

**PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
TEACHING-AND-LEARNING IN CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. S. S. S. S.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Signature

Date: November 2009

## ABSTRACT

The *National Curriculum Statement* (2002), in line with the *South African Constitution* (1996), views human rights, inclusivity and social justice as priorities in all learning areas of the curriculum. However, a document such as the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001) illustrates the complexities of addressing this in practice. One of the reasons is that there are misconceptions about how the concept of 'human rights' should be interpreted in the educational realm.

This study sets out to explore how primary school learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning (from a moral and value stance) and what factors influence this. The intention is to rethink and redefine human rights teaching-and-learning from a learner's perspective as well as to investigate the notion that regards human rights as 'misunderstood'. This research offers a new perspective on human rights in that it focuses on primary school learners. Therefore this study will provide another lens through which to consider human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice.

A literature study and empirical research have been undertaken to investigate how learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning. The literature study explores ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives of human rights teaching-and-learning. Qualitative observation, written narratives and focus-group interviews formed the bases of this empirical research. Ongoing triangulation is used to ensure that the research findings are valid and trustworthy.

It seems that primary school learners do have an understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning, which is characterized by an emphasis on legal rights and the contextualisation of human rights within South African, value and educational contexts. Educational and societal factors are two of the factors that influence this understanding.

It is clear that learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning is not one-dimensional. However, there are certain ontological ambiguities in the views that learners hold of the significance of human rights teaching-and-learning - both within and beyond the curriculum. An indication of this is that learners' responses reveal that they are often uncertain about why they have to learn about human rights and the contexts and/or learning areas (other than Life Orientation) in which human rights teaching-and-learning should take place.

Recommendations highlight the need to gain a better understanding of classroom practices so that teaching-and-learning can infuse a culture of human rights; to acknowledge that human rights teaching-and-learning should be more flexible; to use an implicit way of generating an understanding of human rights; to make human rights teaching and learning in classroom practice more authentic; and to consider 'a human rights beyond the curriculum approach'.

This study also identifies areas in which further research should be done.

Key concepts:

Human rights, understanding, curriculum, teaching-and-learning, classroom practice, ontology, epistemology, methodology

## OPSOMMING

Die *Nasionale Kurrikulumverklaring* (2002) tesame met die *Suid-Afrikaanse Grondwet* (1996) beskou menseregte, inklusiwiteit en sosiale geregtigheid as prioriteite in alle leerareas binne die kurrikulum. 'n Dokument soos die *Handves oor Waardes, Onderwys en Demokrasie* (2001) dui egter aan hoe ingewikkeld dit is om hierdie prioriteite in die praktyk aan te spreek. Een van die redes hiervoor is dat daar wanbegrippe heers rakende die konsep 'menseregte' en hoe dit veronderstel is om geïnterpreteer te word in die opvoedkundige terrein.

Die hoofokus van hierdie studie was om vas te stel hoe leerders in die primêre skool menseregte onderrig-en-leer (vanuit 'n morele en waarde oogpunt) verstaan en die faktore wat dit beïnvloed. Die bedoeling was om menseregte onderrig-en-leer te herdink en te herdefinieer vanuit 'n leerder se perspektief, asook om die nosie van menseregte as 'misverstand' te ondersoek. Wynige navorsingsinisiatiewe rakende menseregte betrek leerders in die primêre skool. Daarom het hierdie studie gepoog om 'n alternatiewe lens te bied om na menseregte onderrig-en-leer in die klaskamerpraktyk te kyk.

'n Literatuurstudie en empiriese navorsing was onderneem om vas te stel hoe leerders menseregte onderrig-en-leer verstaan. Die literatuurstudie het die ontologiese, metodologiese en epistemologiese perspektiewe van menseregte onderrig-en-leer verken. Kwalitatiewe obserwasie, geskrewe narratiewe en fokusgroeponderhoude het die basis gevorm van hierdie empiriese navorsing. Deurlopende triangulasie was toegepas om te verseker dat die navorsingsresultate geldig en betroubaar is.

Die navorsing het aangedui dat leerders in die primêre skool wel 'n begrip toon van menseregte onderrig-en-leer wat gekenmerk word deur 'n klem op wetlike regte en die kontekstualisering van menseregte binne die Suid-Afrikaanse, waarde en opvoedkundige kontekste. Opvoedkundige en sosiale faktore was twee van die faktore wat hierdie begrip beïnvloed het.

Vanuit die navorsing was dit voor die hand liggend dat leerders se begrip van menseregte onderrig-en-leer nie een-dimensioneel is nie. Intendeel, daar was etlike ontologiese teenstrydighede in leerders se sieninge oor die beduidenis van menseregte onderrig-en-leer - beide binne en buite die kurrikulum. 'n Aanduiding hiervan, soos ontvou in die response, was die leerders se onsekerheid oor waarom hulle oor menseregte moet leer en die konteks en/of leerareas (buiten Lewensoriëntering) waarbinne menseregte onderrig-en-leer hoort plaas te vind.

Die aanbevelings wat uit hierdie studie vloei dui daarop dat daar 'n behoefte is aan 'n beter begrip van klaskamerpraktyke wat ruimte skep vir die infusie van 'n menseregtekultuur in onderrig-en-leer; die erkenning dat menseregte onderrig-en-leer meer buigsaam behoort te wees; die gebruik van 'n implisiete benadering tot die generering van 'n menseregtebegrip; om menseregte onderrig-en-leer in die klaskamerpraktyk meer outentiek te maak; en om 'n 'menseregte bo en behalwe die kurrikulumbenadering' te oorweeg.

Die studie het ook moontlikhede vir verdere navorsing geïdentifiseer.

Kernkonsepte:

Menseregte, begrip, kurrikulum, onderrig-en-leer, klaskamerprakty, ontologie, epistemologie, metodologie

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## CHAPTER 1

### GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the time spent doing practical teaching at schools, the researcher became interested in exploring learners' perceptions of human rights and the factors that influence those perceptions. This in-depth investigation resulted.

This chapter provides an overview and basic orientation to this study. The following aspects of this study addressed in this chapter include:

- The background to the study
- The general problem statement
- The overall aim of the study
- The research question driving the research design and processes
- The research design, methods and processes
- An outline of the chapters in this study.

#### 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Human rights violations have long characterised the history of humankind. During the period of 1948-1994 the grand narrative of South Africa was the violation of human rights (Binns, Nel & Lester, 2000:171 & 228) as is evident in the various books and articles (cf Clark & Worger, 2004; Liebenberg & Spies, 1993; Loos, 2004; Worden, 1996). Occurrences such as the growth of slavery in the Cape during the seventeenth century featured strongly in discussions regarding human rights violations in South Africa. Anti-slavery activists regarded slavery as inhumane and the forced labour that was an intrinsic part of slavery as immoral (Armstrong & Worden, 1989:164). The abolition of slavery is not the focus of this study, but it does highlight the importance of interrogating human rights violations. The reason for conducting this study is to provide a contemporary stance to human rights in relation to human rights issues in schools. Since educational policy centred on 'infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights' (Department of Education, 2001a:33-36) has become a central part of teaching-and-learning, the South African education model has had to adapt this stance into the macro and micro curricula. This study aims at investigating how learners

understand human rights and why they understand human rights teaching-and-learning as they do. To provide further background to this study, international and national discussions pertaining to the research topic will now be presented.

The period following the abolition of slavery and resistance to colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to the emergence of liberation and African nationalism struggles (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:37). Furthermore, events in Europe, North America and worldwide dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century were characterised by wars, exploitation and abuse. From a Western perspective this resulted in a great deal of pain, suffering and inhumanity. Post-World War II, there was a move, underpinned by Western values, towards the development of human rights as a means of protecting citizens from abusive governments and ensuring that people would be allowed freedom, shelter, nationality and the right to life (Keet, 2007:63; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:37). This encouraged the growth of democracy and a fight for freedom and equality. At the same time the violence of genocide and the repressions of totalitarianism initiated “foundational motivations behind all modern-day international human rights legislation” (Gearon, 2006:115).

At an international level, the United Nations Charter was instituted in 1945 with the support of the proponents of two major competing ideologies: liberal democracy and state communism (Gearon, 2006:124). Liberal democracy was embedded in a universal human rights approach in which the rights of all individuals are protected. State communism, on the other hand, placed the interest of the state before the freedom of individuals. Gearon (2006:124) argues that these competing ideologies prevailed until the end of the Cold War in 1989. However, to view the ending of the Cold War in 1989 as marking the beginning of the period where globally states adopted universal human rights and ended arguments pertaining to human rights might be imprudent for two reasons. One is the fact that South Africa adopted the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights only after the first democratic election in 1994. Secondly, anti-human rights occurrences such as September 11 (9/11) took place in 2001 twelve years later and similar events are still taking place as can be read about in popular literature (cf Goldscheider, 2001). Gearon (2006:124) offers a possible motive for this when he argues that “it tends to be religious traditions that are again challenging... the principles of open governance based on democracy and human rights”. The acknowledgement that competing ideas between universal human rights and worldviews generate tension could partially explain anti-human rights occurrences.

Events such as these pointed to the need to educate learners about civil and human rights as well as social justice. This led to the introduction of educational curricula centred on peace education, citizenship education and moral education (Keet, 2007:64; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:30). Thus human

rights education can be said to emanate from the San Francisco meetings that drafted the Charter of the United Nations in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human rights on 10 December 1948 (Lerner, 2002:44).

In South African the social order created by the government in pre-1994 years was embedded in the ideology of Christian Nationalism which espoused white supremacy and resulted in a hierarchical division in the school system (Asmal & James, 2002:174). This amounted to discrimination based on racial and ethnic factors which detrimentally affected the education of the majority of learners (Botha, 2002:361). The minority white learners received much more financial support and aid which enhanced their potential for academic achievement, while the opportunities for academic achievement of the majority of South African learners were severely limited. One of the reasons for this educational discrimination by the government was to entrench the supremacy of white citizens. This also prevented so-called 'African', 'Indian' and 'Coloured' South Africans from forming single identities that could then be consolidated into opposition to white supremacy (Botha, 2002:362).

Before the 1994 democratic election, South Africa had little role in international organisations such as the United Nations or developments such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights because of its political dispensation. In fact, South Africa joined Saudi Arabia and the Soviet-bloc in abstaining from the vote to adopt the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ryan, 2002:33). It took almost half a century for South Africa to reconsider their involvement in such treaties and to adopt a new education system based on human rights. Besides recognising the right of all to have access to basic education the democratic government after 1994 also put into effect a number of other policies and passed legislation in line with the 1996 Constitution. These included the positive recognition and promotion of values of human dignity, equality, freedom, non-racism and non-sexism (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:54).

Transformation of the South African education system took many forms. Among these was the White Paper 1 on Education and Training in a Post-democratic South Africa 1995 which initiated the government's 1994 Education Policy Framework (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:54). Two prominent aspects of the early stages of transformation of the education system were the devolution of power and authority and the establishment of a national education system that could centralise standard setting, goal setting, curricula and so forth. This addressed the problem attendant on having a fragmented education system dispersed across nineteen government departments of education (Jansen, 2003:35; Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:54).

These transformations meant that the inherited so called 'apartheid syllabus' of the previous dispensation had to be replaced by a 'new curriculum', which would remove racist, offensive and outdated curriculum content (Jansen, 2003:36). In January 1998 a curriculum called Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was implemented in South African schools modelled on aspects of Australian William Spady's (1994) approach to outcomes-based education (OBE) (Botha, 2002:362). The implementation of the new curriculum gave rise to a broad band of criticism of C2005 and its OBE base. Critics argued that the school environments were ill-prepared and ill-equipped to meet the demands of this curriculum (Jansen, 2003:39). The government's response was to brand these critics as conservatives, who were unwilling to transform, and it threatened that failure to comply with the demands of the new curriculum, which it termed the alternative to apartheid education, could result in dismissal (Jansen, 2003:39). Although the changes in the curriculum resulted in criticism as well as uncertainty and discomfort, it also generated discourse on human rights, inclusivity, equity and social justice.

The National Curriculum Statement (2002) is deeply rooted in the 1996 Constitution which foregrounds human rights, inclusivity and social justice as areas that should form part of all learning areas (Department of Education, 2005b:4). There are other policies that emphasise the role education plays in building peace, equity and human dignity. Such policies include:

- the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, August 2001 (Department of Education, 2001a)
- the National Conference Report: SAAMTREK: Values, Education and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, February 2001 (Department of Education, 2001b)
- the Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum: A Guide, 2005 (Department of Education, 2005c)

These policies also serve as guidelines to assist teachers in developing their competency in and awareness of human rights in education (Gevisser & Morris, 2002:201). Teachers may, therefore, use them as resources and thus improve their practice. These policies highlight the purpose of including human rights in the curriculum and the goals of human rights. A primary goal of human rights education according to Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum (Department of Education, 2005c:6) is to foster the growth of committed, responsible citizens, who are:

- informed about the world in which they live;
- able to act with awareness of social, economic and political issues;

- sufficiently committed to the values of equality, justice and human dignity to be contributors to democracy and human rights in their own communities and nations as well as the global family.

These human rights education goals contribute towards the realisation that human rights education is more than a field of study; it needs to be perceived as a way of life. Nieuwenhuis (2007a:vii) supports this statement:

.....it is not enough to know and understand what values and human rights are. They must come alive in the hearts and minds of people and they must be lived and given space to grow.... human rights cannot be understood only from a legal perspective.... they must be understood against the values on which they are founded.

Ontologically, human rights education is embedded in moral education as it highlights the morals and values that play a role in pedagogy (2.2). Furthermore, the inclusion of human rights education is a response to the South African Constitution (1996) which acknowledges the need for a particular stance to be adopted in education programmes (O'Regan, 2002:166). Gultig, Hoadley and Jansen (2002:7) reflect a similar view in arguing that learning programmes should promote diversity and protect as well as advance basic human rights irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class, creed or ages. This stance might seem unambiguous. However, in South Africa history and perceptions still influence this mind-set. Respect for diversity demands a conscious commitment by teachers to change their teaching approaches (Roux, 2007a:503). If this change is not consciously adopted, then it is unlikely that the tension between "repressive and rights-centred interpretations of values" is unlikely to be alleviated (Gevisser & Morris, 2002:200).

Human rights are deeply embedded in the legalities of daily life in our country, setting a standard which society should strive to achieve. However, this perception of human rights could lead to a culture of legalism. There needs to be a shift from seeing human rights as merely a legal construct to human rights as a moral construct (Roux, Du Preez, Fergusson, Jarvis & Smit; 2009:5). Teachers are presented with the challenge of affecting this shift by transforming learners' understanding of human rights so that it is not limited to a legalistic stance. However, before teachers will be able to respond to this challenge, they will have to gain a full understanding of human rights as a moral construct (Gevisser & Morris, 2002:200; Roux *et al.*, 2009:6). At present human rights tend to change classroom dynamics and teachers and/or learners abuse their rights by using them to their own benefit in certain situations (Du Preez & Roux, 2010). This kind of approach to human rights will not lead to a positive outlook of human rights but rather a negative and bitter one.

The need for human rights in education is apparent but often the demonstration and understanding of these rights is opaque resulting in tension. The reasons for such tension could include; unwillingness of teachers' and learners' to adhere to human rights principles, misunderstanding of human rights concepts, inefficient strategies of teaching-and-learning human rights and tensions that could arise between the comprehension of one's universal human rights and particularistic worldviews (Gearon, 2002:3; Gevisser & Morris, 2002:200; Roux *et al.*, 2009:5). It has become imperative for researchers to study the perceptions of human rights of both teachers and learners. In the next section, closer attention will be given to the problem identified in this study: Namely, the need to explore how learners' understand human rights and the factors that are influencing this understanding so some of the tensions that arise in classrooms may be identified and alleviated.

### 1.3 GENERAL PROBLEM STATEMENT

School-based research<sup>1</sup> has already been conducted to find out what teachers' perceptions of human rights are and why they are so apathetic towards the notion of human rights in their classroom practices (Department of Education, 2001a:33). As teachers are not the only components in teaching-and-learning that takes place in classrooms, it seems axiomatic that learners should also be included in this equation. As a result, the researcher undertook a study in an attempt to detect what the learner "understands" regarding human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practices with the aim of identifying why learners perceive human rights in the way they do. This was deemed necessary to lay the foundation from a learner's perspective in an area where little research has been done, and thus provide a deeper understanding which will generate new theories.

Carrim and Keet (2005) and Du Preez (2008) have done research pertaining to human rights in education. Carrim and Keet (2005) are critical of the curriculum and the education system as a whole, particularly with regard to the infusion of human rights across the curriculum. Du Preez (2008), however, focuses on the use of dialogue (cf Vella, 2007; Bohm, 2006) as a facilitation strategy to infuse a culture of human rights in the classroom. She sees dialogue as a means of assisting in-service teachers to implement human rights in the classroom. These authors have valuably explored human rights from a curriculum, constitutional and teachers' (professional

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<sup>1</sup> Saamtrek: Values, Education and Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Conference Report February 2001 (Department of Education, 2001b: 18).

SANPAD Project: Understanding human rights through different belief systems. Final Report 2005-2008 (Roux *et al.*, 2009).

whether in-service or pre-service) perspective. Research on the learners' perspective is a logical next step. In order to identify the possible contribution to education of such a study, it is necessary to place it in the broader context of a human rights perspective.

This study endeavoured to explore why the notion of human rights is being misinterpreted and undervalued in educational systems (Department of Education, 2001a:33). The need for this study seems urgent in the light of the fact that more policies, legislation and documents (1.2) pertaining to human rights in education are being published while issues such as violence, discrimination against religion and culture, teacher violations, xenophobia and gender issues remain unresolved (Banks & McGee Banks, 2007). According to Robinson (2006:147), the complexity of human rights, together with the vast array of literature including protocols, legislations and policies pertaining to human rights, is one of the reasons why human rights education has an important place in teaching-and-learning. This view is widely shared in national and international education systems. However, it is often feared that human rights literature in education may be so strongly influenced by political considerations that it may lose sight of the essentiality of individual humans (Gearty, 2006:142). The result could be that while the legal documents may make attractive reading, they are not implemented. According to Carrim (as quoted by *Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum*, 2005c:7), human rights in education should amount to the

... workings of the whole school. They are about how people are treated in schools. They are about the processes within schools. They are about school policies, school structures and the nature of their organisations, relations among teachers, relations among learners, pedagogical relations between learners and teachers, the ethos of the school and what is contained in the curriculum. Human rights in education therefore entail a whole school approach. They are not about schooling people in human rights content only.

It might then be questioned, with all the legalities in place, together with the research done on human rights in education, why learners' contributions might enrich human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice. The distinction made between children and adults often presents the child as weak, passive, mindless and/or less informed while adults are presumed to be rational, highly motivated and efficient (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:97; Matthews, 1994:72). Researchers, such as Piaget (Ault, 1977; Piaget, 1978) and Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1981; Lickona, 1976), present children as moving through different development stages in fixed phases or ages. However, overtime further research has evolved and researchers such as Matthews (1994) have developed critiques of both Piaget and Kohlberg. One might learn from Matthews (1994) in his book

*The philosophy of childhood*, that children should not be underestimated and that their participation in research could make far reaching contributions.

In view of what has just been said, it seems imperative to explore learners' understanding of human rights because infusing a culture of human rights, inclusivity and social justice across all the learning areas is a priority in the South African education system (Department of Education, 2005c:4). However, for this to be explored all the educational role players perspectives need to be taken into consideration namely; government, policy makers, principals, teachers, parents and learners. For the purpose of this study only the understanding that learners' have of human rights was explored. As a result, this study endeavoured to reveal the factors that influence learners' understanding of human rights and how knowledge of these influencing factors could be used to further explore the notion that "as a concept, human rights is much misunderstood and underrated" (Department of Education, 2001a:33).

#### **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

This research represents a response to the implicit call in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education, 2001a:33). The concept which it presents of human rights is misconstrued and underestimated within the teaching-and-learning situation. I hoped to generate another lens and viewpoint of learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning (Du Preez, 2008; Keet, 2007; Küng, 2006; Roose & Bouverne-De Brie, 2007) by investigating current conceptions of human rights in diverse classrooms. My intention was to explore and thus gain an understanding of why such mixed views on human rights are reflected in dialogues and/or integrated into pedagogy. Consequently this study was undertaken to identify what the learner understands by human rights in classroom practices, why learners perceive human rights teaching-and-learning as they do, and to explore the challenges that human rights in a diverse society might present to classroom practice.

Human rights is a very broad concept, but for the purpose of this study focus will be on learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning in education with an attempt to bring about "attitudinal and behaviour changes in [learners]. Education in human rights must be designed to develop attitudes that support democratic principles and action skills" (Çayir, 2002:398) that could then endeavour to promote combating challenges faced in classroom practice. Therefore, I trust that this was an appropriate starting point to investigate why it seems that human rights are so "misunderstood and underrated" (Department of Education, 2001a:33). An attempt was made to

provide another stance from which to view human rights with the aim of enriching classroom practices in multiculturally and multireligiously diverse South African schools.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question was constructed to articulate the reason for this study and to be the driving force of this study: ***How do primary school learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and what factors are influencing this understanding of human rights in classroom practice?***

To facilitate sound enquiry into the proposed research question, the following objectives were set:

- To provide an in-depth analysis of learners' understanding of human rights in teaching-and-learning;
- To identify what factors are influencing learners' understanding of human rights;
- To explore challenges in classroom practice regarding human rights teaching-and-learning in a diverse school society.

## 1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND PROCESSES

This section of the chapter will emphasise the role of the research design, methods and processes. For the research question to be thoroughly explored and answered, an appropriate research design with complementary methods and processes had to be selected. These elements are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Here they are outlined as a means of orientating the reader.

### 1.6.1 Research design

According to Patton (2002:214), once the researcher has clarity about the purpose of the proposed study the specific research design can be decided upon. The research design is a means of positioning the researcher in the empirical world and showing how the research question will be connected to the data (Punch, 2006:48). Punch (2006:48) argues that a research design should include five main ideas: strategy, conceptual framework, who or what will be studied and the tools and procedures to be used both for collecting and for analysing empirical materials.

The research design took the form of **exploratory research** (3.2.3) in a framework of **empirical** (3.2.1) and **qualitative** (3.2.2) research. **Empirical** research allows the researcher to "provide an in-depth description of a group of people or community" (Mouton: 2001:148). This is most

commonly achieved when the researcher conducts fieldwork with the research participants in their natural environment in order to gain an in-depth understanding of them and/or their community. **Qualitative research**, on the other hand, is “the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (non-numerical) data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (Gay, *et al.*, 2006:9). These authors also accentuate the nature of qualitative research as a world that is neither stable, coherent, nor uniform and therefore, there are ‘many truths’ (Gay *et al.*, 2006:18). Through this framework of empirical and qualitative research, an attempt to explore these ‘many truths’ was embarked on.

