



# Juxtaposing learners' perceived knowledge gained from career guidance as part of Life Orientation with quantitative findings

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**Abstract:** The focus of this research was on the perceived knowledge learners gained through career guidance, a component of Life Orientation, which aims to prepare learners for the dynamic vocational landscape. A total of seven secondary schools in the Free State province of South Africa, were randomly selected with 430 learners forming part of the final sample. Responses to open-ended questions were coded and categorized using qualitative thematic analysis. Results of the thematic analysis were juxtaposed with results from a quantitative questionnaire that formed part of the overarching study in an attempt to validate the first mentioned. Learners who perceived gained knowledge as inadequate ascribed the before mentioned perception to a lack of information and insufficient coverage of the Life Orientation curriculum. Further themes reflected the necessity of a skill-based approach to the teaching of career guidance, especially with the association between personal confidence and the perception of adequate knowledge gained.

**Key Words:** Life Orientation, Career Guidance, Knowledge, Subjects, Learner perceptions

## Introduction

Internationally, the onset of the technologically driven knowledge economy has brought about an ever increasing complexity within the study of career decision-making (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). The process of aligning career planning and future success is further complicated by the onset of globalization (Van de Venter, 2006) and the emergence of innovative careers based on specific and dynamic skill-sets (Maree & Beck, 2004). Career education attempts to address these vicissitudes by underscoring the preparation of learners for an environment categorised by change in which knowledge and skills differ widely from past criteria (Van de Venter, 2006). The aforementioned emphasises the need for learners to exit school and be pro-active in shaping their knowledge and skills in order to adjust to the technologically driven and diverse vocational environment (Van de Venter, 2006).

At a national level, the historical implications of apartheid has given rise to an additional dimension to an already complex issue, with the restoration of past inequalities leading to a more specialized need for programme implementation during the secondary schooling phase (Bholanath, 2007). The South African Department of Basic Education recognized diversity as a central component to career guidance programmes at secondary school level. However, complications ascribed to discrepancy in the educational backdrop of the teachers, as well as the diverse needs of the learners' as a result of various cultural backgrounds persist (Prinsloo, 2007). Bholanath (2007), in line with the Curriculum and Assessment Policies for Life Orientation (Department of Basic Education, 2011), highlighted the necessary conditions for vocational choices to be based on not only information about careers, but also knowledge about alternative options, motivation to choose, as well as freedom of choice. Jacobs (2011) elaborated further by arguing that negative attitudes must be eradicated from both the teacher and learners for career guidance programmes to foster meaningful change, and that the voice of the learners should form a critical step in deciding which themes to explore during the Life Orientation process.

Current research corroborate the aforementioned recommendations, indicating that there is a paucity of career guidance research with specific reference to the perspective of learners (Mittendorf, Den Brok & Beijaard, 2010). The importance of a learner-centric approach stems from the fact that while the facilitator must interpret the curriculum policy directives and have sufficient knowledge to provide optimal career guidance (Magano, 2011), it is the manner in which the learner receive the information that ultimately contributes towards significant change (Pillay, 2012). Theoretically, the implementation of Life Orientation reflects the ideals of instilling knowledge for learners to become dynamic citizens (Magano, 2011). However, the practical reality thereof is constantly interrogated and scrutinized (Jacobs, 2011). The question arises as to whether the learners feel confident with their subject and future career choices, and whether these choices are adaptable to the ever-changing needs of the labour force (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). As learners are ultimately the focus of Life Orientation, the gap between theory and practice can only fully be bridged when understood from the vantage point of how learners perceive the knowledge they have gained, which in turn provides critical direction for facilitators and stakeholders in interpreting and creating current and future policies and textbooks thus promote knowledge transfer.

In light of the above, the aim of this study was to explore the perceived knowledge gained through focussing on learner narratives. With subject selection taking place at the end of grade 9, it is crucial that learners feel confident in their subject picks, and in turn that these choices are based on sufficient knowledge about the world of work. In this process, the pro-active stance of learners is reflected as the cornerstone to becoming pro-active citizens within the community (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010) where their skills are dynamic and aligned with the needs of the changing workforce. This research subsequently forms the foundation to understanding why the teaching process of career guidance has not led to the desired effect in practice, and to identify factors which inform not only successful teaching, but also more optimal approaches to interpreting and creating current and future policies at schooling level.

