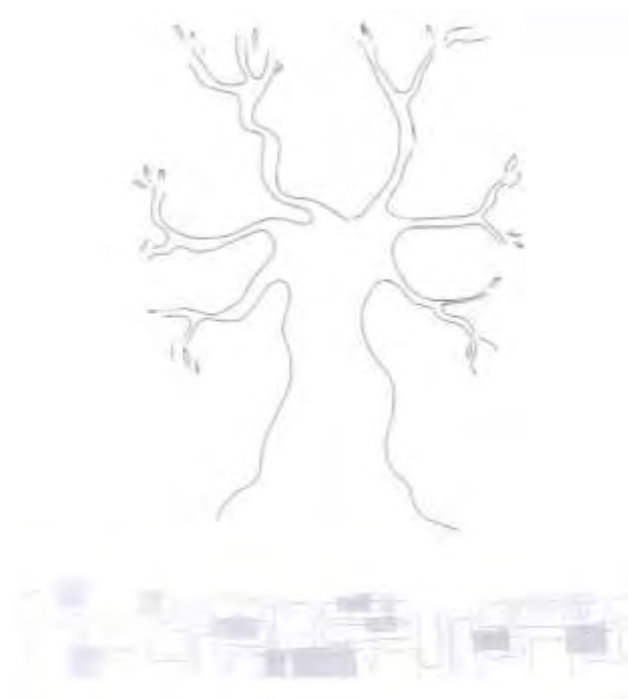
Appendix P FOCUS GROUP 3



Appendix Q FOCUS GROUP 4



## Appendix R FOCUS GROUP 5



## **FOCUS GROUP 5 CONTINUED; CAREER MOTIVATION LETTER**

Dear Grade-12 Learners

Congratulations on achieving your Grade 12 milestone. I am certain that you must be quite chuffed at reaching this milestone. I would like to believe that it is hard work, discipline, perseverance, consistency and self-belief that brought you to this goal post...all qualities that although modeled externally by others, have to come from WITHIN, if we wish to be successful in life.

Grade 12 is however just a goalpost on a lifelong journey. Although a great achievement, it is but only a steppingstone to reaching other heights (dreams / aspirations). On the Career Development there are many tools / resources that can assist us to reach our career goals, but for today, I would like to provide you with the two highly essential tools for your journey, namely self-knowledge and career knowledge. In hindsight, I now know that if I had taken some time to know myself better or had spent some time on doing my career research, that I would have saved myself from spending a post-matric year, not studying nor being employed.

What I have learnt about career development is that it can either be smooth sailing, smooth with occasional speedbumps or very bumpy. I have learnt that the nature of the ride is very much dependent on the person in the driver's seat. I have learnt is that learners should not be passive passengers on their career journey but should choose to actively participate in this lifelong journey. They should be in the drivers' seat steering towards their career goals and aspirations. I have learnt that that GREAT PLANS HAVE NO POWER ON PAPER OR IN MY HEAD ONLY / GROOT PLANNE HET GEEN TOWERKRAG OP PAPIER OF SLEGS IN MY KOP NIE. Plans ought to be actioned. We must do something about our dreams/ goals / aspirations. We must put them into motion to bring them to fruition.

Yes, there are many more tools / items that you will require on your career journey, but I know from personal experience that self-knowledge and career knowledge are at the top of the list.

You

are likely to feel much more in control in the drivers' seat on your career journey having knowledge careers information and information about your interests, personality, values and abilities.

In conclusion, run your race so that you may win it. Run / drive with your own map / plan and only steer from it when you have studied the alternatives routes closely. Remember,

completing the race will not come easy. You will on many occasions be required to “dig deep” and persist. You will be required to “keep on, keeping on”, until you succeed.

Grade 12's 20xx, Mooi Loop / Go well!

**Your Ultimate Supporter**

**Ms/ Mr XXXX**

FOCUS GROUP 5 CONTINUED; EDUCATOR LESSON

# 1.4 Personality - The Four Temperaments

**Instructions:**

1. Score each positive trait in the column if it sounds like you most of the time.
2. Add up your ticks and double your score – this will be your score for this temperament.
3. Once you have completed all four types, plot them on the graph and connect the dots with lines so that you can see your temperament profile.