It is evident that **exploratory research** is compatible with empirical and qualitative research. Exploratory research may be described as “a study seeking to develop an initial understanding of a phenomenon (even though it might include asking respondents why or to explain their actions)...in order to get acquainted with a situation so as to formulate a problem or develop [research questions]” (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:106-107). This particular research design was chosen because the data collected are orientated towards qualitative data. This is in line with Le Grange’s (2000:193) argument that appropriate decisions should be made in the light of the circumstances of the situation and not by pre-determined means and ends. More specifically, this study employed open-ended questioning with participants and produced descriptive data in order to answer the research question. This research approach resulted in the development of qualitative data and adequately supported the research design.

As Le Grange (2000:193) points out, it would be a mistake to rigidly classify qualitative and quantitative research into two camps. A facile division would see qualitative research as using research methods such as interviews that produce thick data, while quantitative research is labelled as being fixed on questionnaires as the research method to produce statistical information. The researcher must consider the circumstances of her research situation and not rely solely on pre-determined assumptions.

Babbie (2004:89) regards exploratory research design as particularly valuable in social scientific research. Exploratory research stems from inductive reasoning. Consequently, the researcher will not use an existing theory or general principle to generate a specific prediction or research hypothesis (Gay *et al.*, 2006:597; Mouton, 1996:80). Instead, inductive reasoning involves interpreting the understanding of a particular group of people. In the case of this research, the understanding gained in this way was used to make deductions and identify patterns amongst the identified group. As a sample, the participants in the particular group were used to highlight the

most general and prominent outcomes of this research study. Babbie (2004:88) articulates that exploratory research is most typically conducted for three purposes:

- To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding,
- To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and
- To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

In this study the exploratory research design assisted the researcher to become acquainted with learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning and the factors that influence this understanding. This was done to enable her to reach a new level of understanding human rights.

### **1.6.2 Research methods and processes**

In addition to a sound research design, a research study needs appropriate research methods and processes in order to answer the research questions and achieve the research aims. In other words, the research methods and processes must complement the research design. In this section the methods used for data collection and the approach adopted in the analysis of this data will be discussed. These procedures were not linear because data were continuously being gathered and analysed before the final interpretations and discussions were made. Further information pertaining to research processes in terms of participant selection, the researcher's role and so forth can be found in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

#### **1.6.2.1. Data collection**

Opie (2004:16) argues that research methods are the "specific research techniques that are used in order to collect and then analyse data". The methods that were employed in this study include; a literature review, observations, narrative inquiry and focus-group interviews. These research methods were used simultaneously and were interconnected.

A detailed **literature review** (3.4.1) was undertaken which presented a body of scholarship relevant to theories and philosophies on the themes found in this study. Hyatt (2004:51) provides guidelines that should be considered when conducting a literature review. These include;

- A literature review must offer perspectives on the topic from a range of standpoints.

- The literature review must not be descriptively reported, it must take cognisance of strengths, weaknesses, implications and interpretations of the literature.
- Examine the theoretical and conceptual issues raised in the literature by looking at alternative interpretations, critically examine the evidence base for the assertions made and show awareness of the limitations of interpretations.
- Do not simply accept the opinions of authors.
- All literature on a topic cannot be included, only literature relevant to your topic and argument should be selected.
- Literature must give coherence to the arguments in your research.

The researcher used these guidelines to select and critically examine the body of scholarship relevant to this study. Furthermore, to ensure that relevant resources were used key words applicable to this study were identified. Prominent amongst these key words were; understanding, human rights, curriculum, learners, epistemology and education.

As a means to become acquainted with the research environment and participants, **observations** (3.4.2) were conducted. According to Gay *et al* (2006:413) "the emphasis during observation is on understanding the natural environment as lived by participants, without altering or manipulating it". He also adds that "by actually observing the classes, you will obtain much more objective information that can be 'checked' against the self-report of the research participants" (Gay *et al.*, 2006:414). These observations were conducted in both schools before, during and after the other research methods (namely, narratives and focus-group interviews) were carried out. Observations formed a vital part of this study as they allow the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the research environment and participants and unlock areas for further exploration. Observations were a means of substantiating the findings of the other research methods as they enabled the researcher to unpack and explore more extensively the identified patterns and themes. This research method complemented the research design as it too drew on inductive reasoning. The researcher entered the research environment in order to explore what was there rather than going in with preconceived ideas or hypotheses and validating them.

Two common types of observation include participant and non-participant observation (Gay *et al.*, 2006:414). Participant observation is when the observer actually becomes part of the situation being observed while non-participant observation is where the observer is not directly involved in the situation being observed. This proposed study took the form of the former, namely participant observation. The stance of participant observation adopted in this study was that qualitative data

cannot be produced unless the researcher is present in the research environment and observing the participants in their natural setting (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:275). The researcher conducted the observations in the two schools and field notes were used to capture the observations (4.4.1). An observation schedule was used (Appendix E) to record this information so that it could be analysed and interpreted.

**Narratives** (3.4.3) were executed with the learners with the intention of allowing them a 'free-space' to share their experiences and points of view concerning human rights. Narratives formed an essential part of this study as they provided reasons for understanding why certain actions were performed by participants. Moreover, they contributed towards the reflection, evaluation and orientation of the participants' understandings of their own situations as well as the situations of others (Hutto, 2007:2). In this study, narratives took the form of informal letter writing where participants were asked to write a letter to a person they could confide in and share their personal thoughts, experiences and perspectives (4.5.1). This approach provided the learners in this study with opportunities to confidently express their viewpoints. A letter template was used to eliminate the danger of this activity becoming an English lesson (Appendix F). Letters thus became the instrument to unlock the participants' narratives. This study confirmed Corbetta's (2003:291) view that "letters provide precious insight into the thoughts and feelings of individuals; they are a pure expression of the subject's interpretation of situations".

Another research method employed in this study was **focus-group interviews** (3.4.4). Wellington (2000:71) explains that interviews allow the researcher to "investigate and prompt things that cannot be observed." In other words, interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to interact with participants and allow them to share their experiences and view points. Unlike observations which allow the researcher to gain data from what they see or narratives which provide a participant's story, interviews allow the researcher to gain content specific information on particular aspects that are of relevance to her research study (4.6.1). There are various types of interviews that can be used as research methods, this study adopted the type of research known as focus-group interviews.

In focus-group interviews four to seven participants take part in an interview with the researcher where different and/or similar responses are articulated (Patton, 2002:385). This allows the researcher to gain various points of view and acquire in-depth data. Focus group interviews could make participants feel more at ease because they are part of a group. This type of participation could also give learners more confidence and place them in more comfortable positions to express their views. The strength of focus-group interviews is that the researcher will be able to obtain data

from more than one participant quickly and effectively as well as acquire depth in the data (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:299; Flick, 2006:160). However, a possible limitation of focus-group interviews could be that they involve personal interaction and thus depend on co-operation. Participants may be unwilling to share or the researcher may ask questions that do not evoke the desired responses from participants. Responses could be misconstrued or even untruthful (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:299; Flick, 2006:160).

The use of these research methods made triangulation (4.7) possible. Interviews, observations and written narratives were used in this study as a means of validating the data collected and to create a more complete interpretation of the environment and participants in the study.

### **1.6.2.2. Analysis**

This section of the chapter will provide a brief overview of the data analysis method used in this study. More in-depth discussions concerning data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

Qualitative data can be analysed in various ways but there are still underlying aspects which provide common guidelines to this process (Wellington, 2000:134). The object of data analysis in qualitative research is the individual or the case and not the variable as in quantitative research (Corbetta, 2003:44). Qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to explore information rich data so they can reveal the meaning and understanding embedded in the data. This study collected data from various participants using different research methods with the intention of deciphering how learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and the factors that are influencing this understanding. Discourse analysis seemed an appropriate approach. As Potter (2004:612) points out, discourse analysis can be “conducted on virtually any set of materials that involves talk and texts.” Due to the fact that this study has written data from the observations and narratives as well as audio data from the focus group interviews, discourse analysis was employed.

Since discourse analysis can refer to various approaches of investigating written texts or spoken discourse (Peräkylä, 2008:353), it is necessary to justify the stance taken in this study. Discourse analysis was employed to interpret the data collected with the intention of revealing the meaning embedded in the data (4.2.1). This was applied to both the narratives written by participants and the comments by participants where language (written or spoken) was used to present their viewpoints. In other words, it was used when participants presented accounts that constructed their emotions, worldviews and characters in ways that contributed to processes of sense-making (Pheonix, 2008:67).

Data analysis formed a vital part of this research as it extricated pertinent data from that gathered during the execution of the research design, processes, methodology and methods. Moreover, data analysis allowed the findings to be interpreted and discussed in ways that could generate discourse on central identified themes and patterns. Although this data became “overwhelming” (Pillow; 2002:396) at times, it was necessary for the researcher to continuously draw on data to guide the process of answering the research questions and aims. In other words, the researcher had to become immersed in the data to the extent that she listened, read, copied, wrote, colour coded and themed the data (Pillow; 2002:396). This process of data analysis did not occur in isolation. “In qualitative research, data analysis is simultaneous with data collection” (Merriam, 2002:14) in the way that data analysis tests emerging concepts and themes against the data so as to redirect the data towards the purpose of the research if need be.

An inductive strategy was employed during data analysis and followed a pattern that Merriam (2002:14) describes as;

One begins with a unit of data (any meaningful word, phrase, narrative, etc.) and compares it to another unit of data, and so on, all the while looking for common patterns across the data. These patterns are given names (codes) and are refined and adjusted as the analysis proceeds.

In this study, data analysis was done in dynamic interaction with the data collection, and became a process of constant defining and redefining. Inductive strategies were employed to produce meaningful and valuable findings which reflected the reason for conducting this study. Once the data had been analysed it was imperative not to end the research process. Data analysis enhanced the collected data by presenting the data in themes and codes which display common themes and relationships found in the data. The researcher then had to interpret the analysed data in order to identify findings and draw conclusions. Without generating findings and conclusions, the data collection and analysis processes in the research would have been meaningless. Consequently, the researcher used this evidence to write up the outcomes and draw conclusions in order to develop a better understanding of the learners' perception of human rights teaching-and-learning.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS IN THIS STUDY**

**Chapter 1** provided an overview of the research that was undertaken to explore learners' understandings of human rights teaching-and-learning. Although human rights are strongly

promoted through an across the curriculum approach and other governmental policies, they still generate conflict and confusion in the classroom. This study recognises the need to give learners a voice in the journey to discovering the role that human rights plays in our schools.

This chapter also outlines the research design used to explore this research problem. This research design is framed in empirical and qualitative research. The research methods used include literature study, observation, written narratives and focus-group interviews. The procedures used to collect and analyse the data were also considered.

In **Chapter 2** a body of scholarship related to the elements influencing learners' understanding of human rights is explored. The discussion includes an exploration of ontological, epistemological and methodological stances

To complement the theory presented in the review of literature, **Chapter 3** highlights the research design, methodologies and methods employed. A detailed description of the research processes that were undertaken, the sampling strategy used, triangulation of the research methods and ethical considerations during the research study is provided.

**Chapter 4** draws closely on elements of Chapter 3 to allow for the presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of data collected. Data are inductively analysed and the themes and patterns that emerged are used to code the data and generate findings.

A summary of the findings are discussed in **Chapter 5**. Conclusions are drawn and shortcomings of the study are illuminated by presenting the implications and recommendations that emanated from the study. Recommendations and issues for further research are also presented.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF AN UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHING-AND-LEARNING

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

A theory is "a way of looking at a field that is intended to have explanatory and predictive implications" (Blackburn, 2005:363). This view of theory informed this exploration of the theoretical underpinnings which contribute to and influence the shaping of learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. The discussion in this chapter includes moral education principles in investigating the ontological implications of understanding human rights teaching-and-learning (2.2). It also includes the understandings learners reach as a result of encounters with human rights in an educational environment. An epistemological (2.3) view and a methodological (2.4) perspective of the development of learners' rights also form part of the discussion.

Before a theoretical exploration of this nature can be undertaken, it is important to define clearly the concepts that are used in the title of this study. These are: **understanding**, **human rights**, **teaching-and-learning** and **classroom context**.

##### 2.1.1 Understanding

According to Blackburn (2005:375), **understanding** is more than words, images or objects presented in one's mind. Understanding requires, in addition, the possession of a technique or skill that allows words to be understood when they are accompanied by ideas (Blackburn, 2005:375). In other words, understanding can be seen as a mental act or experience where the nature of something is grasped in a non-transferable fashion (Curren, 2007:327). Non-transferable in this context implies that understanding cannot be deposited in or transmitted to the learner. The understanding that a learner arrives at may be occasioned by a teacher or environment. In this chapter, understanding will refer to the constructed and in-depth ideas learners' hold of human rights and the possible factors influencing these ideas.

Having knowledge about a particular aspect and being skilful in a specific routine are no guarantee that learners have acquired understanding of any given facet (Perkins, 1993:28). One might then question the need for understanding. My view, however, is that there are at least two reasons that understanding is necessary. Firstly, understanding plays an important role in the way that learners

acquire the ability to construct knowledge. If learners have an understanding of particular knowledge and skills in one learning area, they should be able to apply it across learning areas and in wider environments outside of their school environments (James, 2006:56). This complies with one of the National Curriculum Statement's (Department of Education, 2005b) critical outcomes which state that the learner should be able to "demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem solving contexts do not occur in isolation" (Department of Education, 2005b:2). Secondly, since they will be called upon to make critical decisions in future, it is imperative that they be equipped with the necessary understanding to handle such situations.

### 2.1.2 Human rights

An-Na'im (2007:29) regards **human rights** as "rights due to all human beings, everywhere". This perception of human rights provides one of the many definitions of human rights. To best articulate a global perspective of human rights, one should avoid merely calling on a series of definitions pertaining to human rights. Instead, one has to explore the historical underpinning and controversies surrounding human rights in order to relate human rights discourses to educational contexts. The controversies illuminated by Ishay (2004) in her article, "What are human rights? Six historical controversies", provide a possible basis for such exploration. Another credible reason for exploring these controversies could be Gearon's (2004:31) view that

...there is no area of political life or international relations more contested than the universality of human rights – in their justification, in their use and abuse, in their manipulation for self-interested ends, in their clearly inequitable distribution....

The six controversies Ishay (2004:360) articulates "underlie, and animate contemporary political battles over human rights", and might be perceived as the stepping stones in recognising and probing the existing debates on human rights. These controversies could be used to bridge conflicting political traditions which have emerged internationally over the centuries, bringing to the fore various salient perceptions of human rights. The reason for acknowledging the contribution of Ishay (2004:360-368) in this study stems from the need to embrace human rights as open-ended instead of closely defined, which, to my mind, undermines the deeper discourses of human rights. Moreover, human rights are linked to the notion of teaching-and-learning in this study. This acknowledges that teaching-and-learning is central to this study. For this reason I will integrate human rights and teaching-and-learning.

### 2.1.3 Human rights teaching-and-learning

For the purpose of this study, **human rights teaching-and-learning** refers not only to what is stipulated in the National Curriculum Statement 2005b (in Life Orientation, Learning Outcome 2), for example. It refers also to non-prescribed and unplanned teaching-and-learning situations that might occur during the school day and which are of a human rights nature. Du Preez (2008) has conducted intervention research in which teachers developed a programme to infuse a culture of human rights into the classroom. This programme (*Dialogue as facilitation strategy: infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights*) makes it clear that human rights should not be predetermined by the written curriculum. The individual social context of each classroom should also create opportunities for the freedom to use implicit as well as explicit methods to include human rights in the classroom so that teachers are not limited to what is stipulated in the written curriculum alone (Du Preez, 2008:111 & 270).

I argue that, human rights teaching-and-learning encapsulates the notion that human rights can be pedagogically expressed in various ways. I choose to draw on the types of curriculum presented by Wilson (2005) in her work on *What is Curriculum? and What are the types of Curriculum?* and relate these to the context of 'human rights teaching-and-learning' as expressed in this study. I am not implying that the concept human rights teaching-and-learning can be equated with a 'curriculum'. However, I am suggesting that human rights teaching-and-learning is made up of similar elements to those Wilson (2005) identifies in her discussion of the eleven different types of curricula used in schools today.

I will now use two of Wilson's (2005) principles in the context of human rights teaching-and-learning in an attempt to clarify what human rights teaching-and-learning denotes in this study. The first draws on the overt, explicit or written human rights teaching-and-learning in which human rights are "confined to those written understandings and directions formally designed and reviewed by administrators, curriculum directors and educators" (Wilson, 2005). Hidden or covert human rights teaching-and-learning refers to that which is not taught explicitly through formally designed curricula but rather which is comprised of elements that are influenced by the "very structure and nature of schools" (Wilson, 2005). Further clarification of human rights teaching-and-learning draws on more than an explicit curriculum: elements in the processes of teaching-and-learning which are not necessarily 'overt, explicit or written' are also considered.

#### 2.1.4 Classroom practice

Lastly for the purpose of this study the concept **classroom practice**, takes account of some of the underlying ideals presented by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:51). Classroom practice takes into consideration not only the 'overt, explicit, documented or written' aspects of human rights teaching-and-learning occurring in the classroom, but also the external aspects that the learners bring into the classroom with them. This particular outlook of classroom practice acknowledges (just as Bronfenbrenner's ecological model does) the dynamics in a classroom resulting from the individual factors each learner brings to the classroom. Wilson (2005) refers to an internal curriculum which acknowledges that the learner's individual experiences influence their knowledge construction and interactions with others in the classroom. Wilson (2005), which draws on the idea of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Donald *et al.*, 2002:51), brings the realisation that 'classroom practice' takes into consideration not only what is gained in the classroom, but also the external factors that the learners bring with them to the classroom which influence the teaching-and-learning process.

Following the clarification of the concepts used in this study, attention will now be drawn to the ontological view of understanding human rights teaching-and-learning.

## **2.2 UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHING-AND-LEARNING: AN ONTOLOGICAL VIEW**

When engaging in studies regarding social sciences, one ought to consider the ontological position as well as the epistemological (2.3) and methodological (2.4) views encompassing the social science study (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:3-4). In this section of the chapter the ontology of the study will be explored. The word 'ontology' derives from the Greek: *on* meaning 'being' and *logos* meaning 'reason' or 'plan'. This translates into 'the theory of being as being' which denotes the theory of the nature of what is or the theory of the nature of reality (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:6). In relation to scientific inquiry, ontology draws on the study or theory of the nature of 'what is' for instance the characteristics of the nature and knowledge of social reality (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:6, Wellington, 2000:199). Further understanding of ontology is provided by Somekh and Lewin (2005:1), who emphasise that social science research is concerned with people, their life contexts and the philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge of truth (epistemology), values (axiology) and being (ontology) which underpin human judgements and activities.

It has become increasingly important for researchers to address the ontological 'why' questions or 'what is the purpose' and not be dominated by questions pertaining to 'what content' (epistemology) and 'how can this content might be taught' (methodological). Emphasis on ontological inquiry is not a new movement (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:4). However, it remains valuable in pedagogy as it encourages the reflection and critical thinking needed for dialogue and progress to occur. Furthermore, having an understanding of the purpose underlying the curriculum, for instance, will empower teachers to question and critically reflect on the curriculum rather than just accept and implement it. In this chapter, I will highlight why human rights teaching-and-learning should be explored ontologically by drawing on current moral education debates and identifying their relation to human rights. An investigation of moral education is necessary to understand why human rights need to be included in our education systems. Brabeck and Rogers (2000:167) extend this idea in the light that "moral claims may assist societies struggling to identify and educate the next generation to live moral lives and to build societies that maintain human rights in the midst of diverse and competing demands".

### 2.2.1 Human rights discourses and metatheoretical morality positions

Brabeck and Rogers (2000:167) explain that human rights comprise rights that are "universal across contexts" as well as rights that may in their application "differ across contexts". These authors argue that:

the foundation of human rights work is the international documents and laws of human rights that aim to protect rights that are considered universal across contexts. Human rights work, however, also attempts to recognise personal histories and how the application of rights may differ across contexts (Brabeck & Rogers, 2000:167).

The depiction of human rights by these authors highlights the paradoxical nature of human rights. How can human rights be universal and, at the same time, differ in their application across contexts? In attempting to explore this question, I will take the view that human rights may involve a universalist approach, a particularist approach or a combination of these.

In exploring these approaches to understanding human rights, extensive reference will be made to the context of morality. At this point, I will clarify what these terms entail and how I understand them. *Universalism* as expressed in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Article 2) regards all people "without distinction of any kind such as, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or status" as being entitled to

human rights (Perry, 1998: 13). This idea of universalism is also reflected in other documents such as the International Bill of Human Rights. Perry (1998) suggests that documents, such as the ones mentioned above, contain at least a hint that “if you want to enjoy the fruits of peace in the world, you must extend your respect and concern to all human beings” (1998:33). In short, (moral) universalism considers that all humans without exception are entitled to human rights.

On the other hand, (moral) *particularism* argues that because human beings are interpreted differently in different situations, it is not possible to contextualise human rights in a general set of principles (Blackburn, 2005:241). Particularism is linked to the philosophical notions of relativism. *Relativists* draw on the perception that “what is good and what is bad for a particular human being always depends on something about [their] context or situation, something that is never true about every human being or about the situation of every human being” (Perry, 1998:61-62). In short recognising that (moral) particularism contests the idea of human rights for all human beings because the views of human beings are shaped by various environments and situations that they find themselves in.

The universalism and particularism debate highlights some of the tensions between different approaches to understanding human rights. These tensions may be explained in ontological terms. To contextualise this human rights debate metatheoretically in a moral context, means taking account of epistemology. This means that notions of *foundationalism* and *anti-foundationalism* (2.3.2.1) must receive attention. Foundationalism, in an epistemological view, refers to knowledge that is regarded as a structure with secure, certain and fixed foundations (Blackburn, 2005:139). Anti-foundationalism, on the other hand, pertains to knowledge not bound by structures based on secure foundations. It thus maintains that knowledge is relative (Du Preez, 2008:92).

Another concept that needs to be clarified is the difference between ethics and morality in this chapter. Morality, in philosophic terms, encompasses a wide range of meanings including how humans should conduct their lives and their relations with others (Noddings, 2007:151). Ethics, on the other hand, is defined by many philosophers as the study of morality so these two terms are often used interchangeably (Noddings, 2007:151). It should be noted that in this chapter the term morality is used interchangeably with moral education. It is also necessary to note that “the history of moral education has been dominated by character education” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:350) and it is often the case that the term ‘character education’ is used. Character education underlies the Manifesto (Department of Education, 2001a) however the notion of character education does not form part of the current South African curriculum. For that reason, moral education will be used in this chapter. It is also important to note that the discourse of morality should not be used in isolation

from the human rights debates discussed here as similar issues have arisen. Noddings (2007:153) highlights how moral philosophers are experiencing similar tensions of universalism and particularism: “moral philosophers have tried hard to avoid relativism in the past, [but] current debate suggests greater interest in competing traditions and far less in universal approaches.”