### **Contextualisation**

The implementation of life orientation within the core curriculum in South Africa aims to enhance learners' holistically functioning, encompassing the physical, emotional, and psychological components of growth (Jacobs, 2011). As part of the aforementioned, one of the areas explored within the subject is career guidance, engaging the learner in a knowledge transfer environment that enhances their understanding and knowledge as a means to making informed decisions regarding their subjects and the world of work (Chiresche, 2006). The subject area is also parallel to similar programmes implemented internationally which underscore life skills training.

On a macro scale level, Life Orientation aims to contribute towards promoting social justice and the moulding of pro-active citizens within the South African contexts and their respective communities (Department of Basic Education, 2011). During grade 9 learners choose their subject electives which will form part of their learning profile for the following three years of the Further Education and Training Phase (Grade 10 to 12). These subjects will in turn provide the platform for decision-making related to future career choices and access to higher education institutions. It is consequently critical that grade 9 learners be

equipped with enough information related thereto (Van de Venter, 2006: 4) as well as them perceiving the information gained as adequate to make informed choices. During grade 9 a total of 11 hours is allocated for career guidance, with 28 hours allocated in total from grade 7 to 9. Focus areas at grade 9 level include subject choices and careers, preparing to become lifelong learners, study and funding information, time management, alternative options, reading and writing for different purposes, and knowledge about the vocational environment. The context of this study is based within the framework of grade 10 learner's reflecting on the process of Life Orientation, with specific reference to the facet of career guidance (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

### **Theoretical underpinning**

Career guidance within South Africa has greatly been influenced by international theories, with the theory of Holland being apparent at local level (Rooth, 2005). As such, the context of career guidance in Life Orientation can be based on the principles of Holland's career choice framework (Department of Basic Education, 2011), and is used as the curriculum theoretical underpinning during the implementation of the world of work, the career guidance counterpart of the subject. An examination of the grade 7 to 9 policy documents emphasizes the teaching of strengths, weaknesses, interests and the typologies of Holland's theory discussed underneath.

Core to Holland's theory is the congruence of alignment between the profile of the individual and that of the work environment. This alignment would then provide a better sense of job satisfaction and stability on part of the employee (Allen, 2005). Personality is typed under six categories, namely realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. The work environment is in turn categorised under the same aforementioned typologies, with which the individual is then aligned in order to enhance career planning and choices (Mubiana, 2010).

However, with the shifting from a standardized and predictable work environment to a dynamic and changing structure critique towards the relevance of matching interests with the vocational environment have come to the fore (Stead & Watson, 2006). The external socio-political structure of a country becomes a salient factor when structuring career developmental programs, and it is argued that the theoretical grounding thereof must underscore the importance of the individual's socio-economic and cultural context, and not merely standardized (Mubiana, 2010). This is an important factor when exploring the theoretical underpinning of career guidance within the use of Life Orientation policies. The aforementioned emphasizes the need to see the theory as an integrated part of the final career planning programme, especially as underscored by the unequal distribution of resources due to South Africa's apartheid past (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010).

### **Research methodology**

Within the scope of this article, a qualitative research design was implemented to elaborate on learners' perception about the knowledge that they have gained as a result of career guidance.

#### ***Participants***

Selection of participants took place within the Mangaung area in the Free State Province of South Africa. Utilizing a two-tailed data collection method, a total of 430 participants formed part of the final sample. A total of 390 questionnaires with qualitative responses were used after it was decided that only public schools will be used. Distributed between 155 males and 274 females, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 15 and 17 with Afrikaans as the dominant language at native level as indicated by 235 respondents. Of the final sample, 165 respondents spoke an indigenous language while 30 indicated English as their native language. The majority of participants were categorized under middle socio-economic strata, while 29 were placed under high and 22 under low socio-economic status.