**LION TEMPERAMENT**



- Likes authority
- Takes charge
- Determined
- Confident
- Firm
- Enterprising
- Competitive
- Enjoys challenges
- Problem solver
- Productive
- Bold
- Purposeful, goal driven
- Decision-maker
- Adventurous
- Strong-willed
- Independent, self-reliant
- Controlling
- Persistent
- Action-oriented

**Lion score**  
(double the number)

\_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

**OTTER TEMPERAMENT**



- Enthusiastic
- Takes risks
- Visionary
- Motivator
- Energetic
- Very verbal
- Promoter
- Friendly, mixes easily
- Enjoys popularity
- Fun loving
- Likes variety
- Spontaneous
- Enjoys change
- Creative; goes for new ideas
- Group oriented
- Optimistic
- Initiator
- Infectious laughter
- Inspirational

**Otter score**  
(double the number)

\_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

**GOLDEN RETRIEVER TEMPERAMENT**



- Sensitive feelings
- Loyal
- Calm; even keel
- Non-demanding
- Avoids confrontations
- Enjoys routine
- Dislikes change
- Warm and relational
- Gives in
- Accommodating
- Cautious humor
- Adaptable
- Sympathetic
- Thoughtful
- Nurturing
- Patient
- Tolerant
- Good listener
- Peacemaker

**Golden Retriever score**  
(double the number)

\_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

**BEAVER TEMPERAMENT**



- Reads all instructions
- Accurate
- Consistent
- Controlled
- Reserved
- Predictable
- Practical
- Orderly
- Factual
- Conscientious
- Perfectionist
- Discerning
- Detailed
- Analytical
- Inquisitive
- Precise
- Persistent
- Scheduled
- Sensitive

**Beaver score**  
(double the number)

\_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary**

L	O	GR	B
40	.....	40	
35	.....	35	
30	.....	30	
25	.....	25	
20	.....	20	
15	.....	15	
10	.....	10	
5	.....	5	
0	.....	0	

Your Dominant type is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Four paths to a successful life's work**

The following are examples of work suited for your true personality. Remember, thousands of other possibilities exist.

Golden Retriever	Beaver
Actor, Aerobics Teacher, Airline receptionist, Art Therapist, Career Counselor, Primary School Teacher, English Teacher, Family Lawyer, Fashion Designer, Flight Attendant, Gynaecologist, In-Home Health Care Provider, Journalist, Lawyer for battered women, Marketing Communication Expert, Marriage and Family Counselor, Minister, Motivational Speaker, Music Teacher, News Reporter, Paediatrician, Poet, Psychiatric Social Worker, Public Relations Specialist, Social Worker, Speech Therapist, Tour Guide, Travel Agent, etc.	Accountant, Administrative Assistant, Air Traffic Controller, Auditor, Computer Programmer, Corporate Lawyer, Court Reporter, Dental Hygienist, Economist, Financial Planner, Geneticist, History Teacher, Human Resources Manager, Insurance Agent, Judge, Legal Assistant, Librarian, Math Teacher, Medical Doctor, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, Police Officer, Politician, Radiology Technician, Statistician, Urban Planner
Otter	Lion
Acting Coach, Athletic Coach, Auto Mechanic, Barber/hairstylist, Carpenter, Cartoonist, Chef, Child Care Worker, Chiropractor, Choreographer, Comedian, Computer Operator, Dance Teacher, Fire Fighter, Graphic Designer, Interior Designer, Jewellery Maker, Labour Relations Specialist, Marketing Specialist, Painter, Paramedic, Photojournalist, Plumber, Radio or TV Announcer, Real Estate Agent, Sports Nutritionist, Trial Lawyer, X-ray Technician	Acupuncture, Anthropologist, Archaeologist, Architect, Astronomer, Astrophysicist, Biomedical Engineer, Chemist, Computer Consultant, Systems Analyst, Criminal Lawyer, Dermatologist, Dentist, Engineer, Industrial Designer, Marine Biologist, Medical Doctor, Movie Critic, News Writer, Oceanographer, Photographer, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Radiologist, Science Teacher, Script Writer, Software Programmer, Vet, Surgeon