In order to articulate the ontological position, human rights and morality, metatheoretical positions of morality will be discussed in relation to the human rights (ontological and epistemological) elements defined. Table 2.1 illustrates one way of presenting this stance and this can be done by placing morality into metatheoretical positions. These positions draw on three main philosophical theories of morality (Curren, 2008:507; Fullinwider, 2008:498; Noddings, 2007:166; Noddings & Slote, 2003:349; Velleman, 2008:517). The philosophical theories of morality include liberalist (2.2.1.1), communitarianism comprising of traditional (2.2.1.2) and pragmatic (2.2.1.3) communitarianism and ethicists of care (2.2.1.4). The notions of universalism, particularism, foundationalism and anti-foundationalism will feature in all of the discussions of morality.

Table 2.1: Metatheoretical positions illustrating discourses between human rights and morality (framework adapted from Dunne & Wheeler, 1999:4)

		<i>Ontology</i>	
		<b>Particularism</b>	<b>Universalism</b>
<i>Epistemology</i>	<b>Anti-foundationalism</b>	<b>2.2.1.3</b> Communitarian pragmatism	<b>2.2.1.4</b> Ethicists of care
	<b>Foundationalism</b>	<b>2.2.1.2</b> Traditional communitarianism	<b>2.2.1.1</b> Liberalist

### 2.2.1.1 Liberalists

Noddings and Slote (2003:349) take a Rawlsian (1999) liberalism position, which holds that moral education takes the “form of developing certain capacities for moral reasoning and certain very general principles that can be applied to different moral dilemmas or decisions”. Their view has informed my understanding of liberalism as a universal (ontological) approach to morality whereby emphasis is placed on “general patterns of cognitive or rational development and its freedom from reliance on particular community values” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:350). This acknowledges that “moral judgements are universal” (Fullinwider, 2008:502) and not context specific. Kohlberg’s

theory of moral development underlies a liberalist understanding of morality. Kohlberg's theory (1981) sees moral development as moving through several stages of moral development. "The aim of moral education according to Kohlberg is to move students to higher stages than they presently occup[y]"; each higher stage becomes attainable only once the previous stage has been achieved and it is acknowledged that each higher stage brings with it "better or superior" attainability of morality (Fullinwider, 2008:502). This Kohlbergian theory of stages in moral development thus leans toward a foundational perception of epistemology, one where knowledge is bound to or fixed within certain stages of development with explicit requirements before a higher level of morality and intellectual sophistication is attainable.

I will now explore some of the criticism of the metatheoretical position outlined above as a means of pursuing my ontological investigation of the purpose of human rights teaching-and-learning and its relation to morality.

a. Kohlbergian theory as a liberalist view of moral education: a critique

One of the main criticisms made of Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development arises from his notion of progress between stages and "his confusion of the universal and the general" (Fullinwider, 2008:502). The universality of each of the Kohlbergian stages is generally acknowledged. However, some theorists are critical of what they term the "increased generality that really differentiates higher from lower level principles in the Kohlbergian stages" (Fullinwider, 2008:502). For instance, stage one (the lowest stage) at the preconventional level of moral thinking argues that "children respond in terms of obedience and avoidance of punishment" (Fullinwider, 2008:501). While stage six (the highest stage) at the postconventional level is where the individual reaches the level of "principles morality in terms of self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency" (Fullinwider, 2008:501). This means the higher stages are merely based on general content rather than being closely defined.

Fullinwider (2008:503) argues that "generality of content is not a condition of logical consistency" so the result is a "lack of social content". Social content in this sense draws on the practical appeal of Aristotle and his claim that moral learning is learning by doing (Noddings, 2007:166). Following this logic, it is the knowledge or content acquired through 'doing' that generates social content needed to contribute to moral development and not development of theoretical sophistication. Kohlberg's (1981) stages become increasingly general and lacking in social content and "give no basis for drawing any moral conclusions about anything" (Fullinwider, 2008:503). An illustration of this is in stage six where universal respect is promoted as a "moral guide defining the way in which any

human should act" (Fullinwider, 2008:503). This very general and abstract notion of respect offers no practical guide at all. To sum up, the criticism of Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development relates to its lack of attention to social content which is derived through practice, experience and observation. As Fullinwider's (2008:503) puts it, "what we owe our children is not deflection into theoretical generalities but the best possible acquaintance with our moral conventions".

### **2.2.1.2 Traditional communitarianism**

Communitarianists, in particular, have raised questions about the "autonomous individual, individual rights and universal principles" (Noddings & Slote, 2003:342) presented by liberalism. They question the belief liberalists hold of "the universal power of individual human reason [and] ... the possibility of coming up with rational social rules and institutions that need take no sustenance or brook any interference from the religious, cultural and ethnic differences that have historically divided one community from another" (Noddings & Slote, 2003:342). Contrary to the belief held by liberalists, traditional communitarianists hold the view that

....it is only in relation to community values, traditions and good habits acquired in their context that we can become morally virtuous. Since communities obviously differ in their traditions and values, the communitarian typically holds, therefore, that there can be no universal enlightened morality grounded in an appeal to forms of reason or rationality that are the same for everyone everywhere (Noddings & Slote, 2003:342).

Thus they reject the ideal of universal morality and instead see morality as relative from culture or community to community and not universal in all cultures and communities. On an epistemological level communitarianism and liberalism both embrace foundational principles. This reflects the fact that some values and beliefs are common among a culture and perhaps "fixed" within that community or culture (Noddings, 2007:182). In a different way Noddings & Slote (2003:349) proclaim that communitarianism "treats social morality as necessarily dependent on (and relative to) a unified, historically given set of values, practices and traditions". Thus, from the explanations provided here an assumption can be made that each culture or community poses a unique set of values, beliefs and principles which are foundational.

Communitarianism, however, is not limited to only one view, namely traditional communitarianism. Dewey provides a pragmatic view of communitarianism. Although it takes the same ontological position as traditional communitarianism, it differs in its epistemological position of morality.

In the next section, I will draw on Dewey's view of communitarian pragmatism as presented in Table 2.1. Thereafter a communitarian critique of culturalism will be outlined.

### **2.2.1.3 Communitarian pragmatism**

As Table 2.1 above shows, the ontological position taken by traditional communitarianism and communitarian pragmatism precludes the ideal of a universal morality. Morality is perceived as being embedded in particular cultures and/or religious communities. Furthermore, communitarian pragmatism adopts an anti-foundational epistemological position. This position is also held by Dewey and will be used to demonstrate the anti-foundational (epistemological) position held by communitarian pragmatism.

The notion of communitarian pragmatism has often been referred to as "democratic communitarianism" (Noddings, 2007:181). This label was given to Dewey (1990) by contemporary writers to separate Dewey from "forms of communitarianism that promote hierarchy, elitism and exclusivity" (Noddings, 2007:182). Dewey's pragmatic ethics rested in consequential ideals that illustrated the understanding that an act is to be judged ethically acceptable or unacceptable in accordance to what it produces (Noddings, 2007:163).

Philosophers or teachers who adopt a more traditional form of communitarianism might agree with the debate surrounding "community precedes communication" (Noddings, 2007:182). This debate argues that "people must be taught the values and morals of a community before they can communicate effectively" (Noddings, 2007:182). In education an idea of this nature might resort through the development and implementation of a common curriculum. Dewey's pragmatic communitarian position is in contrast to a 'community precedes communication' view. Dewey contends that a common mistake made by communitarians is the assumption that "communities are somehow fixed" and that too much stress is placed on "acknowledged common values and traditions" (Noddings, 2007:182). She opts rather for a "dynamic view of community" where the community is constantly "under construction" and, furthermore, where a community must pass a "democratic test" (Noddings, 2007:182). Such a 'democratic test' implies a break from hierarchy, elitism and exclusivity measures. This approach to communitarianism brings to the fore an anti-foundational view of morality whereby the knowledge pertaining to morality is not definite, fixed or secure but rather relative.

Traditional communitarianism and communitarian pragmatism have the same ontological view of particularism. With this commonality in mind, I will now explore some of the discourses encompassing culturalism as linked to particularism on a philosophical level.

#### a. Culturalism in communitarianism

The argument presented by a particularism / culturalism communitarianism approach to morality, is that a universal approach attempting to apply universal morals to all people is utopian. Rather, morality is bound to a particular culture and/or religion; moral principles vary because humans hold different views of morality and react differently in situations.

Moral education could have an important contribution to make to school education if teachers were to promote inclusivity as a means of providing infinite moral reasoning and the inclusion of many voices (Du Preez, 2008:102). This kind of moral education would have to take account of particular cultures and/or religions and their moral stances. However, the inability of culturalism to “justify competing values” (Du Preez, 2008:98) makes this problematic. If morality becomes a “matter of opinion, cultural prejudice or one community’s story as opposed to another” (Dunne & Wheeler, 1999: 7), it could result in a situation where traditional values are privileged at the expense of emancipatory values. In similar vein, Booth (1999:36) highlights the danger of basing the exclusivity of cultures on traditional values. In conclusion, a discussion such as this one highlights the complexities of culturalism which are reflected in the question raised by Noddings and Slote (2003:350): “whose values and whose traditions should form the basis for public moral education?” One could argue that models promoting general patterns of cognitive or rational development by Kohlberg should be adopted to free us from the numerous questions surrounding particular community values. However, as has been demonstrated in section 2.2.1.1, such a general and universal approach raises other challenges within moral education.

#### **2.2.1.4 Ethicists of care**

Noddings and Slote (2003:348-349) sum up the universal stance on morality that underlies care theory:

...care theory’s focus on caring relations and encounters potentially allows a universal morality to be based on sentiment. Care theory identifies a natural (empirical) universal in the desire to be cared for (that is, to receive some form of positive response) and a moral universal in the desire to respond with caring.

My understanding of this is that ethicists of care strive for a universal morality in which all human beings would embrace in the ideals of a desire to be cared for and a desire to care for. Such a conception of morality lead me to explore the universal claims projected by the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in which rights are applicable to all human beings without exception. This idea of universal concern for other human beings and their basic moral goodness can also be extended to the idea of “an ethics of justice” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:348). An ethics of justice moves beyond the personal relationships we hold with people to a larger arena of “national and international public and political life” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:348). Both the initiative of an ethics of care or an ethics of justice sheds light on the nature of some humans to care more for those in their intimate relationships than the fate of more distant people. In this breadth, ethicists of care adopt an anti-foundational stance, in part, to morality to deal with the different relationships we hold with people. Noddings and Slote (2003:348) support this point in their argument that an anti-foundational approach to morality implies that reactions will be different for those near to us than for distant people. An illustration of this would be who I would try to save first if a sibling of mine were drowning in a river and a stranger was drowning in the same river. I might morally want to save both my sibling and the stranger but I would more than likely attempt to save my sibling first. In this way regarding morality as anti-foundational where knowledge is relative and not fixed or static due to the notion that “moral motivation is rooted in feeling, not reason” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:248). Lastly, it takes account of the universal, anti-foundational position, presented in this context, that morality can be expressed in different ways. However, it does not preclude basic universal judgements that underpin morality.

I will now draw on four major components of moral education as expressed from the perspective of ethicists of care to consider how this metatheoretical position of morality manifests in education.

a. Moral education from the ethicists of care perspective: four major components

Ethicists of care adopt the position that they want children to learn how to care about others and practice moral behaviour. Such an approach is not bound to theoretical lists of virtues, “instead, they concentrate on how children are treated and on the practice provided – what is modelled, discussed and confirmed in daily interaction” (Noddings & Slote, 2003:353). I will briefly draw on Noddings (2007:226-235) to clarify the four major components of the approach taken by ethicists of care in moral education.

The first major component is **modelling** where teachers and learners display behaviour that portrays moral principles. This is further articulated by Noddings (2007:226) when he proclaims that when modelling is being performed “we do not merely tell them to care and give them texts to read on the subject; we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them”. In this light, moral behaviour can be acquired through the observation and interaction with others. The second major component draws on **dialogue**. On one level, dialogue is one of the fundamental elements of caring (Noddings, 2007:226). On another level, dialogue creates avenues which provide opportunities for reflection and critical thinking to take place (Noddings, 2007:227). Dialogue becomes effective in strengthening the care relationship in the classroom because it can promote the reflection and critical thinking necessary to provide a deeper understanding between the teachers and the learners and even the learners amongst themselves. Noddings (2007:228) states that “through dialogue we learn more about the other, and we need this knowledge to act effectively as carers”.

**Practice** is the third major component of moral education from the ethicists of care perspective. One mode in which practice is applied in the educational context can be through cooperative learning (Noddings, 2007:228). This allows teachers to place learners in specific situations which promote caring practice. It is vital not to bombard learners with content but to create an opportunity for learners' perspectives to shift to one which considers the other. Lastly, **confirmation** is the fourth major component of moral education from the ethicists of care perspective. Confirming is an act of identifying elements of improvement/change and encouraging its development (Noddings, 2007:229). Confirmation is more challenging than the other components of moral education as it requires individual attention and continued monitoring to be a success.

In short, the major components of moral education from the ethicists of care perspective acknowledge that the universality of certain principles underlying morality in that they promote basic principles for all people. However, since they regard knowledge as relative, the interpretation and implementation of moral behaviour is not bound to fixed measures, but is open to different ways of expression.

### **2.2.2. Ontological implications in the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning**

When we consider the ontological position of human rights teaching-and-learning and ask questions such as, ‘what is the purpose of exploring human rights teaching-and-learning?’, the ideals encompassing morality and moral education come to mind. As has been demonstrated in this section of the chapter (2.2.1), moral education draws on various elements. I will now endeavour

to place human rights teaching-and-learning in the metatheoretical positions of morality presented in Table 2.1 in order to further conceptualise human rights teaching-and-learning.

A liberalist (2.2.1.1) approach to moral education is not an appropriate means of promoting the ideals of human rights teaching-and-learning. Firstly, the epistemological foundation of liberalism is too rigid and fixed and secondly, the position taken by liberalists is too often non-contextual and hard to demonstrate empirically. To illustrate these points we can refer to the Kohlbergian model which I believe to be hierarchical and rigid in its reasoning. Kohlberg (1981) provides a step by step 'formula' to achieving morality which allows you to move to fixed higher stages and does not consider the possibility of moving backwards in stages or between stages. It thus portrays morality as static and founded on the ability of one to become theoretically sophisticated in the measures determined by fixed moralities. Embracing morality, as well as human rights teaching-and-learning, is seen primarily in theoretical terms, which prevents its being recognised as a practical endeavour which should not be 'boxed' into specific requirements in order to be fruitful.

Traditional communitarianism (2.2.1.2) adopts a foundational epistemological position (as liberalists do), but one that is fixed in terms of the cultural and traditional foundations. This metatheoretical presentation of traditional communitarianism also has shortcomings with regard to the ontological ideals of morality in human rights teaching-and-learning. Traditional communitarianism reflects a narrow perception of a traditional culture which could limit human rights teaching-and-learning to a narrow view of morality. Moreover, it holds the danger of regarding morality as fixed from culture to culture, thus constraining the ability to justify competing values.

Communitarian pragmatism (2.2.1.3) like traditional communitarianism is particularist in nature. Other than this element communitarian pragmatism provides an anti-foundational epistemology which becomes more effective in the ontological exploration of morality in human rights teaching-and-learning being undertaken. Here a more dynamic view of morality is adopted which allows a more relative approach to moral knowledge as under constant dialogue and exploration rather than definite and fixed.

Ethicists of care (2.2.1.4) provide a more helpful metatheoretical position based on universal ontology and anti-foundational epistemology. An approach such as this one to morality takes the view that morality can be expressed in different ways without precluding basic universal judgements. In other words, varied expressions of morality are promoted but the constant dissatisfaction with moral knowledge encourages the desire to reach a universally justifiable

morality. Otherwise, the same dilemmas pertaining to the particularist position adopted by communitarian pragmatists will surface.

This discussion of the ontological reasons for human rights teaching-and-learning has focused on the various metatheoretical positions held in moral education. What has emerged is that the ethicists of care approach, which endorses a universal ontological and anti-foundational epistemological stance, seems to offer the best option. Such a stance could aid human rights teaching-and-learning in its endeavour to make learners more moral citizens.

In the next section discussions pertaining to an epistemological view of human rights teaching-and-learning will be drawn on. This is done with the intention of exploring discourse on how human rights teaching-and-learning might be understood from an epistemological stance.

## **2.3 UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHING-AND-LEARNING: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL VIEW**

Delanty and Strydom (2003:4-5) explain that epistemology “refers to a fundamental branch of philosophy that investigates the possibility, limits, origin, structure, methods and validity (or truth) of knowledge”. In this section of this chapter, human rights teaching-and-learning will be considered from an epistemological view. I will explore the main elements of such a stance. Firstly, I will explore the debates on knowledge and understanding (2.3.1). Secondly, I will explore the implications of a paradigmatic position (2.3.2) in an attempt to extend the epistemological exploration. Lastly a conclusion (2.3.4) will be presented which will make an effort to link sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 within a human rights teaching-and-learning framework.

### **2.3.1. Knowledge and understanding**

Killen (2005:11) argues that quality teaching strives to provide learners with activities which require them to think critically about what they are learning, to grapple with deep knowledge and ultimately to produce deep understanding. This argument made by Killen (2005:11) emphasises that understanding does not occur in isolation. Understanding is thus dependent on processes such as thinking and knowledge. In exploring Killen’s view, I will examine the way that various types of knowledge manifested during teaching-and-learning to produce understanding. I will then draw on the principles of deep understanding and surface understanding as a means of positioning knowledge types on different levels of understanding. Lastly, I will reflect on what this could entail for human rights teaching-and-learning.

The three states of knowledge (declarative, procedural and conditional) will be examined to determine their relationship with understanding. Declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge depicted as the three states of knowledge, are said to exist together with prior knowledge (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:36). In this context prior knowledge makes reference to everything that an individual knows (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:34).

### 2.3.1.1. Declarative knowledge

**Declarative knowledge** is said to be the most common form of knowledge that is taught in schools as it is factual and content based focussing on *what* and *that* (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:38). Although declarative knowledge pertains to content and factual knowledge one must not view it as having a limited role in generating understanding. Declarative knowledge should also not be categorised as part of memorised or recalled knowledge. Rather declarative knowledge allows one to “label, describe or explain the world around us and to communicate those understandings to others” (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:38). It follows that people who are new to a particular domain will have little declarative knowledge to draw on while competent people in a particular domain will have more (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:39). The potential role declarative knowledge plays in generating understanding is related to the need to have extensive knowledge before one can label, describe or explain something in ways that make sense. If not, the potential for understanding declarative knowledge will be only a mere loose configuration in one’s memory and one will not be able to communicate competently and reach a high level of understanding.

In this study, the learners’ declarative knowledge refers to factual and content-based information pertaining to human rights. The learner must have sufficient knowledge in order to arrive at in-depth comprehension and understanding. For instance, the learner must have declarative knowledge of the Bill of Rights in Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution of 1996 (hereon only the ‘Constitution’) in order to understand its human rights content. It could also consequently determine how this learner might use this understanding in the classroom, school and society in interactions with other people.

In a different light, in the previous educational dispensation in South Africa declarative knowledge dominated the view of knowledge in the way that it prescribed what learners should know and the way in which this knowledge should be taught (Gardner, 2006:54). It can be argued that the curriculum was designed to accommodate declarative reasoning through a largely behaviourist approach (2.4.1) to education. Education today, however, is underpinned by a more constructivist

approach to the teaching-and-learning process. This has raised the question of whether too little emphasis is placed on declarative knowledge, resulting in a culture where children are unable to learn or memorise some basic things such as the multiplication tables in mathematics.

### 2.3.1.2. Procedural knowledge

**Procedural knowledge** is somewhat different to declarative knowledge as it deals with the actions or step-by-step procedures performed which shape ones understanding in a particular aspect or experience. It is otherwise referred to the *how* of our understanding (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:39). Procedural knowledge has a great deal to do with how we perform tasks and how we go about making decisions. An important aspect is the relation between procedural knowledge and understanding. Just as with declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge may or may not have the potential to generate understanding. For one to be able to perform a task successfully, one would need to have the understanding of the task being performed as well as an understanding of how to perform the task so that the desired results are obtained accurately. On the other hand, if procedural knowledge does not have the potential to generate understanding then the task being performed will either fail or be performed without having achieved any desired goal or purpose.

In this study, the learners' procedural knowledge will determine how they understand the actions that might be performed in human rights situations. If procedural knowledge has the potential to generate understanding then learners will have an understanding of the other person's human rights and an understanding of how to handle sensitive issues where their or others' human rights are in conflict. Learners will understand that the situation should be handled through means such as negotiation, communication and respect and not an outbreak of violence. If, however, procedural knowledge does not have potential to generate understanding then the learner will not have an understanding of how to go about resolving the conflict at hand. A thriving generation of understanding in procedural knowledge in human rights will contribute to the learner's understanding and knowledge of how to go about making decisions and performing tasks in a variety of situations such as human rights conflict (cf Donald *et al.*, 2002:189 & 264). Although procedural knowledge creates the space for such an approach to human rights it is too narrow a view. Procedural knowledge does not take into consideration that human rights are not static and, moreover, that the complexity of human rights cannot simply be solved through the demonstration of specific procedures. Furthermore, this approach could suggest that human rights problems are easily solved through instrumental procedures. This does not take account that **how** human rights problems are solved is less significant than **why** these problems should be solved (for instance).

### 2.3.1.3. Conditional knowledge

As has been already been established, declarative knowledge explores *what* the content and factual knowledge of a particular domain is and procedural knowledge considers *how* one should go about making decisions and performing tasks. The other knowledge state of prior knowledge deals with knowledge of *when, where* and *for what reason* a specific action or feature should be demonstrated and this is referred to as **conditional knowledge** (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:41). Conditional knowledge is seen as more flexible, fluid and influenced by the factors in its immediate environment than the other types of knowledge (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:41). This knowledge type is also often perceived as a combination of all three states of knowledge, namely, declarative, procedural and conditional elements are all taken into account (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:41). Conditional knowledge would have the potential to generate understanding as it takes into consideration the ontological (2.2) thought processes of how, when and why one should perform any task or communicate any understanding. Understanding could play a central role as it would determine the success of how, when and why the task at hand was performed. In the same breadth, if conditional knowledge did not have the potential to generate understanding then the success of how, when and why the task was fulfilled might be compromised.

In this study, the learners' conditional knowledge will determine why they approach, for argument's sake, human rights in the context of their human rights responsibilities. If conditional knowledge has the potential to generate understanding then learners will have a detailed understanding of what their rights are, when and why to exercise these rights and with what responsibility. Learners will not only have knowledge of what their rights are (declarative knowledge) and an understanding of when it is appropriate to exercise these rights and how to go about this (procedural knowledge) but also an understanding of the responsibility that comes with their rights (conditional knowledge). However, if conditional knowledge does not in fact generate understanding then learners will be uncertain of exactly what their rights are, how to exercise these rights and why these rights have responsibilities. This type of misunderstanding of human rights could resort in clashes in the classroom, school and society where conflict could arise as a result.

Stemming from the exploration of the three states knowledge, it is necessary to consider the type of understanding that might be generated as a result. I will now probe the relationship between deep understanding and surface understanding as well as the concepts of teaching-and-learning in, for and about human rights.

#### **2.3.1.4 Deep understanding and surface understanding**

Different types of knowledge (namely, declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge) have been investigated determining the degree to which they might have the potential to generate understanding in learners. To extend this discussion I will now consider two types of understanding that Killen (2005:13) refers to as surface understanding and deep understanding.