#### ***Procedure***

A list of secondary schools within Mangaung, Free State obtained from the Department of Education provided the base for random sampling ascribed to the fact that every 5th school on the list was selected. A total of 7

schools formed part of the study as some opted against participation. Schools were approached and the Principal's provide consent, after which consent forms and the data collection instrument were given to the Grade 10 learners. There is convenience sampling in how the data collection was dependent on the availability of the learners on the specific day of the hand-outs. With the intake, a final sample of 430 respondents formed part of the sample.

### ***Data Collection Instrument and analysis***

Five open-ended questions were used to elicit the views and perspectives of learners through written narratives. An example of one of the questions, and the question used for this paper specifically, was: '*Do you feel you have gained enough knowledge from life orientation that you can make informed subject choices? Please motivate your answer?*'. A large amount of data was accumulated, and for that reason the focus of this paper will be centred on the narratives pertaining to the perceived knowledge gained on part of the Learners during the teaching of Life Orientation.

Qualitative thematic analysis informed the analysis of the narratives provided by the respondents. Themes emerged through the process of induction and were categorized further under main and subthemes through recursive processes. The data analysis was performed by two statistical analysts, and was confirmed by the main researcher to achieve consensus. To increase the rigor of the data analysis findings were juxtaposed with data from the overarching quantitative study.

The quantitative questionnaire that was used in the main study is a 25 item self-reporting instrument covering five categories on a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = Always; 2 = Frequently; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Never). The categories covered include service delivery (e.g. My life orientation teacher teaches us study methods to study more effectively), personal confidence (e.g. I am confident that I will be able to choose a study field from a list of potential study fields that I am considering), completion of personality inventories (e.g. I have done a personality versus job questionnaire), overall knowledge of career path (e.g. I know what I want to do after school) and overall satisfaction with subject choices (e.g. I have chosen the correct subjects). The data collection instrument also included a section to gather biographical information. Pilot study results indicated a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86 and the main study's reliability was 0.85.

### ***Ethical consideration***

Permission to perform research within schools in Mangaung, Free State, was obtained from the Department of Basic Education. Consent within the school was obtained from the principal and then the parents and or legal guardian of the learners. After the needed gatekeepers consent was obtained, the learners had to provide the final level of consent in order to take part in the research. Due to the respondents being minors, consent needed to be obtained at various levels before research could commence. No deception took place, with the aim, purpose and outcomes of the study being explained fully to all stakeholders before the onset of data intake. It was also emphasized that participation is done under full anonymity and that it is not obligated to take part.

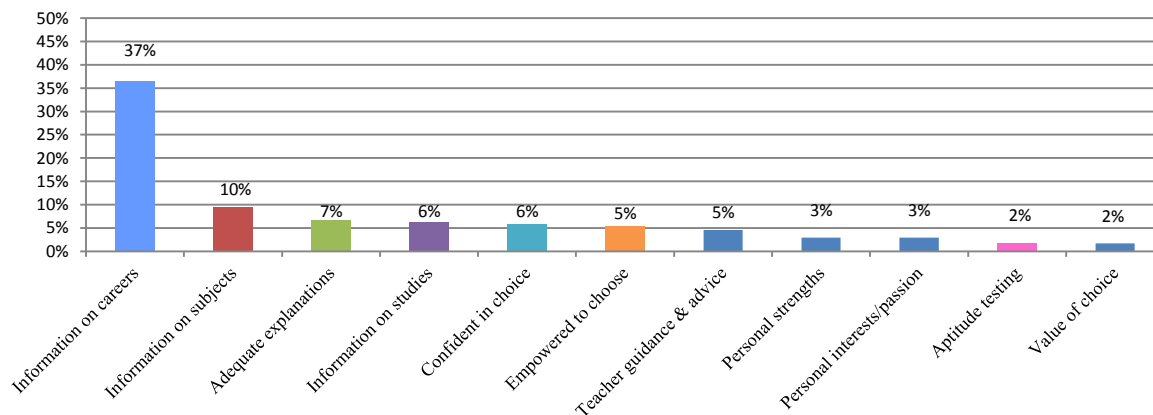
### **Results**

A total of 399 questionnaires with qualitative responses were captured, however it was decided to analyse only the responses of the learners from public schools. The final total sample was 390. Respondent's responses were first categorized according to whether or not they felt they gained enough knowledge from the subject life orientation with reference to career guidance, and then further coded within these broad categories. Three categories were used for the first coding: Yes, No and Other (including ambivalent, somewhat and unsure). There were 34 respondents who did not respond to this question, and thus the total number of responses for this question was n=356. Of this total, 241 indicated they did gain enough knowledge (67%), 93 who did not gain enough knowledge (26%) and 22 who were coded as Unsure (7%).

Respondents were requested to motivate their answer, which were coded to foster in-depth understanding of their responses. Within the category of students who indicated yes, there were 21 learners (9%) who did not provide motivations or who provided motivations that were irrelevant or not interpretable.

The graph below illustrates the percentage of learners who indicated that the knowledge they gained was adequate for each of the motivational categories.

**Figure 1: Motivations related to adequacy of knowledge gained from career guidance**



The table below presents each coding category with a brief description of the types of responses coded along with examples of typical responses from respondents.

**Table 1: Coding categories of learners’ narratives who perceived knowledge as adequate**

Code for activity/role	Description	Examples <sup>1</sup>
Information on careers	This category of responses included learner motivations that related to the knowledge they gained on careers and jobs, in particular how their subject choices relate to their future careers. This category excludes references to their intended field of study (see category “Information on studies” below).	<p>“Yes, I know to take mechanical technology and maths to become an engineer”</p> <p>“Yes! Life orientation has taught us many things. We know if we want to become a doctor which subjects should we take”</p> <p>“Yes I choose subjects that will lead me to my dream job and LO helped me with that”</p>
Information on subjects	This category of responses included learner motivations that related to the information they received about the subjects they were choosing, in particular what the content of the subject is.	<p>“Yes because our LO teacher taught us about different kinds of subjects before we chose them”</p> <p>“Yes, I think she helped us enough with the subjects. She told us about the different subjects and which ones will be the best”</p> <p>“Yes; I gained enough knowledge resulting in the subjects that I choose because he told us what to expect and what not to expect”</p>

<sup>1</sup> All quotes by the learners are captured as written on the survey by the learner. No corrections have been made to spelling grammar and/or punctuation.

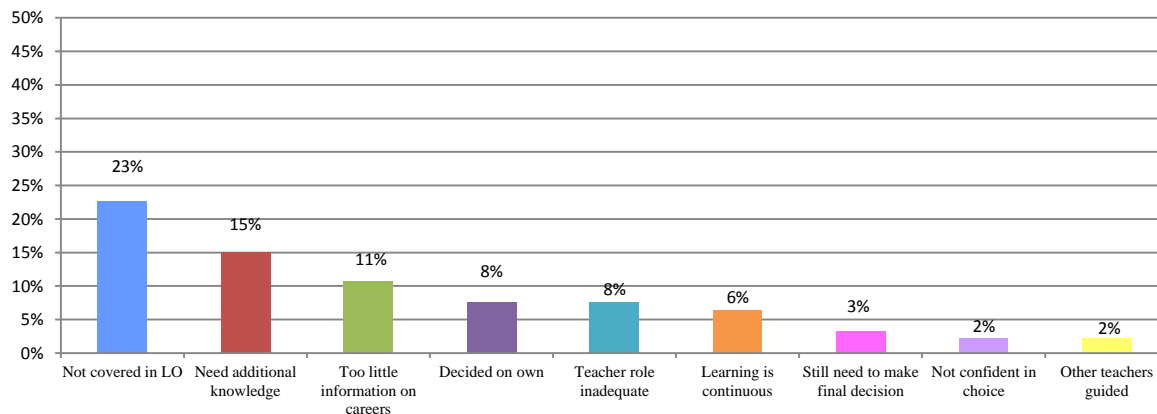
<p>Adequate explanations</p>	<p>This category of responses included information that explained choosing how to choose subjects in a clear, thorough manner. In particular learners referred to the LO books in this regard.</p>	<p>“Yes, the book explain the choices that we can make well”                  “The life orientation book has a lot of motivational answers and I gained enough knowledge to make informed decisions”</p>
<p>Information on studies</p>	<p>This category of responses included learner motivations that related to the adequacy of information on linking their subject choices to their intended field of study at university or college.</p>	<p>“Yes, I now know which field I should focus on. I know what I'm going to study after school. In all subject I have to choose, I have to study very hard”                  “Yes, because I know all the subject I choose can get me into varsity”                  “Yes, I think if you have chosen the right subjects it will be easy to study at university”</p>
<p>Confident in choice</p>	<p>This category of responses links learner confidence in the decisions they have made to the adequacy of the information they have been provided in LO. This category in distinguished from the category below in that it relates to their confidence in the decision, rather than in their ability to make the decision.</p>	<p>“Yes, I have made wonderful decisions already that are benefitting me. I have very good marks so far”                  “Yes, I feel I have because I'm happy with the subjects I've chosen and I'm enjoying most of them to the fullest!”                  “Yes because I can be positive in tests that we write or do what I know or understand and I don't regret taking the subject choices that I made”</p>
<p>Empowered to choose</p>	<p>This category of responses links learners' empowerment to make good decisions for themselves to the adequacy of the information provided. The focus in this category is on the learners' ability to choose, rather than their confidence in a decision that has already been made.</p>	<p>“Yes, they give us the necessary knowledge to make decisions like that”                  “Yes, I feel I have gained enough knowledge from life orientation that I can make informed decisions regarding my subject choices”</p>
<p>Personal strengths</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learners' link between the identification of their own personal strength and having received adequate knowledge to make decisions. This category refers primarily to “I have the knowledge to choose what I am good at”</p>	<p>“Yes because not I know that which subjects I am good at which makes the subjects I've chosen a good choice”                  “Yes, because we chose according to what we can do best”                  “Yes because not I know that which subjects I am good at which makes the subjects I've chosen a good choice”</p>