Killen (2005:13) explores the notion of *learning* to best articulate the difference between surface understanding and deep understanding. In short, learning involves adding to our already existing knowledge (Killen, 2005:13), for example, in the way that we learn the name of a species of bird which we did not know prior to this learning encounter. Learning of this nature is learning in its simplest form which can be useful to communicate various terminologies. However, on its own it is of very limited value for making sense of the world. To make sense of the world we need to understand it (Killen, 2005:13).

Understanding can be defined and described in various ways but for Killen (2005:13) “understanding is something that can be quantified – students can develop different levels of understanding of the same things, hence the notions of deep understanding and surface understanding.” These different levels of understanding then suggest that the more meaning that a learner can make from the learning situation or the knowledge they acquire, the deeper their level of understanding.

Killen (2005:13) presents six main arguments concerning the characteristics of deep understanding. Firstly, deep understanding occurs when learners can relate the ideas that they are studying to one another as well as to other knowledge in an integrated, holistic and well-structured manner (Killen, 2005:13). Secondly, when a learner is aware of his or her thoughts in creating new sense and meaning during the transformation of factual information into valuable and meaningful knowledge, then deep understanding is taking place (Killen, 2005:13). Thirdly, a learner who has a deep understanding of a subject will be able to think flexibly with and about it (Killen, 2005:13). Fourthly, if a learner is able to use the “knowledge of a subject to solve complex problems, arrive at reasoned conclusions [and] explore the problematic nature of knowledge” (Killen, 2005:13), he or she will have a deep understanding of that subject. Fifthly, a learner who is able to apply the cognitive functions of evaluating and creating exercises a deep understanding (Killen, 2005:13). Lastly, deep understanding is robust – in this way it is not fixed or restricted but endures without declining in a short time. In contrast, surface understanding does not have many of these

characteristics. Surface understanding might generate only a fixed, restricted and limited understanding of teaching-and-learning that is less valuable than deep understanding.

The arguments presented about deep understanding and surface understanding will be further illustrated through the notion of teaching-and-learning in, for and about human rights.

### 2.3.1.5. Teaching-and-learning in, for and about human rights

It is necessary to illuminate the underlying characteristics between teaching-and-learning in, for and about human rights as a means to define and distinguish their influence on the construction of understanding. Teaching-and-learning about human rights entails conveying knowledge pertaining to the basic principles of human rights content (Du Preez, 2008:337). While teaching-and-learning in human rights refers to the representation of human rights in more practical situations or contexts (*ibid*). Lastly, paramount of teaching-and-learning about and in human rights is regularly regarded as teaching-and-learning for human rights (*ibid*). Teaching-and-learning for human rights entails the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes pertaining to human rights throughout daily and future actions (*ibid*). These three approaches to teaching-and-learning of human rights will have a profound influence on how learners construct understanding in relation to human rights.

To best articulate the initiative of learners construction of human rights understanding during teaching-and-learning, consider the following table.

Table 2.2: A theoretical representation of the relationship between learning outcomes and different types of knowledge, understanding and human rights

<b>Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Type of Knowledge Declarative, procedural &amp; conditional (2.3.1.1; 2.3.1.2; 2.3.1.3)</b>	<b>Type of Understanding Surface &amp; deep (2.3.1.4)</b>	<b>Type of Human Rights Teaching-and-learning In, for &amp; about (2.3.1.5)</b>
a. Factual and content based knowledge ( <i>what</i> )	Declarative	Surface	About
b. Modus operandi during problem solving ( <i>how</i> )	Procedural	Surface / Deep	In
c. Construction of knowledge ( <i>why</i> )	Conditional	Deep	For

I will now describe the following table by relating it to human rights teaching-and-learning outcomes.

#### 2.3.1.6. Theoretical representations of knowledge, understanding and human rights

##### a. Factual and content based knowledge

In a human rights teaching-and-learning framework, the notion of factual and content based knowledge might make reference to knowledge about basic principles of the Constitution. In this light, learners will exercise a nature of **declarative knowledge** with the intention of familiarising themselves with **what** content is comprised within the Constitution. This type of familiarisation will result in the learner gaining knowledge **about human rights** teaching-and-learning in order to be able to convey knowledge of the principles found in the Constitution. This category of knowledge and avenue of human rights teaching-and-learning could consequently develop a **surface understanding** which to a certain degree generates a fixed understanding restricted to only facts and content.

##### b. Modus operandi during problem solving

To position human rights teaching-and-learning in the context of the procedures that are performed during, for instance, human rights conflict scenarios modus operandi could be employed. In such a context the learner will exercise a type of knowledge which will allow them to determine **how** they might undergo the process of the procedure they are going to deploy in any given human rights scenario. This type of knowledge is best described as **procedural knowledge**. Best suited to this type of knowledge is teaching-and-learning **in human rights** as it depicts the manner in which the learner will handle the processes they could encounter during any given human rights scenario. A human rights scenario could be described as a practical situation or context whereby one could illustrate certain logical steps in order to solve human rights problems. This outlook of teaching-and-learning in human rights acknowledges that for one to learn in a context requires high order thinking skills which cannot be determined only by **surface understanding** but **deep understanding** to some degree as well.

### c. Construction of knowledge

To achieve an outcome such as construction of knowledge, the learner must demonstrate knowledge which promotes reasoning of **why** knowledge can become constructively flexible with the aim of being holistically integrated with other knowledge. The type of knowledge which has the capacity to take into account the various thought processes of how, when and why human rights teaching-and-learning should be performed could be regarded as **conditional knowledge**. When certain processes are put in place for learners to consider human rights holistically and to construct human rights knowledge and understanding which reinforces human rights knowledge, skills and attitudes then teaching-and-learning **for human rights** is taking place. These characteristics in conditional knowledge and teaching-and-learning for human rights will contribute to the development of **deep understanding**. Deep understanding will ensure that the learner is able to refer to the Constitution in a more holistic manner with the ability to transfer this knowledge to related contexts and documents such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*, for instance. The learner might also think flexibly about the Constitution so as to apply this knowledge to solve problems and arrive at reasoned conclusions about both what the Constitution entails but also how and why these principles might be applied in various other situations inside and outside of the school curriculum. In addition, arriving at an understanding of why the Constitution is important for me as an individual and for society.

At the start of this chapter learners understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning in an epistemological view was portrayed in a more practical manner. In order to position this epistemological view paradigmatically and critique it, a more philosophical stance will be adopted.

#### 2.3.2 Paradigmatic position

In order to paradigmatically position the epistemological view of understanding human rights teaching-and-learning, it is necessary to first mention how a paradigm is defined in this context. According to Kuhn (cited in Blackburn, 2005:267) “a paradigm does not impose a rigid or mechanical approach” it creates a creative and flexible “framework of concepts, results and procedures with which subsequent work is structured”. For the purpose of this study, a paradigm is the framework that houses particular concepts and procedures where subsequent epistemological arguments that are related to learners’ understandings of human rights teaching-and-learning are structured. In the light of this definition of the term paradigm, as seen in this study, I will now draw on some of the prominent epistemological ideas shaping this paradigm.

As a starting point I will consider what the term epistemology entails. Next, I will make an epistemological distinction between foundationalism and coherentism (2.3.2.1). Thereafter, I will draw on internalism and externalism (2.3.2.2) in epistemology to determine whether these concepts have any correlation with foundationalism and coherentism. Lastly, I will conclude (2.3.3) by summarising the implications of the discussion on knowledge and understanding (2.3.1) and the paradigmatic positions explored in this section of the chapter on human rights teaching-and-learning.

Epistemology comes from the Greek, *epistēmē* meaning the theory of knowledge (Blackburn, 2005:118; Delanty & Strydom, 2003:4). Blackburn (2005:118) argues that epistemology can be perceived as being dominated by two rival metaphors. The first metaphor pertains to a “building or pyramid built on foundations” (Blackburn, 2005:118). This metaphor illustrates the secure foundations and modes of construction necessary for this building or pyramid to be sound. A theory of deduction is implied and the idea of the ‘given’ as a basis of knowledge is supported. It could be deduced that this metaphor depicts a more foundational approach to epistemology. The second of Blackburn’s (2005:118) metaphors describes a boat that has no fixed foundation but where its strength is derived from its interlocking parts. This metaphor favours a more inductive approach where the idea of a knowledge leaning on a foundation in the ‘given’ is rejected. Here it could then be deduced that this metaphor leans towards a coherentism approach to epistemology.

### 2.3.2.1 Foundationalism and coherentism

Foundationalism, in an epistemological view, refers to knowledge that is regarded as a structure with secure, certain and fixed foundations (Blackburn, 2005:139). One can also associate foundationalism with clear and distinct reasoning devoid of any variability or unpredictability. Greco (1999:8) makes the distinction between foundationalism and coherentism by accentuating that for something to be equated with knowledge it must be grounded in good reason(s). However, this view could be questioned when such reasoning is in fact sufficient or when it can come to an end. Bonjour (1998:210) poses a trilemma in response to such a degree of reasoning being questioned. He argues that there are only three opinions:

- Firstly, reasons go on indefinitely;
- Secondly, reasons run short resulting in no further reasons being available to support the previous reasons and;
- Thirdly, reasons circle back on themselves.

When placing these three opinions in the frame of foundationalism and coherentism certain conclusions were drawn. Proponents of foundationalism in epistemology are more likely to be sceptical of opinions one and three in that they do not portray features most commonly found in foundationalism convincingly (BonJour, 1998:210). Option two, namely that reasons run short resulting in no further reasons being available to support the previous reasons, is unlikely to be viewed sceptically. An observation of this kind pinpoints that foundationalism renders knowledge that is secure and fixed. On the other hand, BonJour (1998:210) argues that proponents of coherentism are likely to view options one and two sceptically in that they convincingly portray elements most commonly found in coherentism. They would not be sceptical of option three namely, that reasons circle back on themselves, since it portrays to elements found within coherentism convincingly. As a next step, certain traits of coherentism will be drawn on.

Coherentism is referred to as the rival of foundationalism in that coherentism can be viewed as containing "a body of propositions [that] may be known without a foundation in certainty" (Blackburn, 2005:139). BonJour, (1998:216), however, accentuates that coherentism falls short of the ideal epistemology. Nevertheless, this should not preclude coherentism from providing an alternative mode of investigating epistemology. Coherentism brings to the fore a body of propositions that are believed to draw on other sources including perceptions in order to reach conclusions rather than contemplating only secure and certain epistemological foundations (Blackburn, 2005:65).

Reservations are often expressed about the lack of consistency and coherence (Blackburn, 2005:65) in coherentism's approach to epistemology. I agree with BonJour (1998:216) when he argues that judgements of this kind are based on the misapprehension that mere consistency and explanation are the central ingredients of coherentism. It can also be argued that foundational epistemology has the potential to be consistent and explanatory. In the light of these discussions it is evident that coherentism has given rise to various opaque discourses. For this reason, BonJour (1998:216) contends that coherentism should be used with caution due to the complexities that it engenders. Therefore for the purpose of the exploration of epistemology pertaining to learners understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning in the context of this dissertation, I have opted instead to view coherentism as knowledge unbound by structures raised on secure and certain foundations and maintain that knowledge is relative. Du Preez (2008:92) refers to this kind of explanation of coherentism as anti-foundational epistemology.

### 2.3.2.2 Internalism and externalism

I will now turn to the terms internalism and externalism in epistemology. It has been argued that the epistemological distinction between 'internal' and 'external' is more acceptable in current times (Alston, 1998:45). The reason for placing emphasis on what these terms entail will form part of an extended exploration of the concepts foundationalism and coherentism that have just been discussed. It also makes it possible for an in-depth analysis of the possible epistemological views of learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning to be viewed from another perspective.

Alston's (1998:45) discussion centred on the distinction between internalism and externalism in epistemology is argued from the departure point of justification, justification of any nature such as a belief, argument or content. He explains that internal epistemological arguments (for instance) are justified by laying down constraints and restricting the justification of the argument(s) to items that apply to a subject (in this case, a learner). In Alston's (1998:45) view the degree something has to be within the subject in order for it to comply with internal epistemology takes into account that justification will be presented from within the subject's perspective or viewpoint of the world, something the subject himself/herself knows and/or believes and therefore something that forms part of the subjects knowledge and understanding. This view of internal epistemology calls to mind certain elements of pre-knowledge, in the sense that the subject relies solely on that which is already known to them. This further accentuates the fact that the subject's justification is based on his or her propositional attitudes and what is depicted as being accurate from his or her perspective (Alston, 1998:50; Greco, 1999:10).

External epistemology on the other hand, denies that internal epistemology constitutes a necessary condition of justification (Alston, 1998:45). It maintains that externalism, as a more western epistemological tradition, represents a very radical departure in that matters can be entirely external to the person's subjective conception of the situation (BonJour as cited in Alston, 1998:46). It was only very recently been recognised that a person could present a justification that was external to his or her subjective conception (Alston, 1998:46). I understand why this issue has been debated for so long and why no serious philosopher of knowledge was willing to consider such a stance. However, I think it is important to underline that external epistemology generates a different perspective from the purely subjective approach adopted by internal epistemology.

Although from an epistemological viewpoint, foundationalism, coherentism, internalism and anti-externalism have unique characteristics, I think it is also apparent that these concepts could have

overlapping intentions and assumptions. Foundationalism adopts a secure and fixed stance on epistemology, but externalism also adopts a certain stance, namely a perspective entirely external or objective to the person's subjective conception thereof. To a degree it can be argued that externalism models a fixed epistemology like that found in foundationalism. Conversely, the view of coherentism expressed in this chapter rejects a fixed and secure epistemology. Similarly internalism too promotes a stance where the probative strength of reasons is assessed according to each subject and not static or fixed amongst all subjects. This similarity illustrates the commonality between coherentism and internalism. However, although there are evident commonalities in foundationalism and externalism, it would be a mistake to view these notions as one in the same. The reason for emphasising their commonalities is to accentuate certain overlapping elements so they can be drawn on when exploring human rights teaching-and-learning.

These elements portrayed here as well as discussions presented in section 2.3.1 will now be embarked on in the light of human rights teaching-and-learning.

### **2.3.3 Epistemological implications in the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning**

At this point, it is necessary to consider the implications of the in-depth exploration of human rights teaching-and-learning from an epistemological view. I will now conclude this section of the chapter by considering the relevance of the explorations conducted concerning knowledge and understanding (2.3.1) and paradigmatic epistemological positions (2.3.2).

Three possible positions could come to the fore when the epistemological implications in the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning are discussed. These three positions are reflected in Table 2.3. The first possible position illustrated by learning outcome a in Table 2.3, 'factual and content based knowledge' could be extended to contain principles found in both foundationalism and externalism. The reasoning behind this assertion stems from the fixed and secure nature of **foundationalism** and the objective stance held by **externalism**. These foundational and externalist elements supplement the outlook comprised in a **declarative** form of knowledge nestled in **surface understanding** and resulting in teaching-and-learning **about** human rights as depicted through the explanations about this learning outcome (2.3.1.6 a). A stance of human rights teaching-and-learning such as this one taken by 'factual and content based knowledge' becomes untenable for a rich understanding of human rights to develop. This is because it focuses solely on **what** human rights are without acknowledging that human rights cannot be viewed as static and entirely external to the subjective conceptions of people.

The second possible position is illustrated by learning outcome b in Table 2.3, 'modus operandi during problem solving'. Like outcome one, outcome two could also be regarded as expressing epistemological elements of **foundationalism** due to the fixed and secure process of carrying out a procedure of **how** to solve human rights problems. However, I regard outcome two as possessing components of **internalism** as well. It seems obvious to me that, although there may be fixed procedures, procedural knowledge of teaching-and-learning in human rights cannot be external to a person's subjective conception. In other words, it would be impossible for people to interpret the procedures involved in solving human rights problems in exactly the same way. Nevertheless, although this is the case, **procedural knowledge** supplemented by foundationalism and internal paradigmatic positions produces only **surface understanding**, which is not sufficient for the development of a fruitful conception of human rights teaching-and-learning. Moreover, the resultant teaching-and-learning **in** human rights would portray solving human rights problems as dependent on the completion of certain 'steps'. More importantly, learners could be prevented from engaging critically in human rights discourses as too much emphasis would be placed on procedure.

Finally, the third possible position considers learning outcome c in Table 2.2: 'construction of knowledge'. Alternatively, this outcome posits an **anti-foundational** epistemological stance unlike the other two outcomes. An anti-foundational approach dismisses a view of knowledge as fixed or secure and instead sees knowledge as relative. Furthermore, it fosters **internalism** since teaching-and-learning **for** human rights is promoted in this outcome. An approach such as teaching-and-learning for human rights acknowledges that to understand the "attitude and skills pertaining to human rights throughout our daily and future actions" we cannot take a stance that is entirely external to our subjectivity. Attitudes and values play a prominent part in attaining this outcome; and such attributes are influenced by many factors (namely, religion, culture, tradition) which cannot be seen as external to an individual's behaviour. This outcome seems more likely to achieve a fruitful understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. Its use of **conditional knowledge** has the potential to develop **deep** understanding in learners. This requires the learner to construct his or her own understanding free of foundational strains. Furthermore, realising that understanding goes beyond what human rights are or how they are carried out includes **why** they are important for us as individuals and as societies.

In conclusion, it should be acknowledged that the third possible position presented here may not be ideal for understanding human rights teaching-and-learning. However, it does generate an alternative perspective in which the learner's understandings of human rights teaching-and-learning

are not limited to static conceptions. As Ficher & Frey's (2007:7) point out, understanding can be regarded as the result of ongoing inquiry and critical rethinking and not static conceptions.

In the section that follows emphasis will be placed on the notion of how human rights teaching-and-learning might be understood from a methodological view.

## **2.4 UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHING-AND-LEARNING: A METHODOLOGICAL VIEW**

In an attempt to further explore the development of learners understanding in human rights teaching-and-learning, I will review some of the possible influences on a methodological position. The concept 'methodology' is derived from the Greek *methodos* meaning the "way towards or procedure for attainment of a goal" (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:4). In other words, methodology considers the theory of the way in which knowledge is acquired (Delanty & Strydom, 2003:4). This section of the chapter will explore the pedagogical stance teachers might employ in the classroom (2.4.1), mediation as a possible teaching strategy (2.4.2) and the influence that the assessment approach adopted by the teacher could have on a learner's development of understanding in human rights teaching-and-learning (2.4.3).

### **2.4.1 Instructivism and constructivism**

Terhart (2003) makes the distinction between instructivism and constructivism in his exploration of the concept of understanding. Instructivism foregrounds a behaviourist approach towards education as it merely involves transmitting and receiving information (Terhart, 2003: 32). A behaviourist/instructivism approach to education predominated in South Africa before outcomes-based education was introduced in 1997 (Chisholm, 2005:193). In a behaviouristic framework, learning is often associated with hurried or fast-paced learning, with the main focus on the memorisation of facts and the acquisition of basic skills (James, 2006:55 & 59). Instructivism favours learning based on behaviourist principles and a learning environment where knowledge is instructed from teacher to learner and where learners performance is either correct or incorrect and no intermediate position is debated (James, 2006:55). When learning is viewed as being instructed it implies transmission of preconceived knowledge divorced of concrete situations (Fraser, 2006:6; Terhart, 2003:32). With what might be perceived as indoctrination of preconceived and memorized learning, there is limited scope for the learner to develop insight into and understanding of the learning material being explored in the classroom. To further accentuate this point, Terhart

(2003:27) declares that “we can understand reality<sup>1</sup> only in the form in which it has been constructed by ourselves.”

Through another lens, this conception of instructivism links comfortably with Paulo Freire's (2007:68-75) notion of 'banking' which furthermore dictated educational practices before the national Department of Education (DoE) launched Curriculum 2005 in 1997 (Chisholm, 2005:193). Freire's (2007:68) critique of learning as 'banking' contests the notion that the main task of the teacher is to 'fill' learners' with content or knowledge resulting in them being viewed as containers capable only of receiving, filling and storing deposits made by the teacher. Such an approach to education, Freire (2007:68) argues develops learners who are “motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable” in their perceptions of reality and teachers who often expound on topics that are “completely alien to the existential experience of the students”. In this view, education is reduced to knowledge that is passed on by more knowledgeable ones (teachers) as a gift bestowed to those who are considered to be less knowledgeable (learners). A 'banking' approach to education develops learners who are lacking in creativity, critical consciousness and transformation making education no more than, to my mind, fixed on foundationalism epistemological (2.3.2.1) poses where only surface understanding (2.3.1.4) can mature.

Constructivism is often referred to as one of the more significant developments of teaching-and-learning in the last half of the previous century (Killen, 2005:7). It is said to be so important because it provides a more holistic approach to teaching where teachers explore ways in which learners can learn and accept responsibility for their own learning (Killen, 2005:8; Fraser, 2006:6). However, the new approaches and the renewed sense of responsibility for learners learning alone do not provide sufficient reason for the importance placed on constructivism. Together with these attributes is the profound recognition that learning is not merely instructed by the teacher but rather actively constructed and restructured by both the teacher and learner to gain insight and understanding (Fraser, 2006:6; Noddings, 2007:127; Terhart, 2003:32). A shift is, therefore, made from passive (instructivism) learning to more active (constructivism) approaches to learning which can lead to learners constructing knowledge in a way that makes sense to them rather than absorbing and memorizing knowledge without understanding.

Fraser (2006:6) refers to two main trends in constructivism, namely cognitive and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism reflects the way people make sense of the world around them by constructing their own understandings of knowledge through cognitive processes and the

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, reality is anything from our everyday observations to scientific knowledge formation (Terhart, 2003:27)

construction of relationships (Fraser, 2006:6). In contrast, social constructivism regards learning in a social light in which knowledge is acquired through interaction with one's environment; and learners use their experiences to construct meaning in a way which they can relate to (Fraser, 2006:6). Constructivism can be defined as an active process of constructing and deconstructing meaning where learning is social and focused on how learning takes place rather than what is learned. It seems that cognitive and social constructivism should not be viewed in isolation, but the distinct relationship between the two should be recognised. In other words, it is important to see that within a constructivist context social constructivism is reliant on cognitive constructivism for the construction of understanding and vice versa. Freire (2007:69) supplements these ideas with his explanations of problem solving which recognise that "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world and with each other".

It is also necessary to consider critiques of constructivism. Phillips (2007:398-409) in his chapter, "The good, the bad and the ugly: the many faces of constructivism", makes a healthy contribution to this debate. I will summarise what he sees as the bad and good elements. The more negative side to constructivism is the epistemological relativism that results from the tendency "towards treating the justification of our knowledge as being entirely a matter of socio-political processes or consensus, or toward the jettisoning of any substantial rational justification or warrant at all" (Phillips, 2007:407). In another way when teachers use constructivism methodologically challenges might arise because in a constructivist framework knowledge is not fixed or foundational leaving room for the learners to interpret it in their own way. This type of 'self-interpretation' or 'individual interpretation' results in epistemological relativism which could result in many equally valid truths, which means the teacher and learners must reach a consensus on the truth or discourses under investigation. A methodological stance such as constructivism could therefore have negative implications as to how consensus should be derived and the procedures involved in that.

On the other hand, constructivism is still worth pursuing and Phillips (2007:407) argues that the positive aspects of constructivism are two fold. Firstly, constructivists emphasise the importance of active participation by learners and furthermore accentuate the social nature of learning. In this respect, the stance taken by most constructivists to education is one of "modern forms of progression" (Phillips, 2007:407). Secondly, Phillips (2007:407) contends that constructivism's contribution to bringing epistemological issues to the fore in the discussions on learning and the curriculum should be praised. Such discussions have enhanced debates in education journals. Although some philosophical points have not been resolved, constructivists have introduced another perspective.

These discussions centred on instructivism and constructivism have highlighted valuable aspects of learners' development of understanding. They have emphasised that understanding involves more than mere memorisation and recalling of knowledge presented by the teacher. Understanding involves the constructing and reconstructing of knowledge through analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation so that concepts can be transferred in authentic and varied situations (James, 2006:56; Killen, 2005:8; Terhart, 2003:32).

Further exploring the role of constructivism when developing meaning and understanding in the classroom, I would like to highlight the role of mediation. Mediation is comprised of various elements of which will now briefly be explored.

#### **2.4.2 Mediation and understanding**

Mediation is derived from the Greek *mesites* which means to 'intervene' between two parties (Fraser, 2006:5). Intervening should, however, not presume that the mediator will present the parties with solutions. Rather, the mediator will guide the parties in recognising all possibilities and alternatives that can be explored so as to illuminate that there is not necessarily only one solution to any given problem. This has highlighted the contribution of constructivism.

Donald *et al* (2002:71) refer to cognitive mediation and social mediation. Cognitive mediation involves "helping a child, through proximal<sup>2</sup> interaction, to construct a new level of understanding" (Donald *et al*, 2002:71). Social mediation entails the presentation of suggestions to two opposing parties with the aim of guiding these parties to reach a new level of agreement (Donald *et al*, 2002:71). In an educational context, mediation should not be limited to only cognitive mediation or social mediation. Rather, to generate understanding, mediation should be perceived as the process whereby a mediator intervenes explicitly into a learning situation (social mediation) with the intention to direct and guide the learning process in order to generate a new level of understanding (cognitive mediation). Therefore in an educational setting with the aim of generating understanding, a combination of social and cognitive mediation is preferred.

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) is crucial to understanding the theory and the process of mediation. Rowe and Wertsch (2002:552) underline that Vygotsky developed and use the notion of ZPD to argue against teachers who used IQ testing or academic

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<sup>2</sup> Proximal interaction refers close and face-to-face interaction between the people involved

performance to gauge learners' development. ZPD is commonly referred to as the "critical space in a person's present understanding where, through proximal interaction (mediation), [they] can be helped to construct a new level of understanding" (Donald *et al*, 2002:71). This recognises that in an educational setting, a learner's understanding need not be seen exclusively as individually constructed (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995:68). Although a learner's understanding can also be constructed socially, the individual learner is still ultimately responsible for his or her own understanding and learning (Feuerstein & Feuerstein, 1991:13; Bitzer, 2004:48).

The learners' ZPD is fundamental as it defines how and when mediation takes place. Mediation takes place when there is the presence of a parent, peer, teacher or any significant and knowledgeable others (Murphy & Alexander, 2006:103). The mediator must engage with the learner in proximal interaction with the aim of helping the learner shift their current position of understanding to construct a new level of understanding (Donald *et al*, 2002:72; Murphy & Alexander, 2006:103; Rowe & Wertsch, 2002:552). During this interaction the learner learns how to adapt his or her present meaning of a particular domain to create new meanings so that he or she can create a new understanding of this domain. This new level of understanding can be used to relate to a particular domain of understanding, for instance, deep understanding or surface understanding (2.3.1.4). However, it should also be brought to question whether this type of proximal interaction is not perhaps possible without human reaction. What if one could mediate their own knowledge through their interaction with for instance books and in this way regard books as knowledgeable others?

For the success of the mediation process, it is vital for the mediator to know how mediation takes place. The prime factor of mediation is intentionality (Donald *et al*, 2002:72). The mediator can not rely purely on chance for there to be meaningful interaction with the learners ZPD (learner's potential). The mediator is also required to be aware of the learner's potential (ZPD) so that the interaction taking place will in fact increase the learners level of understanding. Consequently, the success of any mediation experience is dependent on the accuracy of the mediator in connecting with the learner's potential understanding in the ZPD. This means that the mediator must regularly be aware of exactly where the learners are positioned in their growth of understanding. If this is not the case, there will be very little or even no indication of how and where to connect with their critical growth points or ZPD (Carpendale & Lewis, 2006:229; Donald *et al*, 2002:119). Therefore, for effective mediation to occur the proximal interaction guiding and facilitating the learner to grow to new levels of understanding must be intentional.

Closely related to Vygotsky's (1978) concept of mediation is Bruner's (1964) notion of scaffolding and Johnson & Johnson's (1975) notion of cooperative learning. I will now briefly explore the notions of scaffolding and cooperative learning with the aim of looking at additional ways in which learners understanding might be developed and enriched in the classroom. **Scaffolding** literally means the temporary structure that is erected around a building to support the building until the building process is complete. It can be removed gradually as the building process requires. Metaphorically scaffolding therefore involves "mediating key structural<sup>3</sup> and/or strategic elements of a particular topic of understanding" (Donald *et al*, 2002:104). In this way, the scaffolding process challenges the learner, at whatever level they might be, to develop their understanding to a more powerful and higher level (Donald *et al*, 2002:104). The process of scaffolding will require the mediator to provide suggestions, guidance and facilitation just as in mediation. However, the difference with scaffolding evolves when the mediator gradually draws away as the learner reaches higher and higher levels of understanding till eventually the learner is able to construct his or her own internalised understanding with no guidance or support. This occurs in the same way that the scaffolding of a building is gradually removed and the building process is completed without the necessity of scaffolding to assist the building.

#### 2.4.2.1 Cooperative learning

**Cooperative learning** does not represent a new version of the use of small discussion groups in teaching (Bitzer, 2004:41). Rather, cooperative learning reflects contemporary research and reflects effective modes of teaching-and-learning in groups. This approach brings a different edge to understanding from the context of mediation and scaffolding as discussed above. Cooperative learning involves learners working together as members of a group towards a common goal as well as to maximise learning and understanding of both the individual and that of others in the group (Bitzer, 2004:43; Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Messerschmidt, 2003:107; Slavin, 1991:74). Although working in groups is perhaps not a new idea, cooperative learning must not be perceived as simply dividing learners into groups and believing that learners will work together to complete tasks presented by the teacher.

Cooperative learning can be defined as an "umbrella term that loosely covers a diversity of team-based learning approaches" (Damon & Phelps, 1989:11). This diversity of cooperative group activities or techniques encompassing cooperative learning holds various intellectual and social advantages for learner. The most salient advantages of cooperative learning include; improved

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<sup>3</sup> Structure refers to the key concepts and relationships that underlie a particular knowledge area (Donald *et al*, 2002:104).

understanding and skills in the learning area being taught, developing an appreciation of different individuals and cultures, learning to listen and respect one another, enhancing and building on the original instruction of the teacher, improved academic achievement, promotion of mainstreaming by improving relationships across the ethnicity and disability barrier and increased self-esteem (Messerschmidt, 2003:107; Slavin, 1991:75). This might seem sophisticated but it must be noted that these advantages of cooperative learning are dependent on the capacity of structural elements in teaching-and-learning to promote the development of effective cooperative learning.

It has been stated by Bitzer (2004:47) that learners will learn effectively in cooperative groups if five key elements to co-operative learning are promoted. These five elements are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, interpersonal and small-group skills and group processing/reflection (Bitzer, 2004:47). In short, if the effectiveness of cooperative learning is judged on the success of its results, the five key elements to cooperative learning must be promoted. In this context, success refers primarily to the improvement of understanding in learners.

#### **2.4.3 Assessment and understanding**

The concept of assessment can serve many purposes (Killen, 2005:101). The Department of Education (2005a:27) emphasise that assessment is core to the teaching-and-learning process for its underlying role of promoting effective teaching-and-learning. For the purpose of exploring how assessment relates to understanding I will only draw on certain aspects of assessment to demonstrate the relationship between assessment and understanding in an educational environment.

For assessment to serve its purpose, teachers must know what they are assessing and how to assess this in learners. This is necessary as assessment is performed with learners for different reasons. Teachers can assess a learner to determine their level of knowledge and understanding in a particular learning area, learners can be assessed to diagnose learning difficulties, learners can be assessed to provide them with feedback, learners can be assessed to determine if they are ready to progress to further learning and so the list goes on (Department of Education 2005a:27 & 28; Killen, 2005:102).

Understanding can be regarded as the result of ongoing inquiry and rethinking (Ficher & Frey, 2007:7). For this reason, assessment of understanding must be thought of as a collection of evidence over time instead of a single event. Teachers must therefore continuously check learners

understanding during the teaching-and-learning process. If learners understand the learning material they are working with, they will be able to, for example, restate sections of the material in their own words, ask critical questions about the material and think of examples that are related to the learning material they are working with (Fisher & Frey, 2007:2). Learners understanding can be checked through various approaches such as oral language, questioning, writing, projects and tests (Fisher & Frey, 2007:2).

To further illustrate the relationship between assessment and understanding I will draw on the concepts of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning (Killen, 2005:97; Gardner, 2006:3). **Assessment of learning** forms part of summative assessment as we have known it in education for centuries (Harlen, 2006:103). Summative assessment, as its name suggests, provides a summary of the learners' learning at the end of a course of instruction or period of time (Harlen, 2006:104; Killen, 2005:128). There is no immediate feedback to the learner, learners have very little or even no role in assessment and the primary purpose is to report achievement (Harlen, 2006:106). Conclusions about the learners learning are limited because these conclusions are made at the end of the learning experience so cannot be used by the learner to help them learn anything more (Killen, 2005:128). As a result, the room for improvement in terms of understanding is very restricted.

On the other hand, **assessment for learning** as a purpose for assessment is regarded as more recent in comparison to assessment of learning (Harlen, 2006:103). Assessment for learning is also referred to as formative assessment and these terms are used interchangeably (Gardner, 2006:2). When assessment for learning is applied then learners are assessed during the course of the learning experience and not just at the end. The main value of formative assessment differs from summative assessment. While summative assessment provides a summary of the learners' learning after the completion of a section of work or period of time, formative assessment continuously provides feedback to the learner during a section of work or learning experience. Formative assessment is valuable as it helps learners to identify the gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills and guides the learner towards closing these gaps (Killen, 2005:129). Furthermore, formative assessment is valuable because it provides the learners with feedback which the learner must understand and act on with the intention of bringing about improvements in their learning and understanding (Harlen, 2006:104; Killen, 2005:129).

The underlying difference between these forms of assessment lies in how the information that is gathered is used (Harlen, 2006:104; Killen, 2005:129). The purpose of the distinction between assessment of and for learning is not to favour one form of assessment over the other. Rather this

distinction will endeavour to accentuate that each form of assessment has different roles in how information is gathered and used and moreover for what purpose. Consider, for instance, that one avenue of how information that is gathered from assessment could be used to generate feedback. Feedback in the context of assessment *of* learning would more than likely be present at the end of a particular course of work or year. Feedback of this nature is mostly presented in the form of a report to parents, teachers and other educational institutions (Harlen, 2006:104&106). As a result learners are given very limited opportunities to make improvements or fill gaps where learning and understanding were limited or lacking. In terms of the relationship between assessment and understanding, assessment of learning does not provide scope for learners to further develop their understanding.

Feedback within the context of assessment *for* learning involves various elements. Firstly, feedback can assist with the regulation of teaching so that the pace of learning is adjusted to ensure active participation of all learners. Secondly it ensures that new experiences in teaching-and-learning are not too difficult or too easy. Thirdly feedback is given to both to the teacher and the learner. Lastly feedback is continuous and identifies the areas where improvement is necessary (Harlen, 2006:105). The learner is an active participant during feedback thus making feedback valuable in its contribution to improving learners understanding. Feedback is only active when the learner makes sense of the feedback presented to them, identifies the gaps in their knowledge and understanding and then uses the identification of these gaps to 'feed forward' (Killen, 2005:129). Feed forward will ensure that the learner closes the gaps in their understanding and establishes a new level of knowledge and understanding.

The exploration of the relationship between assessment and understanding highlights the general necessity for teachers to assess *for* learning if a higher level of understanding is to be achieved in learners. However, although assessment *of* learning plays a vital role in the classroom, it has a limited role in developing learners' understandings in the area of human rights.

The methodological discussions presented in this section of the chapter have drawn on possible ways in which teachers could carry out their pedagogical instructions and assessment procedures. I have viewed these pedagogical approaches in the context of Grundy's (1987) theories of curriculum as these theories augment the methodological arguments being expressed in this chapter.

#### 2.4.4 Paradigmatic position

In the next section, I will position the methodological view of the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning adopted in this investigation. The discussion will involve an exploration of Grundy's (1987) theories pertaining to curriculum as product, curriculum as practice and curriculum as praxis. This will be done with the intention of providing a macro-view of a possible approach to the curriculum. In addition, I shall give more detail on the philosophical stance as well as a possible concomitant methodological pedagogy.

##### 2.4.4.1 Curriculum as product

Grundy (1987:28) draws attention to the metaphors 'construction' and 'building' of curriculum in the development of her argument pertaining to curriculum as product. She reasons that such terms are clear indicators of a technical and product centred approach to curriculum. She uses the terms 'technical interest' in her explanations of a curriculum of this nature and thus these terms will also be employed in this discussion.

Technical interest can largely be equated with the **control and manipulation** of environments such as that of learners as well as holistic teaching-and-learning environments. An approach to a curriculum of this nature could imply that a teacher will endeavour to produce a learner who behaves according to predetermined criteria. To achieve this kind of result would therefore require control of both the learner and the learning environment (Grundy, 1987:29). The implication is that the environment is seen as an **object** and that the learner's behaviour and learning can be controlled and managed by agents such as the teacher. It thus follows that technical interest gives rise to certain power relations in the learning environment (Grundy, 1987:30). The direct effect on the learner is that he or she is perceived as having no power to determine learning objectives and is merely a reactor in the learning situation.

Along with a view of knowledge as an object to be studied objectively, knowledge in a curriculum of this calibre is also ideas orientated. This means knowledge is objectively accepted rather than deconstructed, questioned or reinterpreted (Grundy, 1987:57). Knowledge is also not regarded as being socially constructed since there is no acknowledgement that "constructions have historical and temporal antecedents which [give] a unity to all human knowledge and experience" (Grundy, 1987:35). Similarly, assessment is perceived as a separate entity from the teaching-and-learning process. It is informed by the need to make a prediction of how closely the preconceived ideas and outcomes were achieved by the learner (Grundy, 1987:36 & 37). Evaluation of the product is based

purely on assessing the outcomes alone. It does not take account of the process involved, thus reinforcing, to some degree, the notion that the act of teaching is in itself “mechanistic” (Grundy, 1987:38).

Grundy’s (1987) theory of curriculum and product can be linked to the concept of instructivism (2.4.1) which includes Freire’s (2007:68) ‘banking’ theory (outlined earlier in this section of the chapter). It is also necessary to portray the relationship that such an approach to curriculum entails for education in South Africa in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 democratic election curriculum revision that began in South Africa (Chisholm, 2005:193). However, before this period of curriculum revision, control of the curriculum was exercised through top-down approaches and control of syllabuses (Graham-Jolly, 2003:9). In South Africa this was strongly influenced by apartheid. “Curriculum development in the form of periodic syllabus revision was the preserve of four white provincial education departments within the House of Assembly” (Graham-Jolly, 2003:9). Illustrating that control and manipulation of curriculum featured strongly amongst different racial groups in South Africa. This resulted in a curriculum policy framework that was centralised and widely viewed as “racist, Eurocentric, sexist, authoritarian, prescriptive, unchanging, context blind and discriminatory” (Jansen, 1999:4). Thus before the first democratic election in South Africa, the curriculum adopted a curriculum as product position which viewed the learners as objects and directed teachers’ approaches towards an instructivist methodology.

Lastly, Grundy (1987:35) refers to a technically informed curriculum as being bound to a culture of positivism in both its content and methodology due to its orientations based on objectivity and control. I agree with her view that a curriculum focused so predominantly on objectivity and means-end criteria could thwart the potential richness of learners’ understanding and autonomy in the world (Grundy, 1987:35).

#### a Philosophical stance taken by curriculum as product

Curriculum as product endorses the view that the teaching-and-learning environment can be manipulated and controlled: learners are seen as objects and teaching is regarded as a product. As has already been established, this technical interest stance is grounded in positivism.

Positivism takes the view that the highest or only form of knowledge originates from the description of sensory phenomena (Blackburn, 2005:284). This confines experience to that which is positively given and avoids all speculation. Pring (2004:223) states that positivism refers to the ideal scientific explanations of both physical and social reality. Furthermore, it sees science as the only genuine

form of knowledge that makes it possible to control or regulate the behaviour of people in an environment.

Offering a different explanation, Ornstein and Hunkins (2004:184) present the argument that a curriculum driven by manipulation and control can be said to be traditionalist. The authors adopt the position that a traditionalist tends to theorise the curriculum structurally. To structurally theorise the curriculum entails a scientific approach to teaching-and-learning where learning can be identified, described and controlled and, in addition, where learning can be predetermined. Their explanation reveals common ground between this particular traditionalist approach and a positivistic approach to curriculum as product that depicts teaching-and-learning as a fixed product that can be controlled as well as manipulated.

#### 2.4.4.2 Curriculum as practice

Certain elements of the notion of curriculum as practice will now be drawn upon with the intention of providing a clear and concise account of what curriculum as practice entails for teaching-and-learning.

Curriculum as practice acknowledges education as a practical activity which takes place through the realm of **human interaction** where curriculum is orientated on interaction between teachers and learners (Grundy, 1987:68 & 70). This rejects the possibility of studying the curriculum objectively and accentuates that all participants within the curriculum are subjects not objects. Emphasis is placed on teaching-and-learning for the purpose of **making meaning** and not on teaching to produce preconceived artefacts. Learning by means of meaning making should also promote **understanding** of *what* is being learnt and *why* in order to avoid regurgitation of facts detached of any meaning or reasoned interpretation. Whereas the technical interest focuses on the learner accepting knowledge objectively according to predetermined outcomes, the practical interest depicts knowledge as a personal act of meaning-making where the interpretation of knowledge requires the learner's interpretation unbound of preconceived outcomes. The idea that the learner's interpretation plays a fundamental role in learning does not mean that they have *carte blanche*, but reflects a situation in which knowledge is not just accepted but questioned and deconstructed so as to generate meaning.

Grundy (1987:73) argues that learners should not be perceived as objects that are controlled and manipulated by the curriculum and their environments, but that within the practical interest both teachers and learners are perceived to be fundamentally rational. Rationality in this context

validates teachers and learners as logical, reasoned thinkers who are not the by-products of the curriculum but rather an active part of the curriculum. Teaching-and-learning is not teacher directed but involves both the teacher and the learner. In the practical interest approach, therefore, content is viewed holistically and is integrated rather than fragmented: interpretation and the demonstration of judgement are encouraged to avoid rote learning of pre-specified skills (Grundy, 1987:76).

Within the practical interest approach to curriculum, as is the case of content, assessment is holistically orientated. It is an integral part of the teaching-and-learning continuum. Furthermore, curriculum is viewed as a form of **deliberation** from which certain **judgements** and actions develop and thus assessment is regarded as a process and not just a product. Since assessment is also considered to be a human interaction, the meanings and interpretations of both teachers and learners contribute to the development of understanding through means such as feedback, report and discussions, for instance.

It can be argued that South Africa has shifted significantly from curriculum as product to a less predicted, manipulated and controlled curriculum. In support of this view, Chisholm (2005:194) refers to South African education as possessing "proponents and elaborators of constructivism and outcomes-based education." For Chisholm (2005:194), learner-centred education lies at the heart of outcomes-based education and such an approach brings to the surface "local, hidden, silenced knowledge and everyday realities of learners". To my mind, South African education rests in this curriculum framework in the way that our education systems have adopted outcomes-based, learner-centred and constructivist principles. This approach to curriculum has not escaped criticism. Jansen (1999:146-147) amongst others have questioned the ability of outcomes-based education in South African schools. Jansen (1999:146-147) presents that argument that:

....OBE will fail, not because politicians and bureaucrats are misinformed about conditions of South African schooling, but because this policy is being driven in the first instance by political imperatives which have little to do with the realities of classroom life. Rather than spawn innovation, OBE will in fact undermine the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms of the new South Africa.

Jansen (1999:146-147) makes some valid points. However, in the context of Grundy's (1987) curriculum as practice, outcomes-based education could be seen as only one aspect of this theory. To my mind, a learner-centred and constructivist driven education system with components of outcomes-based education is a more feasible position for South Africa than that offered by a curriculum as product. Ultimately, what is important is having elements of curriculum as practice

that acknowledge the importance of deliberation, judgement and meaning making through human interaction (Grundy, 1987:77). Furthermore, these elements, which can be said to feature in some of the underlying aims of South African education, could contribute to generating a more meaningful learning experience for both the teacher and the learner because they regard teaching-and-learning as a practical process and not only a product.

a. Philosophical stance taken by curriculum as practice

Curriculum as practice recognises the importance of human interaction during teaching-and-learning practices that aim to promote meaning making and understanding. Furthermore, curriculum as practice rejects teacher-centred pedagogy where learners are passive participants in the learning process.

With a depiction of curriculum as practice holding attributes such as interaction, meaning making and understanding it seems possible to refer to the philosophical stance taken by social constructivism. It must, however, be noted that constructivism has many trends of which social constructivism is only one (Curren, 2007:330). Let us first briefly explore what constructivism entails in an educational context before I briefly embark on two trends of constructivism namely cognitive constructivism and social constructivism.

Constructivism holds the view that learning is a process in which knowledge is acquired through active construction and reconstruction of meaning. Grundy (2007:413) reasons that the term constructivism is a metaphor in the sense that knowledge is constructed and not directly imbibed from the environment. The focus in a constructivist context is on *how* the learning takes place more than *what* the learners are learning (Fraser, 2006:6). Together with the principle of how learning is taking place is the notion that learners should question their own understanding as well as discover and construct new understanding rather than accept the knowledge relayed to them (Cook, 2001:4; Fraser, 2006:6).

Two of the trends in constructivism include cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism according to Fraser (2006:6) takes cognisance of the cognitive processes people use to make sense of the world around them. This takes into account the potential of knowledge to be constructed and questioned and not just to be a fixed product (Curren, 2007:330). In contrast, social constructivism regards the teaching-and-learning process as socially constructed, thus acknowledging that knowledge and understanding are developed through the interaction of learners with their peers, teachers and environments (Fraser, 2006:6). Social

constructivism relies on learners' unique experiences as well as their prior knowledge to construct meaning which makes sense to them. This takes into consideration the uniqueness of each learner and the influences of their individual cultural and traditional backgrounds, which ultimately influence their meaning making and understanding. Taking the methodological stance explored in this chapter, I think, although the notion of cognitive constructivism should be taken into account, it is necessary to concede that social constructivism takes prominence over cognitive constructivism in human rights teaching-and-learning (see section 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3).