<p>Personal interests and passions</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learners' link between the identification of their own personal interests and passions, and having received adequate knowledge to make decisions. This category refers to "I have the knowledge to choose what I love/enjoy".</p>	<p>"Yes. He made me realise how important my subjects are. He assisted me not to follow/do any subject that I don't have any interest in"                  "Yes, I am good with drawing and I have a passion how to draw or design something"</p>
<p>Teacher guidance and advice</p>	<p>This category of motivations refers specifically to responses that mention the teachers' role in providing guidance and advice.</p>	<p>"Yes, the advice was of great help. It helped each of us as learners to make the correct choices"                  "Yes, she has helped me make right subject choices"</p>
<p>Aptitude testing</p>	<p>This category refers to the aptitude tests learners completed. This self-knowledge is perceived as adequate to guide the learners in making their choices.</p>	<p>"Yes, she also helped us with an aptitude test and tells us how to handle our subjects"                  "Yes, now I have enough knowledge about my personality and likes and dislikes that I can make confident subject choices"</p>
<p>Value of choice</p>	<p>This category of responses includes the learners' perceived personal value of the choice they have made linked to the perception of the adequacy of the information and knowledge provided to them in LO.</p>	<p>"Yes, I can now make decisions regarding my subject choices. I can see how important they are and the good they will do me"                  "Yes, because you can see what subjects to take and what subjects you don't have to take to become something one day"</p>

In addition to the themes above, there were a limited number of motivations why information was inadequate mentioned by 1% or fewer of the learners.

Within the category of students who indicated no, there were 5 learners (5%) who did not provide any reasons or who provided information that were irrelevant or not interpretable. Figure 2 below indicates the percentage of respondents who indicated that the knowledge they gained was inadequate for each of the motivational categories.

**Figure 2: Motivations related to adequacy of knowledge gained from career guidance**



The table below presents each coding category with a brief description of the types of responses coded along with examples of typical responses from the learners.