This discussion on constructivism is limited to philosophical arguments that relate directly to the commonalities between Grundy's argument of curriculum as practice and the notion of social constructivism. The commonalities are that curriculum as practice promotes the development of understanding and meaning making through construction and interaction. Similarly, the underlying principles underpinning social constructivism promote teaching-and-learning through interaction with peers, teachers and their environments. It accentuates the involvement of learners in actively constructing knowledge by drawing on their own experiences as opposed to being solely dependent on the teacher as being their only source of knowledge construction.

#### **2.4.4.3 Curriculum as praxis**

Grundy (1987:99) stresses that the most fundamental orientation towards curriculum as praxis is **emancipation**. Since emancipation is a focal aspect of curriculum as praxis, it is clear that the objectivity and control of producing particular products in a technical interest do not meet the requirements of emancipation. However, the deliberative, meaning making capacity of a practical interest to make judgements is more compatible with, albeit not at one with, an emancipatory interest. Therefore, the practical interest has the potential to develop into an emancipatory interest. Such a development does not occur naturally, but rather through a transformation of consciousness during which one's perceptions and actions of the world are transformed.

The three interests namely; technical, practical and emancipatory should not be seen in isolation because it is unlikely that only one interest will dominate all the time. We should be aware, however, that one interest could characterise a teacher's consciousness and determine the way that he or she constructs knowledge and conducts teaching-and-learning processes (Grundy, 1987:100). Within the South African context a major paradigm shift in methodology has been made from a curriculum as product approach (instructivism [2.4.1] prior to 1994) towards a curriculum as practice approach (constructivism [2.4.1] after 1994). This shift has not evolved fully into a curriculum as praxis methodological approach yet, but I think it has the potential to do so. As was

seen in arguments presented by Jansen (see section 2.4.4.2), the current curriculum has been severely criticised. It is, nevertheless, valuable to explore Grundy's (1987) view of curriculum as praxis as some South African theorists and institutions could be functioning in this context and other might be striving towards it.

Grundy (1987:100-121) makes extensive reference to Paulo Freire's (2005) work on **praxis** and regards it as fundamental to the emancipatory interest. Grundy (1987:114-116) explores Freire's five constitutive elements of praxis within curriculum to illustrate their implications for curriculum as praxis. I will explore each of these constitutive elements of praxis in the context of education, very briefly. Firstly, a curriculum as praxis would mean that the development of curriculum takes place through the dynamic interaction of action and reflection, which shows how curriculum is developed through active and integrated processes and not as a set of plans to be implemented. Secondly, curriculum as praxis is developed in relation to the real world by taking cognisance that learners and teaching-and-learning situations are an integral part of curriculum implementation: Learners are not objects and teaching-and-learning situations are not superficial or theoretical. Thirdly, curriculum as praxis recognises teaching-and-learning as a social act where the curriculum is developed in a social environment and where individualised instruction is brought under critical scrutiny. In addition, this accentuates teaching-and-learning as a dialogical relationship between the teacher and learner as apposed to an authoritative relationship. Fourthly, within curriculum as praxis knowledge is a **social construction** rather than a depiction of the natural world. Learners' construct knowledge while they are in interaction with other learners and/or while they are in interaction with the teacher. Teachers and learners are encouraged to engage critically when reflecting on knowledge in order to distinguish between knowledge pertaining to a natural world and knowledge pertaining to a cultural world. It is important to bear in mind that a natural world makes reference to the world around us in the sense that the natural world is consists of nature such as nature immersed in the world. A constructed or cultural world sees humans as objecting, understanding and transforming the world in reflectively constructing or reconstructing the social/cultural world (Grundy, 1987:105). Lastly, curriculum as praxis considers meaning-making and interpretation as a social process in which critical orientation of all knowledge is essential. Meaning-making gives rise to conflicting meanings which makes it undeniably political.

Curriculum as praxis is thus never straightforward and consequently requires reflection and risk-taking action by all participants rather than academic declaration (Grundy, 1987:121). Critique is therefore essential in the emancipatory interest. Ultimate emancipation is reliant on a critical focus and therefore the promotion of **critical consciousness** becomes a precondition of this interest (Grundy, 1987:125). Critical consciousness requires that the legitimacy of the construction and

selection of knowledge for acquisition be placed under scrutiny by both the teacher and the learners. Negotiation of knowledge should not be teacher centred but be reflected on critically by both the teacher and learner in order to safeguard authentic learning and minimise predetermined and hypothetical teaching-and-learning (McLaughlin, 2007:361). In addition, assessment is as an integral part of teaching-and-learning. Curriculum as praxis also promotes the emancipation of oppression from external evaluation and therefore judgements about the quality and meaningfulness of work is made by the teacher and learners and not imposed from outside (Grundy, 1987:127). Assessment processes are also never haphazard but occur rather within frameworks of flexible organisation where teaching-and-learning is not predetermined or fixed. Moreover, assessment is not focused merely on what has been learnt but rather what has been learnt through critique. The quality of learning is judged by the degree of autonomy and validity expressed by the learners' critiques and not how they were able to deliver specific product.

a. Philosophical stance taken by curriculum as praxis

Curriculum as praxis considers the emancipatory role of teaching-and-learning through the employment of a "critical consciousness" (Grundy, 1987:125). This level of critical consciousness is not possible in curriculum as product as it requires all participants in the teaching-and-learning process to critically question educational knowledge and practice. Curriculum as practice with its constructive and interactive approach toward meaning making and understanding comes closer to achieving the aims of curriculum as praxis. Curriculum as praxis is positioned on a different level because of its emancipatory role as well as its acknowledgement of the close relationship between "doing action", "intrinsic" worthwhile outcomes as well as reflectivity and reflexivity (Waghid, 2002:64).

I argue the importance of recognising that curriculum as praxis is embedded in critical consciousness because the very nature of critical consciousness within this context is a fundamental determining factor of emancipation as well as in the relationship between action and reflection. I will briefly draw on the main defining arguments of critical thinking in order to relate them to the underlying concepts shaping curriculum as praxis.

Critical thinking can be perceived as "thinking that facilitates judgement because it relies on criteria, is self-correcting and is sensitive to context" (Lipman, 2007:428). Lipman (2007:428) clarifies his use of the terms 'criteria', 'self-corrected thinking', and 'being sensitive to context'. First, he explains that critical thinking and criteria have a common ancestry. Critical thinking is employed when judgements are made based on reliable reasoning (criteria). In this way teachers should seek to not

only learners' ability to make reasoned judgements but also develop their inclination and disposition to do so (Siegel, 2007:442). Siegel (2007:435) describes a critical thinker as being a person who holds certain attitudes, dispositions, habits of mind and character traits and he labels these traits a "critical spirit". Thus, teachers should employ methodological approaches to teaching-and-learning that develop a critical spirit within learners. Second, Lipman (2007:429) refers to self-corrective thinking as being an attribute of critical thinking: Self-corrective thinking need not be equated with the principle of metacognition (thinking about thinking) since it aims at discovering its own weakness and rectifying that flaw or misconception in its own procedures. Thus the flaw or misconception is self-corrected. Lastly, Lipman (2007:429) makes the point that critical thinking displays sensitivity to context. If thinking is sensitive to context, it recognises all circumstances even the exceptional ones and is sensitive to particularities and uniqueness. Therefore, when critical thinking is sensitive to context it is hostile to all stereotyping and disregards thinking which forces standard rules upon individual cases.

Within teaching-and-learning critical thinking encourages learners to question the learning process and demand answers from their peers and teachers. A classroom which promotes critical thinking will develop the skills, habits and dispositions in learners so that they can scrutinise and make judgements during teaching-and-learning. This experience should allow learners a genuine opportunity to be aware of the role that reasoning plays in the justification of reflection and action. Similarly, curriculum as praxis also promotes teaching-and-learning which emphasises the importance of critical consciousness in learners' judgements with a view to emancipation. Curriculum as praxis thus embraces various elements of critical thinking.

#### **2.4.5 Methodological implications in the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning**

The preceding discussion has presented different views on Grundy's (1987) theories of curriculum as product, curriculum as practice and curriculum as praxis which can be related to certain philosophical stances (2.4.4.1a; 2.4.4.2a; 2.4.4.3a). The contribution that these stances could make to understanding human rights teaching-and-learning will now be examined.

The methodological view presented by curriculum as product (2.4.4.1) as well as its accompanying philosophical view embedded in positivism provides a very restricted understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. This would amount to human rights teaching-and-learning that is driven by methodological positions which portray elements of instructivism (2.4.1) and assessment of learning (2.4.3). Teaching-and-learning is teacher centred, transferring knowledge from the teacher

to the learner in a learning environment that can be manipulated or controlled. In this context learners are viewed objectively. This would reduce understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning to an outcome predetermined by the teacher that would simply be accepted without question.

Within the methodological view of human rights teaching-and-learning presented by curriculum as practice (2.4.4.2), it would be possible to create a different framework for understanding. Curriculum as practice takes into account the importance of human interaction for meaning making and understanding to occur. The nature of human interaction referred to here is enveloped by the philosophical stance taken by social constructivism (2.4.4.2.a). This stance makes provision for teachers and learners' working together, by bringing their experiences to the fore and contributing to discourses with the intention of making meaning. In the light of human rights teaching-and-learning, curriculum as practice generates a platform for understanding to be actively developed rather than transmitted. This acknowledges that the methodological view held by curriculum as practice encourages the development of learners' understanding in human rights teaching-and-learning, more so than curriculum as product would.

Lastly, curriculum as praxis (2.4.4.3) could be perceived as the ideal methodological stance to adopt when striving to develop an optimal understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning amongst learners. Curriculum as praxis promotes the development of critical consciousness aimed at emancipation. This makes critical thinking (2.4.4.3.a) imperative. Critical thinking advocates the need for teachers to apply methodological repertoires which will develop learners' ability not only to interact with each other and generate meaning making but also to reflect critically and make judgements about meaning based on justifiable reasoning. A classroom which promotes a methodological approach of this nature will recognise the need for avenues such as mediation (2.4.2) and assessment *for* learning (2.4.3) in order to develop learners who have a deep understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning.

It seems clear that curriculum as product will not produce an understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. The methodological positions adopted by curriculum as practice and curriculum as praxis are more hospitable to developing understanding in human rights teaching-and-learning. Although curriculum as practice promotes fundamental aspects such as social constructivism and meaning making, curriculum as praxis appears to offer the ideal methodological position because it promotes critical awareness and emancipatory values.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The investigation of literature in this chapter explored the theoretical underpinnings that might influence learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. Ontological (2.2), epistemological (2.3) and methodological (2.4) components were scrutinised as part of gaining an understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning on a moral level. Throughout this exploration I have highlighted the various concepts that underlie 'understanding' which could ultimately have an influence on learners' attainment of human rights on various levels.

It is evident that an understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning requires a holistic approach. Education role players must acknowledge human rights in education as promoted by principles in the 1996 South African Constitution (1.2). Knowledge on *how* human rights is understood must be considered from various stances. Furthermore, it is clear that human rights are underpinned by values and morals so should not be viewed solely legalistically. Viewing human rights from a legal perspective would have far reaching implications for ontological, epistemological and methodological positions taken and, ultimately, would affect how learners' understand human rights.

The theoretical notions highlighted together with their paradigmatic positions have revealed an appropriate stance from which to view human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice from a learner perspective. Such a stance has contributed to the generation of an alternative means of considering how learners might develop or gain an understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice. The intention is to introduce different perspectives and insights on human rights in pedagogy.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will highlight the theoretical underpinnings of the research approach, design and methodologies employed in this study.

Research in education should not be perceived as a discrete discipline as it has been one of the focal sites for the development of social science theory and is interconnected with the disciplines of sociology, psychology and philosophy (Somekh & Lewin, 2005:7). Educational research should be seen as a branch of social science research. What distinguishes this form of social science research off from some other types of research is its concern with phenomena related to human behaviour. It focuses on “people and their life contexts, philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge and truth (epistemology), values (axiology) and being (ontology) which underpin human judgments and activities” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005:1). In the case of this study, the kind of social science research undertaken foregrounds empirical research. In order to observe “social life for the purpose of finding and understanding patterns in what is observed” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:xxi) data are collected about people, employing a range of methods. The research reported here involved an empirical study to determine how primary school learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and what factors influence this understanding in classroom practice.

In this study due caution was exercised to ensure that the research was informed by interpretive principles. The aim was not positivist, objective, value-free and generalisable findings, but rather to “explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations” (Wellington, 2000:16). For such an exploration to be undertaken particular methodologies and methods were necessary. In the next section the methodological paradigm and the type of reasoning applied in this research study and definitions of the terms design, methodology and method will be provided.

According to Henning (2004:16), it is necessary for one to position one’s research firmly within a particular paradigm that could inform the methodological framework of the research in a logical and coherent way. As Henning (2004:16) explains that “the research methodological orientation of [a] study could best be developed along the various forms of research prominent in that paradigm”.

Thus it is important to have an understanding of these paradigms and to identify the paradigm in which the methodology of this study was situated.

Habermas identifies three basic cognitive interests and refers to these as; technical, practical and emancipatory (Habermas, 1971:176). These interests are said to make up the “three types of science by which knowledge is generated and organised in our society” (Grundy, 1987:10). For the purpose of this study, Habermas’s theory of his three cognitive interests as well as Grundy’s (1987) interpretation of Habermas’s cognitive interests will be drawn upon in referring to the three paradigms. These are:

- The **Empirical-analytic paradigm** which is said to be the technical cognitive interest (Habermas, 1971:176). It is driven by positivism and aims at producing knowledge which can be used to make predictions and exercise technical control (Habermas, 1971:176; Slattery, 2006:234).
- The second paradigm known as the **historical-hermeneutical paradigm**. Here the interest is in practical (Habermas, 1971:176). The focus of interest is interpretation or the notion of understanding (Habermas, 1971:179). According to Grundy (1987:13), this paradigm is embedded in “understanding the environment so that one is able to interact with it” (Grundy, 1987:13). Furthermore, hermeneutic and historical understanding is free of structure and control (Habermas, 1971:179).
- The third **critical paradigm** is closely associated with the notions of empowerment and emancipation (Grundy, 1987:19). In this paradigm, reflection, in the sense that reasoned reflection and self-reflection forms part of one’s journey to emancipation (Habermas, 1971:198), features strongly. Slattery (2006:228) argues that situating a curriculum in a critical paradigm creates opportunities to engender social justice in a postmodern era.

For Habermas there are only three paradigms. However, in current academic discourses the **postmodern/poststructuralist paradigm** has become increasingly influential in research (O’Donoghue, 2007:10). A reflection of this is that postmodernism is often referred to as the fourth paradigm. This paradigm recognises multiple ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting, making meaning and defining ‘truths’, as opposed to the recollection of only rational and logical ways of knowing (Hammersley, 2007:130; O’Donoghue, 2007:11). Postmodernism not only presents multiple views, but tolerates ambiguity, promotes diversity and endorses change (Nieuwenhuis, 2007b:63).

This study was grounded in the paradigm referred to above as the historical-hermeneutical paradigm (Grundy, 1987:13; Habermas, 1971:176). This paradigm is concerned with unlocking the meaning of learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. This was done by looking more closely into the "art of understanding" (Roux, 2007b:470) through constructing, making-meaning of, understanding and interpreting the data gathered. This paradigm embraces the ideas presented by Slattery (2006:130) which acknowledge the importance of subjective understanding and emphasise understanding as an ontology rather than an epistemology. However, to facilitate sound research, processes and elements from the other paradigms were also drawn on as a means of ensuring that the data and interpretations of the data were accurate and valid.

According to Mouton (2001:114), there are "three types of reasoning that you could employ when writing your thesis". This could serve to enrich a study as these types of reasoning "formulate practice generalisations with the aim of building a theoretical knowledge base" (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2005:47).

The three types of reasoning identified by Mouton (2001:114-119) are **deductive reasoning**, **inductive reasoning** and **retroductive reasoning**.

- **Deductive reasoning** moves from the general to the particular. It involves reasoning with an existing theory or general principles in order to generate a specific prediction or research hypothesis (Gay, Geoffrey & Airasian 2006:597; Mouton, 1996:80).
- **Inductive reasoning** moves from particular to general and requires that one "generalise from a sample to the target population" (Mouton, 2001:118). Such a generalisation is done by using small-scale research and relating it to a larger population of similar cases (Gay *et al.*, 2006:598; Mouton, 1996:81).
- **Retroductive reasoning** requires one to take the observations made as well as the perceived trends and patterns in the observation, and create a hypotheses that would explain the observed events and data (Mouton, 2001:118). "Whether these explanations or hypotheses are credible or plausible is in some sense left to the reader and further research" (Mouton, 2001:119).

In this study, I employed **inductive reasoning** (1.6.2.2). This was done by interpreting the understanding of a particular audience of learners in terms of human rights teaching-and-learning. This understanding was used to make deductions and identify patterns amongst this audience of

learners. As a sample, this audience of learners' understandings was employed to generalise learners' understandings of human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practices.

For clarity and correct use of terms such as design, methodology and method, these terms need to be defined as they were used in this study. According to Patton (2002:214), once the researcher has clarity about the purpose of the proposed study; the specific **research design** can be decided upon. The research design is a means of positioning the researcher in the empirical world and showing how the research question will be connected to the data (Punch, 2006:48). Furthermore, a research design makes it possible for the researcher to be transparent and explicit about the research (Henning, 2004:39). Punch (2006:48) argues that a research design should include five main ideas: strategy, conceptual framework, who or what will be studied and the tools and procedures to be used both for collecting and for analysing empirical materials. **The design of this exploratory research study will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (3.2).**

Henning (2005:37) contends that a researcher needs to differentiate very finely between research methods and to be aware of the potential they have to complement each other in the existing research design of any study. I would add that a researcher also needs to be very clear about how she defines the methodology and methods used in her study. In this study, methodology refers to a group of methods that coherently complement one another and that have the capacity to deliver data and findings that will answer the research question and adequately address the purpose of the research (Henning, 2004:39). The reason for adopting a qualitative methodology will be explored later in this chapter (3.2.2). When a qualitative methodological stance is applied, several methods can be employed by the researcher in her endeavour to collect empirical data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:25). If the term method denotes "a way of doing something (one thing)" (Henning, 2004:36), then this study employs a series of methods. Taking due account of the research design and methodology described above, it was decided that the following research methods be used; literature review, observations, narrative inquiry and focus-group interviews (3.3).

In the remainder of this chapter elements pertaining to the design, methodology and methods of the research study will be elaborated on and discussed. Attention will also be given to the ethical considerations that will be employed in this research.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design can be described as being the general strategy or plan for conducting a research study (Gay *et al.*, 2006:82). Using another analogy, Patton (2002:254) argues that "the term design

suggests a very specific blueprint". Such a specific blueprint must acknowledge that a design is determined by the structure and aims of the study. The greatest challenge is the task of meticulously identifying the "most appropriate, productive and useful" (Patton, 2002:255) methods to effectively demonstrate the design and ultimately answer the research question/s.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:xxvi) regard a research design as a particular plan or structured framework describing how one intends to conduct their research study in order to answer the research question. **The research question of this study endeavoured to determine primary school learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning by taking into consideration the aspects influencing this understanding.** There were three elements in the study: empirical, qualitative and exploratory research. The way these elements shaped the research design and methodology and the rationale for the selecting each of these elements as a means of exploring the research question of this study will now be discussed.

### **3.2.1. Empirical research**

According to Wellington (2000:196), empirical research involves first-hand data collection such as interviewing, observations and questionnaires, for instance, and can be conducted without the researcher arriving at "empiricist" or "positivist" conclusions. The empirical component of this research study set out to "provide an in-depth description of a group of people or community" (Mouton: 2001:148). In this research study, empirical research or "research which involves the collection of data about people and their social contexts by a range of methods" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005:1) was conducted. In the light of this research, primary school learners and their social contexts were explored using a range of methods namely observations, narrative inquiries and focus group interviews. An empirical exploration of this nature was undertaken as a means of determining how these learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and the factors that influence this understanding.

### **3.2.2. Qualitative research methodology**

As Gay *et al.* (2006:402) points out, a central concern in qualitative research is to "provide an understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants". The researcher thus sets out to understand the participants and the social contexts in which the research is situated. This means becoming "immersed" in the research setting. "Without this immersion, the search for understanding would elude the qualitative researcher" (Gay *et al.*, 2006:402). Babbie and Mouton (2001:271) take a similar view in arguing that qualitative

researchers should “make a deliberate attempt to put themselves in the shoes of the people they are observing and studying and try and understand their actions, decisions, behaviour, practices, rituals and so on from their perspective”.

Applied to this research study aimed to explore learners understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning, it was necessary for the researcher to become “immersed” (Gay *et al*, 2006:402) and deliberately “put [herself] in the shoes” of the research participants and their environment (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271). Such an endeavour requires the research to be conducted in the participants’ natural setting and the researcher to adopt an “insider” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:271) perspective towards the research participants in keeping with qualitative methodology. However, Babbie and Mouton’s (2001:271) “insider” notion can also be questioned in the light of McCutcheon’s (1999) theory of the insider/outsider problem. This theory considers the extent to which a person can adopt an insider position. “To truly understand an insider one must become an insider; to understand is to be” (McCutcheon, 1999:21). The implication is that the researcher has to consider carefully the extent to which it is possible to be an insider in the research participants’ natural setting. The stance adopted by the researcher in this study is detailed in section 5.3.

### **3.2.3. Exploratory research design**

A design of any research project must relate to the intended purpose of the research study being conducted. It is frequently true that the purpose of doing research stems from the desire to address a particular question or issue (Henning, 2004:30). Just as research questions can be asked in various ways, the design used to answer these questions will also vary. According to Wellington (2000:49) there are three categories of questions to be considered when determining the design of a research study. These questions are firstly, *what*, *which* or *where* questions. Secondly, are the *how* questions and lastly are the *why* questions. The questions which address investigating *what*, *which* and *where* during research could be regarded as part of the “descriptive research [design]” (Wellington, 2000:49). A descriptive research design will “determine and describe the way things are” (Gay *et al*, 2006:597) in a way that presents “a fairly straightforward collection of information” (Wellington, 2000:49).

Moreover, if the aim of the research design is to answer *why* and *how* questions, which are more complex and intractable, then a more in-depth approach and less straightforward approach will be demanded. In order to determine *why* some issue is an obstacle in education or *how* it came to be an obstacle to educational spheres, either an explanatory or exploratory research design could be employed. It is important to recognise that the principles underlying explanatory and exploratory

research are not one in the same. In this study the exploratory research design uses qualitative research methods to identify “concepts and potential hypotheses” (Gay *et al.*, 2006:491). An explanatory research design, on the other hand, tends to “formulate a hypothesis” as a first step (Gay *et al.*, 2006:491) and thereafter set about proving this hypothesis through the employment of quantitative approaches. Consequently, an exploratory design is more appropriate than an explanatory design to exploring the research question of *how* primary school learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and *why* their understandings of human rights are influenced by particular aspects. Furthermore, an exploratory research design underpins the notion of “seeking to develop an initial understanding of a phenomenon” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:xxvi; De Vos *et al.*, 2005:106-107) rather than formulating a hypothesis and proving it. An exploratory research design demands a “more in-depth approach” (Wellington, 2000:50) in which the researcher draws on qualitative methods such as observations, interviews and narratives. These methods support an exploratory design and aid in the efficient discovery and understanding of the research participants as well as the social context in which the research is taking place. De Vos *et al.* (2005:107) further reinforce this statement by exclaiming that exploratory research design draws on research methods which “ask respondents why or to explain their actions” such as the qualitative methods that will be employed in this study.

To sum up, the following aspects of the research design and methodology dimension of this study have been highlighted:

- The research design represents a blueprint for positioning the researcher in the empirical world and highlighting the connection between the research question and the data.
- This study adopted an exploratory design which takes account of the importance of using research methods that enable the researcher to explore and understand the research question of study.
- The need to do empirical research moulded the type of research being done.
- An empirical approach and qualitative research generated the relevant methodology, ontology and epistemology to drive this research process towards achieving the intended purpose of this study.

### **3.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESSES**

Reference will now be made to the processes adopted in this study. As has already been stated above (3.2), the research process and the selected research methods took place within the natural

setting of the research participants. In this section of the chapter attention is given to the research processes as a means to understand the elements that make up this study (3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3).

### **3.3.1. Site or social network selection**

Walford (2001:22) argues that researchers often give insufficient consideration when selecting the site for qualitative and ethnographic research. To achieve an informed and rich array of data pertaining to how learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning, a diverse environment was allocated. This type of diversity required that a school consisting of learners from different economic, cultural, religious and social circumstances be selected. For a study of this nature the North West Province, Potchefstroom region was seen as providing a sufficiently diverse network in which to conduct the proposed research. Two schools were selected with the aid of department officials and academic researchers who are familiar with the North West Province, Potchefstroom region. Grade seven learners were used in the schools selected in this province. Learners in this grade can be regarded as being cognitively advanced in the sense that they have the ability to analyse and reason logically about concrete as well as abstract concepts (Louw, van Ede & Louw, 1998:412). These learners could be in what Piaget refers to as the 'formal operational period' (Louw *et al.*, 1998:80; Piaget, 1978). Having participants who are in this period of their cognitive development aided in producing rich data pertaining to how learners understand human rights.

### **3.3.2. Participant selection**

Participants for this proposed study were selected from two schools in the North West Province, Potchefstroom region. One school was a conservative Christian School which is diverse in terms of the learners which are from different economic and social environments. The second school and its group of learners were diverse in terms of their culture, religion, economic and social environments. Grade 7 learners in the selected schools were selected from various class groups and not only one class. The study was thus ensured of diversity.

The participants were selected using qualitative sampling methods. Qualitative sampling proposes that small numbers of individuals be selected as participants who can adequately contribute to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Gay *et al.*, 2006:113). One way of selecting appropriate participants for the study is for the researcher to spend time in the research setting before selecting the participants (Gay *et al.*, 2006:114). This is what was done in this study. These participants were selected by means of purposeful sampling after a period of observation.

Purposeful sampling denotes exactly what its name implies, namely to select participants with a specific purpose in mind (Wellington, 2000:59). It involves “selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002:230). By selecting participants from diverse backgrounds information-rich data was generated so that the researcher could “learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002:230) rather than deriving futile generalisations from the participants. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to develop insights and in-depth understandings of the phenomenon under study (Wellington, 2000:61).

Typical case sampling and critical case sampling are two forms of purposeful sampling . The former involves obtaining a sample that is typical in nature and in no way extreme or deviant (Patton, 2002:236; Wellington, 2000:61). In this study typical case sampling was employed. The schools that were selected can be regarded as typical OBE (Outcomes-Based Education) practising schools. Critical case sampling refers to cases that “make a point quite dramatically” (Patton, 2002:236). The underlying premise is that “if it happens there it will happen anywhere” (Patton, 2002:236). In this study the aim of the research is to determine how learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning and thus “carefully chosen cases” (Wellington, 2000:61) will be drawn on. Such cases will “permit logical generalisations and maximum application of information to other cases because if it’s true of this one case, it’s likely to be true of all other cases” (Patton, 2002:243).

### **3.3.3. Researchers role**

According to Wellington (2000:41), “in social and educational research the researcher himself, or herself, is the key instrument”. The particular roles undertaken by researchers during their research studies are numerous (5.3.1). The role of the researcher to be ethical forms an important part of such a role, which will be discussed later in this chapter (3.4). The fundamental role of the researcher was to reflect on the research process. By being reflective the researcher thinks critically about the research process. “Reflection is an important part at every stage [of the research]” (Wellington, 2000:42). Reflection was important in this study: I had to think critically about what methods should be used to complement the research design and methodology to avoid, for instance, making unjustified decisions (5.3). Reflexivity, as a sub-set of reflection, was essential as it required me to reflect about myself as a researcher (Wellington, 2000:42). These elements are all essential. However, Wellington (2000:43) emphasises that reflection forms an integral part of evaluation during research whereas reflexivity could diminish the status of the research if it becomes too personal and thus irrelevant to the research process.

Another role of the researcher is related to attempting to find answers to the research questions. In this study this meant that I had to become an 'insider' to the natural setting that was being investigated (McCutcheon, 1999). To adequately explore the understandings that primary school learners hold of human rights teaching-and-learning, I had to become immersed in "the perspectives of the social actors themselves" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). In other words, I engaged in a quest to discover and understand the research participants and the environment in which they find themselves (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2007:41). Yet another role was related to collecting the data, analysing the data and interpreting the data through the application of the research methods selected. This accentuates the need to focus on the process of the research and not solely on the outcome. To become the "key instrument" in the research process is to facilitate the collection of in-depth descriptions and understanding in order to address the research question under investigation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270).

#### **3.3.4. Pilot study**

A small-scale pilot study was conducted before the research process took place. This small-scale implementation of the planned research process was an attempt to identify possible deficiencies in the empirical research (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:82). During the pilot study, I spent a day at each of the two schools involved in the research study. This allowed me to acquire valuable information about the research environment and participants. The insights gained assisted me to determine whether the penultimate research instruments and questions were adequate. The other research method namely focus-group interviews was piloted with other respondents such as professional teachers and academics in this field of study. Their contributions assisted me to determine which aspects of the research instruments were incoherent, irrelevant or insensitive.

### **3.4 QUALITATIVE METHODS**

In this section, attention will be given to the specific methods that were used in this study and the role that they played in achieving the aims and purpose of this study (3.3.4.-3.3.8). Denzin and Lincoln (2005:25) argue that several methods can be employed by researchers in collecting empirical data. The methods that were employed in this study include literature review, observations, narrative inquiry and focus-group interviews. These research methods were not used consecutively but rather ran parallel and were interconnected.

#### **3.4.1. Literature review**

According to Boote and Beile (2005:3), “a substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, though, sophisticated research.” De Vos *et al.* (2005:124) argue that a literature study is a means by which the researcher undertakes a study to gain insight into current knowledge of their prospective field or topic. This means that the researcher considers literature that is both directly and broadly related to the topic in order to gain a broad orientation to the topic and to extend her knowledge before she commences her own empirical investigation (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:124). This requires the ability to “synthesise the literature” relevant to the research question and to “engage critically” with the literature as a means to address the purpose of the research (Henning, 2004:27).

The value of a literature study becomes apparent when certain considerations are taken into account (1.6.2.1). Some of these considerations include the type and range of the literature sources used. The former underlines what is lost when journals, dissertations and official documents books are the sole source of information (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:126). The latter stresses the importance of projecting “cumulative” literature as it allows the researcher to “build on and learn from prior research and scholarship on the topic” (Boote & Beile, 2005:3). Not taking full account of prior research can put the researcher at a disadvantage and limit the synthesis of literature in a way that permits a new perspective. For this reason, the literature study (which forms the second chapter of this study) drew on an array of sources, which are both broadly and specifically related to the topic. This made it possible to create a solid foundation of literature on which to build the research.

To review literature and critique it is a challenging task. Boote and Beile (2005:8) present a framework that can be used to analyse the literature reviews. They include:

- Coverage: Justification of what literature was included and excluded during the review
- Synthesis: Distinction between what has been done and what needs to be done in the field; situation of the study in a broader scholarly and historical context; acquisition and definition of the subject vocabulary; articulation of variables relevant to the study and arrival at a new perspective on the literature.
- Methodology: Identification of the main research methods and techniques employed and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of using them in a particular study.
- Significance: Assessment of the practical significance of the research problem as well as the scholarly significance of the research problem.
- Rhetoric: Justification of arguments in a logical, coherent, clear and structured manner.

This particular set of criteria provided a helpful framework for the literature review in this study. There are, of course, other options (see Wellington 2000:37-38, for instance).

### **3.4.2. Observations**

Observations offer the researcher a unique research method that “draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events first hand” (Denscombe, 2003:192). The process of observation is continuous and requires that the researcher observe, develop categories and their links as well as to search for new data to explore new categories (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002:208). Furthermore, an observational study can begin as soon as a research site has been selected and the research questions and purpose underlying the research are clear (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002:209). Two common types of observation include participant and non-participant observation (Gay *et al.*, 2006:414). Participant observation is when the observer actually becomes part of the situation being observed while non-participant observation is where the observer is not directly involved in the situation being observed. This proposed study implemented the approach of the former, namely participant observation.

For the purpose of this study, observations do not form the focal research method. However, the observations proved to be valuable for the research because of their potential to define the natural environment and social context in which the research is being conducted and to develop a deep understanding of the research participants. This is in line with Gay *et al.* (2006:413) who proclaim that “the emphasis during observation is on understanding the natural environment as lived by participants, without altering or manipulating it”. These authors also add that “by actually observing the classes, you will obtain much more objective information that can be ‘checked’ against the self-report of the research participants” (Gay *et al.*, 2006:414).

The role of observations in this study was to orientate the researcher in the research environment and to develop a richer understanding of the social context in which the study was conducted. As noted earlier, I spent a period of time in the research environment. The discoveries made during this period shaped the other research methods (namely, narratives and focus group interviews) so that they were in line with the social context of the research environment. To best capture the value of these observations field notes were taken by the researcher. These observations were captured and recorded in the form of field notes. “Field notes describe as accurately as possible and as comprehensively as possible, all relevant aspects of the situation observed” (Gay *et al.*, 2006:414). Field notes, according to Gay *et al.*, (2006:414), contain two basic types of information namely,

descriptive information and reflective information of which both were used in the proposed research.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:294) argue that “sometimes note taking can be made easier if you prepare standardised recording forms in advance”. Using this advice, in this study, an observational framework was devised so the observation could be more focused. Such a framework eliminates the possibility of trying to take account of everything that is going on in the research environment and losing track of the purpose of the research. In this research study the observational framework to be applied when taking notes of the research environment involved paying attention to:

- The general setting of the school
- The teaching-and-learning atmosphere in the school generally and, more specifically, between teachers and learners in the classroom?
- Whether or not human rights were addressed and how they were addressed?

Observations were the ‘ground work’ of the research methods in this study. Therefore observations helped to generate a better understanding of the research setting and contributed to the effective development of the other research methods namely, narrative inquiry and focus group interviews.

### **3.4.3. Narrative inquiry**

Narrative is the “way in which people make sense of an experience, construct the self, and create and communicate meaning” (Chase, 2003:79). This makes narratives an essential ingredient in a study like this which sought to understand why certain actions were performed by participants. Narratives also valuably contribute to the reflection, evaluation and orientation of one's understandings of the participants' situations as well as the situations of others (Hutto, 2007:2).

The three key features of narratives stress that narratives are chronological (by representing a sequence of event), meaningful (provide a form of communication to express experiences and make meaning from the experiences), and social (as they are produced for a specific audience) (Elliot, 2005:4). According to Elliot (2005:6), some common themes that make use of participants' narratives during research include:

- An interest in people's lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience

- A desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determining what are the most salient themes in an area of research
- An interest in process and change over time
- An interest in the self representations of the self
- An awareness of the researcher him- or herself is also a narrator

This research study employed narratives as a research method as a means of addressing the first two themes listed by Elliot (2005:6). Narrative inquiry “provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007:3). However, narratives only become a valuable research method when researchers critically reflect on the participants’ stories. In order to contribute to the generation of understanding of these stories, participants’ experiences must be interpreted and reflected on in a manner which effectively portrays their stories and not preconceived ideas of the researcher (Webster & Mertova, 2007:7).

In the field of education and especially research in human rights education, narrative research is used increasingly for a number of reasons. Gay *et al.* (2006:429) express three reasons for the increased interest in narrative research in educational research. Firstly, the increased emphasis on teacher reflection and research in the past fifteen years, secondly the increased emphasis on teacher knowledge and lastly, the increased emphasis on empowering the voice of the teacher in educational research. The narratives allowed the voices of the learners to be heard. Before narratives were conducted with learner participants, due attention was given to encourage learners to produce rich data. This included a conscious effort by the researcher to explain to the participants why they had been asked to share their narratives, to ensure sufficient time is made available for the narrative to be written, selecting a narrative method/approach which suited the age of the participants and creating a positive learning environment where learners could take this activity seriously.

Narratives can be gathered in oral and/or written form. Some common forms of narratives include storytelling, journaling, letter writing, autobiographies and artefacts (Gay *et al.*, 2006:436-437). This study adopted the narrative research technique of letter writing: each participant was asked to write a letter to a person whom they trusted and could confide in (4.5.1). This letter allowed the participants to share their unique experiences and understandings of the phenomenon being researched. It thus created an opportunity for the researcher to gain a “nearness to the data and context” (Moses & Knutsen, 2007:196). However a disadvantage of narrative research is that the

richness of the data collected is dependent on the participants' ability to tell their stories and explain their experiences (Gay *et al.*, 2006:433).

Narratives might also amount to gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon (Hutto, 2007:5; Van Manen, 1990:66). Narratives were used in this study to do in-depth investigations of what is both frequently as well as moderately understood by a group of diverse learners when it came to their understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning. The researcher was then able to use these 'stories' or narratives obtained from learners to articulate the learners' perspectives on human rights. Simultaneously the researcher developed an in-depth analysis of the participants' understanding of human rights in teaching-and-learning. This was used to identify the factors that were influencing learners' understanding of human rights values.

In this research study, narrative research was carried out before conducting the focus-group interviews. This was done so that I could identify common trends and themes that were mentioned by the participants. This was deemed essential since I wanted to explore these trends and themes during the focus-group interview.

#### **3.4.4. Focus-group interviews**

Interviews as an information collection method are one of main modes of data or information collection in qualitative research (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:287). Interviews are also regarded as a means of collecting stories from people since stories are a way of knowing and essentially a meaning-making process (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:287). Interviews take many forms and address various audiences according to the purpose of the research. Amongst the most common forms of interviews used as research methods include structured interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews and focus-group interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:289-293; Denscombe, 2003:166-169; De Vos *et al.*, 296; Gay *et al.*, 2006:419; Patton, 2002:353-385; Wellington, 2000:95).

Since grade seven learners were the participants during the research process, focus-group interviews were used as a means of aiding the production of rich data. The assumption was that grade seven learners might gain inner-confidence if they participated in the interview with their peers so as to "create meaning among themselves rather than individually" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292). In this research study focus-group interviews provided an approach to "uncover the motives, meanings and conflicts experienced" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002:215) by learners in a

quest to explore the understandings they hold of human rights. The interview was carried out in a flexible manner. Questions were not necessarily asked in the same order and participants could engage in open-ended or in-depth responses (Gay *et al.*, 2006:419). In this way, “questions [could] be asked in a truly open-ended fashion so people [could] respond in their own words [and] minimize the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data” (Patton, 2002:353).

This study employed focus-group interviews. Unlike a one-on-one interview, a group of about 6 to 10 people participated in the interview and this generated various perspectives in which not all of them might agree (Denscombe, 2003:169; Patton, 2002:385). This made it possible for the interviewer to gain insight while the participants fed off each other's responses. The object of a focus-group interview is thus to get “high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 2002:386). Furthermore, focus group interviews encouraged participants to feel less interrogated in the discussions since they were part of a group. The notion that focus-group interviews can “excite contributions from interviewees who might otherwise be reluctant to contribute” (Denscombe, 2003:169) is the main reason that focus-group interviews were chosen as a research method in this research.

When employing a research method such as focus-group interviews, the researcher is required to act as a facilitator and ensure that the research process includes “individual responses of all the members of the group” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:292). The researcher also has to manage the group so that participants’ did not interrupt each other or become occupied with conversations unrelated to the research questions. Working with learners brings to the fore many ethical considerations but these will be addressed later in this chapter (3.4).

Narrative inquiry was used alongside focus-group interviews. These methods together gave participants an opportunity to express themselves individually and as part of a group. The principles of validity and trustworthiness as they apply to this research will now be discussed.

#### **3.4.5. Validity and trustworthiness of data**

**Validity** is used to “judge whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon which it is intended to describe” (Bush, 2002:65). It is important to be aware that validity and trustworthiness are not the same. In the way that a “valid test that measures what it purports to measure will do so consistently over time” (Gay *et al.*, 2006:407). While data might be trustworthy it could consistently provide evidence of the wrong thing.

Validity “does not have a single meaning and is a term whose meaning has evolved over time” (Le Grange & Beets, 2005:118). There are many types of validity that must be considered and taken into account when working in this paradigm, namely interpretative and understanding. Among these forms of validity is triangulation (4.8). Triangulation refers to the practice of obtaining different perspectives on an issue, which can be “sustained by using several methods” (Flick, 2007:41). These several methods should then promote a surplus of knowledge by producing knowledge of different levels, thus going beyond the knowledge made possible by only one approach/method and promoting quality in research by incorporating perspectives from various methods (Flick, 2007:41). In this study triangulation involved using the literature review, observations, focus-group interviews and written narratives to cross-check the data collected and enhance the quality of the research. When working with narratives as a research method, one can question to what extent these narratives can be validated. In addition to triangulation, the researcher also made sure that the scientific underpinning of the analysis of the narratives was sound as a means of validating the narrative data and ensuring trustworthiness.

Since triangulation was not the only form of validity being projected, some of the different types of strategies used to ensure validity in the study will be outlined. These are based on Maykut & Morehouse (1994:145-147), Bush (2002:68-69), O’Donoghue (2007:99-100); Punch (2005:186-187) and Gay *et al.* (2006:404-406).

For the purpose of this study, the dominant validity strategies included:

- **Member checking** (asking the participants in the study if their experiences, as described by the researcher, have been described accurately)
- **Content validity** (constructive interactions, pertaining to the efficiency of research methods used in the proposed study between the researchers promoter and knowledgeable colleagues)
- **Thick descriptions** (data that was retrieved during the proposed research was rich and thick enough to provide ample relevant information to contribute to the knowledge construction in this field. To ensure this, the researcher asked open-ended questions and invited participants to respond with in-depth responses)
- **Triangulation** (a literature review, focus-group interviews, observations and written narratives as a means to cross-check the data collected and to create a more complete interpretation of the environment and participants in the study)

- **Referential adequacy** (checking the accuracy of the interpretations made by the researcher based on the primary data that she received from the interviews, observations and written narratives)
- **Trustworthiness** (taking into account credibility [truthfulness of the data], dependability [consistency of the findings] and confirmability [deductions of the data must be true and logical – not constructed by the researcher])
- **Inter-code validity** (critical discussions concerning the coding of data with the promoter of this study as well as other knowledgeable colleagues).

These validity types aim to ensure that the data collected is valid and that it accurately describes and interprets the phenomenon which it is intended to describe (Bush, 2002:65).

### 3.5 ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH

In research, ethics are usually referred to as “the moral principles, guiding conduct, which are held by a group or even a profession” (Wellington, 2000:54). In planning and executing research, ethical aspects such as access, consent and participants protection are fundamental (Punch, 2006:56). Since a researcher cannot demand access and participant consent, the researcher must rely on assistance and permission (Punch, 2006:56). Careful consideration should be given to the procedures involved in gaining access on to research sites. The researcher must acknowledge that is very rare for research to be conducted without the cooperation of a number of people (Gay *et al.*, 2006:77). The key to gaining adequate cooperation and approved access is through good planning and good planning is derived from a well designed and carefully thought-out research plan (Gay *et al.*, 2006:77).

The following ethical considerations that should be taken into account during a qualitative study are based on Wellington (2000:54-57), Punch (2006:56-57) and Henning (2004:73). For the purpose of this study, considerations other than gaining access and informed consent included:

- **Confidentiality and anonymity** (is essential at every stage of the research process to avoid putting the participant in any form of danger)
- **Use of volunteers** (the researcher may not exercise power over participants or force participants to participate in the research. Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The researcher must not place the participants in any form of danger or force them to participate to anything they see as unwilling.)

- **Honesty/Deception** (the researcher must be honest with the participants about exactly what is expected of them during the research process and exactly what the research process entails. The researcher must also advise the participants to be honest so that the data collected will be valid and trustworthy. This is important as to avoid any form of deception by the researcher or participant which could negatively effect the participant, research process and findings)

I began by informally requesting permission from two schools in the Potchefstroom region. Once I had met with the principals at the two schools, a letter was sent to the North West Department of Education as well as to the schools involved. A copy of my research proposal was attached to this formal letter, (Appendix A) which specifies the title and purpose of the research. Once the Department of Education had granted permission in writing for the researcher to conduct research in these schools, this formal letter was also sent to the schools involved (Appendix A). Thereafter arrangements were made to have a formal meeting with the school principal of the two participating schools to discuss the research process and what would be expected of the participants.

The next step was for the researcher to request cooperation and consent from the participants. Because the participants were grade seven learners, a letter was sent to their parents or guardians requesting their permission to allow them to participate in the research (Appendix D). This letter was sent home with the participants in good time for them to give it to their parents or guardians and return the signed letter to school. The letter specified the title and aims of the research study and ensured that participants knew exactly what they were being asked to do and where the findings might be publicised. Parents and guardians were requested to sign and return the cut off slip specifying whether they agreed or disagreed to let their children participate in the study. Once the parents and/or guardians who had agreed to let their children participate were identified, these participants were invited to participate in the research. Only after their parents or guardians had given consent were the learners regarded as participants of the research study. It was also necessary to develop good rapport with the teachers of the learners involved. As Gay *et al.*, (2006:78) point out, it is important to “convince school personnel that what you are proposing is of value, that your study is carefully designed and that you will work with teachers to minimise inconvenience”.