**Table 2: Coding categories of learners’ narratives who perceived knowledge as inadequate**

Code for activity/role	Description	Examples <sup>2</sup>
Not covered in LO	This category of responses includes learner comments that indicated the knowledge obtained from LO related to careers and subject choice was inadequate due to the fact that these topics were not covered in LO.	<p>“No, not really because our school has not yet gave us access to find out about our subject choices either than internet”</p> <p>“No haven't received and knowledge from my life orientation teacher at all what so ever!!! Nothing about choosing or anything to do with subjects!!!”</p> <p>“No, we never talk about our job options and the subjects we need”</p>
Require additional knowledge	This category of responses includes learner comments that indicated learners did not find the knowledge provided adequate, and their motivations specifically mentioned the inadequacy of the extent of knowledge.	<p>“No, because I have received or gained knowledge but it is not enough for me. I want to gain more knowledge than I will know that I had gained enough”</p> <p>“No, I still have a few years of school left and I think that I do not have enough knowledge to make informed decisions”</p> <p>“In the past year not allot of information was given to us concerning career choices or subject choices so it's affecting me now”</p>

<sup>2</sup> All quotes by the learners are captured as written on the survey by the learner. No corrections have been made to spelling grammar and/or punctuation.



<p>Too little information on careers</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learner comments that indicated learners found the information in LO inadequate because there was an insufficient link between the work covered and their future careers.</p>	<p>“No, they never told us much about the subjects and why we should take them for the jobs”                  “No, because they don't inform us about all the job choices. They just tell us about the basic jobs like lawyers, doctors and so on. So when it's time to choose subjects it makes it hard for us”                  “No, I would have liked it more if I was told more about the job that I chose”</p>
<p>Decided on own</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learners who indicated that the knowledge provided was inadequate because they had already made the decision on their own what their choices would be.</p>	<p>“I believe that I have not gained any knowledge about making decisions regarding my subject choices, because I already knew how I should have made my decisions”                  “No, I had to choose my subjects without the teacher telling me what to take”</p>
<p>Learning is continuous</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learner comments that indicated the knowledge provided was not adequate because there is still much to be learnt. Although this category is situated within the group of students who indicated inadequate knowledge the tone of the responses is not negative per se. A sense of still wanting to or expecting to learn more was communicated in this group of responses.</p>	<p>“No, because learning can never be enough so one must keep an open mind to learn new things everyday of one's life”                  “No I still have to learn a lot and I want to go to an Institution of Higher Education.”                  “No, because I have more to learn from them and use a lot of their guidance from them”</p>
<p>Teacher role is inadequate</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learner comments that indicated the teachers' role in providing them with information was not fulfilled. This includes learners who indicated that teachers provided too little information.</p>	<p>“No, we didn't get much guidance so I didn't feel like it were helpful”                  “No, she does not help me at all and she doesn't tell us good things”</p>
<p>Still need to make final choice</p>	<p>This category of responses includes learners who have not yet made their final decision about subject choices or their careers, the information provided is inadequate from their perspective as they still need to learn more before being able to make the choice.</p>	<p>“No - because I'm still at an early stage to make a final decision of my subject choices”                  “No I think we are too young to make a discussion that will influence our whole life”</p>
<p>Not confident in choice</p>	<p>In contrast to the category above, this category of responses includes learners who have made a choice, but are not confident it is the right choice. Their link to the knowledge provided to them suggests they did not have enough information to make the right choices.</p>	<p>“No, I don't feel like that at the moment. I would say that the knowledge I gained wasn't quite effective, it doesn't give me that confidence to make informed decisions regarding my subject choices. I haven't gained enough knowledge”</p>

Other teachers assisted	This category of responses includes learner comments that suggested it was not the LO teacher who provided information or support in this regard, but rather other teachers at the school.	“She didn't help me but the teachers that were not supposed to did help me”
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In addition to the themes above, there were a limited number of reasons why information was inadequate mentioned by only a small number of respondents. These subsume being unsure of personal direction, guidance not linked to personal strengths, conducting own research as well as parental guidance, subjects which to choose from are not in line with specific careers, the teachers attitude and lastly too soon to tell whether the information was adequate albeit it not.

Within the category of students whose responses were coded as Other (n=22), there were 3 respondents (14%) who did not provide any motivations. The majority (N=19) of the learners (86%) in this Other category indicated that the knowledge they gained from the subject Life Orientation was somewhat adequate. Three main themes emerged from the coding of the responses in this category: inadequate information, lack of clarity/finality for the learner and the continuous nature of learning. Of the 22 students, there were 8 (36%) who indicated that the information they had gained was somewhat adequate, but that they would need and/or desire additional knowledge and information. Their responses included statements such as: *“Not really enough, I still think I can gain more knowledge and learn more about subjects, job etc.”* and *“I feel I have gained knowledge but not enough for me to make my own decisions”*. Aligned to the theme of additional knowledge is the set of responses from learners (n=3) that acknowledges that continuous learning is necessary, and therefore the knowledge provided in a classroom is not an end in and of itself: *“I feel I have gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation to do research regarding my subject choices. Life Orientation itself has only guided me in what I must do to make informed decisions”* and *“I have gained some knowledge but I still have a lot more to gain”*.

The responses from a further three respondents (14%) suggested that they were not entirely confident in the direction chosen, or completely sure of their own personal career directions. This made it difficult for them to assess whether or not the knowledge gained was adequate or not. Responses typically coded here included: *“I would said yes because I might have chosen the right subjects for myself but sometimes I think I made a mistake”* and *“With what I have learned in class I can more or less make an informed decision. At least I know that I am not going in the opposite direction of what I want”*. Finally, one student indicated that the subject choice packages (i.e. his options to choose from) were too limited (not relevant directly to the information provided by Life Orientation) and another indicated that they were given too few opportunities to get knowledge *“Only one opportunity given at pupil and parent night after discussing my strong and weak points and intelligent tests to help subject/choice/job guidance”*.

In addition to the analysis of the qualitative responses, an integrated approach (analysing qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously) was also taken to increase the rigor of the analysis. This was done by using the broad categories of Yes, No and Unsure as levels of classification for comparing responses on selected quantitative responses from the main study. The selected quantitative questions were (i) “To which extent do you agree with the following statement: I know what I want to do after school”; (ii) “To which extent do you agree with the following statement: I have chosen the correct subjects” and (iii) the scores on the personal confidence scale.

There was a significant difference in the mean scores on the "I know what I want to do after school" item between respondents with varying levels of knowledge gained from Life Orientation classes ( $F = 7.481$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The Tukey test in the Post hoc analysis indicated that in particular there were differences in mean scores between respondents who indicated they had gained enough knowledge and respondents who answered they had not gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation classes to make informed subject choices. The descriptive statistics show that respondents, who felt that they have gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation classes, were surer about what they want to do after school than individuals who felt they had not gained enough knowledge. This result is in the expected direction.

There were no significant differences in the mean scores of the "I have chosen the correct subjects" variable between students with differing levels of knowledge gained from Life Orientation classes ( $F = 2.224$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, students who felt that they had gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation classes, students who felt they had not gained enough knowledge, and students who were unsure, did not differ significantly in their confidence that they had chosen the correct subjects.

There was a significant difference in the mean personal confidence scores of respondents with differing levels of knowledge gained from Life Orientation classes ( $F = 12.188$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Post hoc analysis using the Tukey test indicated that in particular there were differences in mean personal confidence scores between respondents who felt that they had gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation to make the correct subject choices, and respondents who felt that they had not gained enough knowledge. The descriptive statistics shows that individuals who have gained enough knowledge from Life Orientation have higher levels of personal confidence. This result is also in the expected direction.

### **Discussion of the results**

Of significant interest is the discrepancy between respondents who indicated that they did gain enough knowledge (67%) and those who indicated they gained inadequate knowledge (26%). In both cases the primary motivation behind the indications relate to content. Sufficient information about careers and subjects, as well as adequate explanations on part of the teacher and the textbook were primary reasons as to why respondents perceived the knowledge they gained as sufficient. In contrast, the respondents who perceived the knowledge gained as inadequate owed this to a lack of information on careers, a need for additional information and a deficiency of their choices reflected through Life Orientation itself. The implementation of a career guidance program cannot be restricted to a unison approach based on information that is expected to work optimally for multiple environments, but must take the personal aptitudes, personality, interests and self-concept of the learner into account in order to provide adequate and relevant information (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). All aforementioned attributes were reflected through the narratives of learners who perceived the knowledge they gained as being adequate. Of interest is that the learners who perceived their gained knowledge as adequate formed part of the category informed by narratives advocating intrinsic motivations such as interests, understanding and strengths. These motivations were missing from the category in which learners felt they did not gain sufficient knowledge, and reflects the mediating role of intrinsic motivations in relation to content being taught.

The results furthermore reflect that the category of learners who perceived the knowledge gained as sufficient during Life Orientation felt more reassured about what they want to do after school. Respondents who perceived their knowledge gains as sufficient showed a significantly higher level of personal confidence, as opposed to those who felt they lacked knowledge and information. These findings can be aligned with the research of Edwards and Quinter (2011), stating that perceptions of suitability for future occupations differed among individuals and is dependent on different job characteristics, cultural backgrounds and year of schooling. This also reflects the need of Life Orientation to be based on the needs of the learners, and to accommodate the diversity reflected within the socio-economic differences among learners and schools (Prinsloo, 2007). The results strengthen the central argument that the theory cannot be the primary mediator of learning, but that the context within which teaching-learning takes place must lay a critical role during the career guidance process (Mubiana, 2010).

The perception of sufficient knowledge accounts for a greater sense of personal confidence and agency, and form critical components in the conditions of successful vocational choice, being alternative options, motivation and freedom of choice (Bholanath, 2007). Value of choice (5%), empowerment to choose (5%), confidence in choices (6%), personal strengths (3%) and personal interests (3%) are reflected as themes as to why knowledge is perceived as adequate, while the primary motivations pertain to knowledge and information directly related to subjects (37%) and careers (10%). A lack on part of these themes, information on subjects and careers, also informed the primary motivations for the group of learners who did not perceive the knowledge they gained as sufficient. It is evident that whether knowledge was perceived as adequate or inadequate depended on intrinsic motivations in relation to information and content that formed part of the

process during teaching. The data reflects that content currently forms a dominant part of the discourse within the classroom, but that the discrepancy owed to how this information is internalized is attributed to more intrinsic motivations on part of learners and the manner in which they perceive career guidance to have contributed to the process as being adequate or inadequate.

The main limitation of this article can be ascribed to the fact that the data gathered focused on only one component of the teaching of Life Orientation, the views of the learners. Because of this, it would be of valuable insight to also incorporate the views of the teachers in future studies. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Life Orientation, it is needed to have insight regarding the views of all stakeholders involved in the process.

## Conclusion

The implementation of Life Orientation as a prerequisite subject area for grade 10 to 12 learners have been met with great critique, while the effectiveness and change that it instils has been criticized and deemed insufficient. South Africa has been at forefront focus regarding globalization, multi-culturism and the emergence of an ever-changing workforce. With the teacher being a prime agent in interpreting policy and textbooks, it is critical to ensure that the content taught aligns with the needs of the learners as well as the needs of the post-schooling context. With each learner embodying different interests and aptitudes, primarily focusing on a uniform knowledge set is insufficient and impractical to the ideals of creating dynamic pro-active citizens.

This paper reflects the discrepancy of learners who perceived the knowledge they gained as either appropriate or inappropriate during the career guidance component of Life Orientation. The discrepancy between theory and practice can highly be underscored by an overemphasis on a uniform knowledge being taught. Results show that the intrinsic profile of the learner plays a mediating role regarding the perception of knowledge gained, and that while sufficient information about careers and subjects are prime to perceiving career knowledge as sufficient, it is underscored by attributes such as being aligned with interests, aptitudes an understanding dependent on the learner. It is in turn evident that learners who do not perceive these factors as present during their guidance did not deem the knowledge they perceived as sufficient either. With a higher level of perceived knowledge gained, learners reflect higher personal confidence and agency, these being core pillars to becoming pro-active agents within society and more specifically, the dynamic workforce.

Teachers must reflect on the information and knowledge they transfer during career guidance and ensure that the information not only fits the content and aims of policy and textbooks, but also allows for the individual profiles of each learner to be taken into account during the shaping of themes to teach. Facilitators must gain a clear understanding of the intrinsic profiles of the learner, and in conjunction with the textbook ensure a more relevant teaching of content. This is especially applicable to the South African context which is characterized by the restoration of past inequalities and the diverse nature of learner-backgrounds, but is equally applicable at international level where career guidance programs aims to prepare individuals to function optimally within the globalized vocational setting.

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