An application was submitted to the North West University (Potchefstroom Campus) Ethical Committee so it could scrutinise the proposed study to ensure that all ethical considerations had been taken into account in the design (Appendix C). This ensured that the research process was

conducted in a professional and respectful manner that did not infringe on or violate the participants' rights in any way.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a description of the research approach, design and methodologies employed by the researcher. This research study used an empirical, qualitative and exploratory design and methodology. This involved using compatible and complementary research methods in the form of a literature review, observations, narratives and focus-group interviews. These elements made it possible for me to interact with the participants in their natural environment in order to gather rich data pertaining to the purpose of the study.

Empirical research formed the core of this research. The research design acknowledges the relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants. Accordingly, ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. The design also took careful account of dimensions of trustworthiness and validity to ensure the quality of the data and findings.

The next chapter presents the data collected using the methods and processes discussed in this chapter. The findings will be analysed and interpreted in a critical manner in responding to the research questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a detailed description of the empirical research undertaken for this study will be given. The empirical investigation was conducted to generate an understanding of how learners' make meaning of human rights in classroom practice. According to Patton (2002:432), when qualitative data are analysed they become transformed into findings. Data analysis is ultimately a means of reducing volumes of collected data, selecting significant data, identifying patterns and producing findings from the essence of what the data reveal (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:333). In this chapter, I will first clarify the methodology and processes underlying qualitative data analysis and then present information about the two schools in which the empirical investigation was performed.

The remainder of the chapter will present, analyse, interpret and discuss the data collected through the research methods used in this investigation in accordance with ethical requirements. The methods used were: observation, narratives and focus-group interviews. These research methods will be discussed separately. The analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data will be presented in ways that allow the findings to emerge clearly. Two case studies will thus be presented rather than one case study which compares the findings from the two schools. The triangulation of the data will then be described in order to illustrate how the observations, narratives and focus-group interviews were used as a means of cross-checking the data collected and creating a more complete interpretation of the data, the environment and interpretations of the participants in the study.

#### 4.2 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESSES UNDERLYING QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF DATA

Qualitative data analyses can be done in numerous ways but there are "general principles and guidelines which can be followed in doing it systematically and reflectively" (Wellington, 2000: 134). According to Henning (2004:101), data analysis requires "analytical craftsmanship and the ability to capture understanding of the data [being analysed]." Miles and Huberman (as quoted by Wellington, 2000:134) describe three stages of data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Due to the reality that the activity of analysing qualitative data is often messy,

ambiguous, time-consuming and complicated (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:333; Wellington, 2000:134), I have opted to employ the detailed stages of data analysis described by Wellington (2000:135-141).

Before I could do this, I had to unclutter and reorganise the data. Whatever the format, the data must be coherently organised so that all materials have a similar format. The raw data was then identified with unique serial numbers or codes for reference purposes (Denscombe, 2003:269). I also had to return to the original research questions, aims, methodologies and theoretical underpinnings to ensure that the analysis did not become irrelevant to the intentions of the study (Wellington, 2000:145). The stages of data analysis as identified by Wellington (2000:135-141) offer a clear procedure for analysing the data:

- Firstly, *immersion*. The researcher should examine all the data collected to get an overall sense or feel of the data. This involves note taking, active reading, highlighting or annotating transcripts. Ultimately, 'immersing oneself' in the data. (Wellington, 2000:135).
- Secondly, *reflecting* must take place by literally "standing back" from the data and reflecting on it. (Wellington, 2000:135).
- Thirdly, the researcher must *take apart/analyse the data*. This is the informal process of selecting or filtering out data that will be used, categorizing data, itemising data and reorganising data. (Wellington, 2000:135).
- The following important phase is the *coding process*. According to O'Donoghue (2007: 91-98) three coding steps are often applied namely: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding involves the break down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising of data in order to identify, analyse, question and explore categories of data (O' Donoghue, 2007: 91). The primary aim of axial coding is to make connections between the categories and sub-categories identified in open coding (O'Donoghue, 2007: 94). Lastly, selective coding involves the process of selecting the core categories related to the research aims and identifying significant relationships such as commonalities and contrasts within these core categories (O' Donoghue, 2007: 97).
- Fourthly, data is formally organised into clusters to facilitate the search for patterns and similarities as well as to create new knowledge construct. This process is referred to as *recombining and synthesizing data* and requires continuous refinement as the researcher must de-contextualise data and re-contextualise data. (Wellington, 2000:136).
- Fifthly, the researcher must now *relate and locate data* from other people's research that will position his or her findings in the research holistically and in line with the research questions and aims (Wellington, 2000:137-139).

It is essential for the researcher to compare and contrast the data. This is the fifth and last stage of the data analysis in which the researcher reflects on and makes sense of the data. According to Wellington (2000:138), the following questions can be asked and/or considered:

- a. How do the categories identified by the researcher compare or contrast with others in the literature?
- b. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the data and methods? How do they compare or contrast with the strengths and weaknesses in the methodology of other studies?
- c. What theories/frameworks/models have been applied in, or developed from, other inquiries? To what extent can they be applied to the research study?

In short, data analysis is an important process in research during which the researcher interprets and presents the findings fairly, clearly, coherently and attractively (Wellington, 2000:139). *Presenting* the data, which brings the reality, authenticity and vividness of the participants' responses to the forefront, is sometimes also referred to as the sixth stage of the data analysis (Wellington, 2000:139).

The specific strategy that was employed in this study will now be described.

#### **4.2.1 Discourse analysis as a theoretical framework**

Discourse forms a central part of our daily lives. Consequently, "analysing discourse is a central task for social science" (Potter, 2004:607). One advantage of discourse analysis is that it can be applied to various forms of communication and not only to talk (Bryman, 2001:360; Flick, 2006:324). Another advantage is that it shares with communication analysis a preference for locating contextual understanding in terms of the situational specifics of talk (Bryman, 2001:360). It is thus a very useful tool for searching for the reasoning and purpose lurking behind the way that something is said or presented in the data (Bryman, 2001:361). Yet another advantage is that it can analyse larger chunks of language from data collected during fieldwork.

Discourse analysis is concerned with two levels of discourse construction. The first level comprises words, idioms and rhetorical devices while the second level comprises the means of constructing and stabilising versions of the world (Potter, 2004:610). This study focused on disclosing the content and meanings embedded in the discourse rather than the way discourse is 'constructed'. In

my view, discourse analysis of this kind is compatible with the research methods narratives (3.3.7) and focus-group interviews (3.3.8) used in this study.

### 4.3 SCHOOL SITUATION ANALYSIS

It is necessary to provide a brief overview and context of the schools that were used in this study. Information about these schools was derived from discussions with officials and staff at the schools, as well as from the observation done during the time I spent at the schools. The profiles of the schools obtained were used to situate the research data analysis, interpretations and discussions.

Certain criteria were taken into account when the profile of each school was drawn up:

- Type or origin of the school (public or private)
- Grades taught in this school (GET-Grades)
- Medium of instruction in the school
- Number of learners attending and professional teachers working in the school
- Principal's gender
- General socio-economic status of the learners' parents of the school community
- Diversity in terms of religions and languages presented at the school

Consider the following table presenting a synopsis of the profile of the two schools used in this study.

Table 4.1 Table representing the profiles of School A and School B

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
PROVINCE	North-West	North-West
METROPOLE	Dr Kenneth Kaunda District	Dr Kenneth Kaunda District
TOWN	Potchefstroom	Potchefstroom
TYPE	Private	Public
GRADES	R-7	R-7
MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION	English and Afrikaans	English
TOTAL LEARNERS	236	560
TOTAL TEACHERS	13	23
PRINCIPALS GENDER	Female	Female

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS <sup>1</sup>	Medium to low	High, medium, low
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF LEARNERS	Christian African Religion	Jewish Islamic Christian
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY OF TEACHERS	Christian	Christian Jewish
LANGUAGE DIVERSITY OF LEARNERS	Portuguese Setswana Tshivenda English Afrikaans	Korean Arabic Setswana English Afrikaans
LANGUAGE DIVERSITY OF TEACHERS	Afrikaans	English Afrikaans

#### 4.3.1 School A

School A is situated in an urban area in the Potchefstroom region. This private Christian school is embedded in Christian mores and ideals. Although the curriculum has been adapted to suit the Christian pedagogical approach adopted by this school, it largely follows the National Curriculum Statement (2002) of the Department of Education (DoE) of South Africa.

School A was selected for this study as it is a monoreligious private school grounded in the religious ethos of Christianity. Although the teaching staff of the school are Christians, the learners come from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. One of the reasons for this is that parents want their children to attend a school which provides "good education".

Another reason for choosing School A is that it is a multilingual environment in which learners and teachers from different language backgrounds are in constant interaction (Teachers' are predominantly Afrikaans and learners' speak a variety of languages). School A offers education from grades R to 7 and has 13 teachers and 236 learners. According to discussions held with the school staff, the learner's parents mainly fall into medium to low socio-economic income groups. Although this school uses English and Afrikaans as its mediums of instruction, the empirical study

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<sup>1</sup> These findings were revealed through personal observation and further confirmed through conversations with the staff at each respective school.

obtained data from only the 21 grade seven English medium of instruction learners. These learners were between twelve and thirteen years old and were predominantly Setswana first language speakers. The first languages of the minority were Portuguese, Tshivenda and English.

#### **4.3.2 School B**

School B is also situated in the urban Potchefstroom region. This is a public school so meets the requirements of the National Curriculum Statement (2002) of the South African Department of Education. School B was selected for this study as it is a multi-religious public school whose learners have various religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, School B is a multilingual environment where learners and teachers of different language backgrounds are in constant interaction. School B offers education from grades R to 7 and has 22 teachers and 558 learners. According to teaching staff of the school, the learners' parents fall into three socio-economic groups: low, medium and high. English is the sole medium of instruction at the school. This research study drew its data from the 72 grade seven learners. These learners ranged between twelve and thirteen years of age and were predominantly Arabic and Setswana first language speakers, with a minority of Korean and English speakers.

#### **4.4 OBSERVATION**

In Chapter 3 (3.3.6) the methodological stances employed during observation in this study were elaborated on and described within the parameters and theoretical underpinnings of this research. The purpose of such observation is to help the researcher develop a rich understanding of the social context of the study. Therefore the researcher will spend a period of time in the research environment and embrace the aspects comprising this environment gain a deeper understanding. Through a discovery of this nature the researcher can develop the other research methods (namely, narratives and focus group interviews) so that they are in line with the social context of the research environment. Research methods will be developed in a manner that is applicable to this study as it will address the social context in which the study is being performed.

In the remainder of this section of the chapter, the observational data gained from School A and B will be presented in the framework that was used to gather the data over a one-week period in each school. Thereafter, the data will be analysed and interpreted to show the value of observation as a means of increasing the understanding of the social contexts of the study.

#### 4.4.1 Presentation of observation data

The data obtained through observations are presented in the form of tables in an attempt to display the data in a more coherent and accessible manner. The tables accentuate the core elements that were observed with the intention of facilitating the process of analysis and interpretation. Appendix E provides an example of the observation schedule applied in each school. In the observation I focused on the research questions for the following reasons: firstly, only one week was spent in each school doing observation and secondly, the aim of the observations was to help me become familiar with the environment and context in which the research was to be conducted and to facilitate the development of the other research methods being employed, namely narratives (3.3.7) and focus-group interviews (3.3.8).

The data of the two schools will be presented separately. Each table will highlight what was observed. After a synopsis of the data is presented, the processes of analysis and interpretation will be described (4.4.2).

Table 4.2 Table illustrating aspects observed in School A

A1	Teaching-and-learning atmosphere	
	a. Teacher and learner relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learners are confident and often speak out of turn disrupting the class while the teacher is teaching</li> <li>- teachers are constantly having to control the class</li> <li>- punishment and discipline are common with the intention of eliminating disruption during teaching-and-learning</li> <li>- learners are repeatedly engaged in their own preoccupations unrelated to the academic work at hand and they, for instance, talk among themselves or write personal messages to each other</li> <li>- the learners' do not listen to the teacher so there is a constant battle for respect between teacher and learners</li> <li>- teaching-and-learning involves mostly teacher facilitation and lacks self directed learning by learners</li> <li>- learners are predominantly Setswana speaking</li> </ul>

		while the teachers are predominantly Afrikaans speaking but educate the learners in English
A2	Human rights	
	a. Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- predominantly approached implicitly through discipline and emphasis on values such as <i>respect</i></li> <li>- indirectly approached through religion by using examples from the Bible such as '<i>we are all equal</i>' and '<i>we should treat others as we would like to be treated</i>'</li> <li>- human rights are referred to minimally through curriculum content or across the curriculum</li> <li>- approached as a separate entity in the learning area Life Orientation only to be dealt with when this theme surfaces in the teachers Life Orientation lesson plans</li> </ul>
	b. Context addressed in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- addressed in daily teaching-and-learning, not necessarily within the content of a particular learning area</li> <li>- at the beginning of each day when time is spent on biblical studies, human rights are considered indirectly by referring to human rights values such as human dignity and social justice</li> <li>- addressed through the teacher when discipline and/or motivation are being expressed</li> <li>- through learning area Life Orientation when issues defined in Outcome Two are discussed</li> </ul>
	c. Teacher transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mostly done orally and indirectly as a means of motivating and inspiring learners to improve their behaviour or attitudes</li> <li>- not transmitted through aggression, hate-speech or punishment</li> <li>- minimal transmission through the curriculum</li> </ul>
	d. Learner reaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- self-assured and confident about human rights although often misinformed, illogical and unsound</li> <li>- are unaware of the rights of the teacher making their reactions harsh and self-centered</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reactions concerning human rights values are often aggressive</li> <li>- reactions are <b>implicit and unrelated</b> to curricular elements of human rights as they often relate to discipline or personal disagreements with the teacher</li> </ul>
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From Table 4.2 it is evident that School A has an academic teaching-and-learning atmosphere that seems to be affected by many distractions. From the analysis of the observations it seems that these distractions are caused by misconduct, the learners' lack of respect for the teacher and possibly the fact that teachers and learners belong to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Considering the facilitation of human rights in particular, it is clear that human rights are approached explicitly in the curriculum as a separate entity with its own aims and outcomes (mainly through Life Orientation). Human rights are implicit in the actions of teachers related to discipline and value enforcement, but there is no explicit reference to human rights as a concept. Great emphasis is placed on biblical or Christian principles to enforce human rights values and ideals, albeit implicitly. The teachers' methods of transmitting human rights are based on their own interpretation of Christian values and their desire to improve learners' attitudes and behaviour from a Christian stance. Teachers adopt methods of reasoning and negotiation with the learners and do not rely on punishment or aggressive measures. Learners' reactions to the teacher's approach were often aggressive; they raised their voices and questioned the teacher. Furthermore, learners do not have sound reasons for their actions: when asked why they conduct themselves as they do, they provide reasons such as "*because it's my right*".

Table 4.3 Table illustrating aspects observed in School B

<b>A1</b>	<b>Teaching-and-learning atmosphere</b>	
	a. Teacher and learner relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- respect between teacher and learner</li> <li>- learners refer to teachers as <i>madam</i> and <i>sir</i> while teachers pay similar respect to learners by calling them by their names</li> <li>- teachers are in control of the teaching-and-learning environment</li> <li>- learners mainly behave well during teaching-and-learning although in some instances disruptive behaviour did occur</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- disciplinary action by the teacher is minimal because the learners were not disruptive in the classroom</li> <li>- learners do not seem distracted by their own personal endeavours and focus on the academic activities presented to them by their teachers'</li> <li>- teaching-and-learning is approached as self directed learning with only a little teacher facilitation</li> <li>- learners are predominantly Arabic and Setswana speaking and the teachers are English home language and teach in the medium of English</li> </ul>
<b>A2</b>	<b>Human rights</b>	
	a. Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- predominantly implicitly approached through discipline and emphasis on values such as <i>respect</i></li> <li>- approached as a separate entity in the learning areas Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences as well as Social Science and not holistically across the curriculum</li> </ul>
	b. Context addressed in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- human rights are addressed implicitly during daily classroom situations such as behaviour management</li> <li>- human rights are addressed as separate entities in separate learning areas in the curriculum and a legalistic stance towards human rights is adopted</li> </ul>
	c. Teacher transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teachers implicitly accentuate the human rights values of respect and equity during teaching-and-learning</li> <li>- implicitly relates human rights to a punishment and reward approach</li> <li>- teachers explicitly accentuate human rights in the curriculum through human rights content such as documents or activity sheets</li> </ul>
	d. Learner reaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learners conduct towards human rights is not ad hoc or aggressive although they do push the borders at times to try and suit their needs or justify their behaviour, for instance when trying to get the teacher to give them less homework</li> </ul>

		- learners have a good comprehension of the consequence of their behaviour and accept punishment without questioning the teacher's decisions
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From Table 4.3 it is evident that the teaching-and-learning atmosphere in School B displays a sound relationship between the teachers and learners that is founded on mutual respect. Discipline and bad behaviour was not common during the observation period although this school does have learners who behave badly. Human rights values such as *respect* and *equity* are strongly promoted in interactions with teachers and peers as well as between peers. Human rights issues do feature explicitly in the curriculum although they are viewed as separate elements in different learning areas. In addition to being dealt with explicitly in the curriculum, human rights are addressed implicitly as a regular part of pedagogy in terms of behaviour and developing good values. Teachers' transmission methods are strongly linked to the philosophy of punishment and reward. For instance, one teacher said to the class that they must behave properly otherwise they would be disadvantaging their own education. In another classroom, posters with messages such as 'no matter your mood....don't be rude' are displayed. Learners' responses are conscious and thought through, giving the impression that they acknowledge the responsibility that comes with their actions. It is clear that learners' do not answer teachers back (back-chat) or present illogical and unsound arguments to substantiate their behaviour or attitudes.

#### **4.4.2 Analysis, interpretation and discussion of observations**

The observation data presented above (4.4.1) will be used to elaborate on and interpret some of the main findings that emerged during the period of observation. Special attention will be placed on the findings that contribute to answering the research question (1.5). The period of one week spent in each school only provided a broad indication of how learners might understand human rights and the possible factors influencing this understanding. Although a longer period of observation could have been valuable, the intention of the observation was met. This was to provide background information on the research environment that could be used to interpret the findings. The period of observation also helped identify the importance of the following questions:

- Could the teaching-and-learning environment influence how learners understand human rights?

- Why are human rights only addressed as separate entities in different learning areas of the curriculum?
- When discipline and ill conduct arises why is emphasis placed implicitly on human rights?
- Why does School A direct an understanding for human rights from the departure point of religion?

#### 4.4.2.1 Teaching-and-learning environment

The question as to whether the teaching-and-learning environment could influence how learners understand human rights is complicated by the fact that the dynamics of each classroom in any school are different and so multiple factors could be at play. I will draw on only one factor that I perceived as having a strong influence in both School A and School B. This related to the relationship between teacher and learner. More specifically, the manner in which the teacher constructed human rights knowledge and the learners' reaction to this strongly influenced the teaching-and-learning atmosphere or environment. The approach taken by teachers in their direct (curriculum) or indirect approach to human rights affected not only the reactions of the learners but also the atmosphere in the classroom. However, it is also possible that the reactions that learners had towards human rights could also influence the approach or method used by teachers to construct human rights knowledge and human rights literacy (cf Roux, Forthcoming).

#### 4.4.2.2 Separate entities in the curriculum

The observation data revealed that both School A and School B's compartmentalised human rights. This approach views human rights knowledge as fixed or foundational (2.3.2.1) and confines this knowledge to specific learning areas and particular learning area outcomes. This questions whether human rights are seen holistically in the curriculum. Carrim and Keet (2005:100) argue that there is only a mere minimum infusion of human rights across the curriculum. What they mean by minimum infusion is that content is indirectly used to refer to human rights issues or concerns or that human rights knowledge, skills, attitudes, values or behaviour are covered separately or singularly rather than holistically in an integrated manner (Carrim & Keet, 2005:101). Maximum infusion, on the other hand, would require content in the National Curriculum Statement (2002) to deal more directly with human rights issues and concerns and thus deal with human rights knowledge, skills, attitudes, values or behaviour holistically and in an integrated manner (Carrim & Keet, 2005:101).

Carrim and Keet (2005:101) imply that this minimum infusion of human rights could lead to the assumption that human rights education contains merely foundational knowledge rooted in a surface understanding of knowledge **about** human rights (2.3.1.6.a). In this way, it could imply merely the memorisation of a number of clauses and legalistic terminology rather than regarding human rights in education as part of “living a just and fair life where we become an instrument for promoting social justice and equality by accepting the duties placed on us by virtue of the fact that we are human” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:39). The latter stance is more likely to encourage a holistic approach. Such a stance would take cognisance not only of the knowledge dimensions **about** human rights but also teaching-and-learning **for** human rights (2.3.1.5), thus encouraging learners to develop a deep understanding of human rights (2.3.1.4).

#### 4.4.2.3 Discipline and human rights

During the observation conducted, a prominent feature that emerged was the manner in which teachers approached disciplinary situations in the classroom. According to Vally (2005:3), disciplined behaviour refers to behaving in a manner that displays respect and responsibility. However, it is common that to enforce disciplined behaviour teachers use strategies such as simply “demanding appropriate behaviour” or the technique of “remind[ing] learners of the rules and expectations” (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2004:368) for that particular classroom or environment. What became very clear in my research was the shift away from instructivist (2.4.1) approaches to discipline and the acknowledgement of a more constructivist (2.4.1) approach. Teachers are more likely to discuss the disciplinary situation with the learner and introduce human rights values such as equality and respect than to demand actions from learners without hearing their explanations. Therefore, teachers often question learners and ask them **why** they behaved in a certain way rather than make their own assumptions and reacting by verbally or physically punishing learners. The main point to be made here is the emphasis placed on morality (2.2.1) and how teachers use dimensions of morality during discipline. Perhaps one could regard the South African Schools Act (1996), which banned corporal punishment, as part of the reason why teachers have had to reconsider how they approach disciplinary situations.

#### 4.4.2.4 Religion and human rights

The observation done in School A revealed that teachers often used religion as a point of departure to illustrate human rights principles and values. In other words, the teacher uses Christian ideals and principles to highlight certain human rights elements. For instance, respect your neighbour features strongly in the Christian religion and respect for all people features strongly in human

rights values. This approach, however, could become problematic in a multicultural and democratic education system such as South Africa. Learners in School A have multicultural and multireligious backgrounds. This opens up debates around the stance taken by School A. This highlights the emphasis that the staff in School A place traditional values over emancipatory ones. Du Preez and Roux (2010) refer to this as “the adoption of a traditional perspective to preserve cultural traditions”. School A may be “open to human rights (emancipatory) values and principles, but they turn to their traditional (cultural) values in most instances” (Du Preez & Roux, 2010) because they are concerned to protect their Christian roots. This stance taken by School A could result in traditionalist arguments which evolve into culturalism (2.2.1.3.a). This could lead to a perspective that privileges particular cultures and/or religions and their stance on morality and ignores competing values found in human rights discourses.

#### **4.4.3 General conclusions regarding interpretations and discussions of observations**

The observation period provided me with the opportunity to engage in the research environment and thus develop an understanding of the participants in this environment. It also provided me with me with ‘one view’ of considering how learners understand human rights and the possible factors influencing this understanding. The observation also highlighted themes/domains that should be further explored during the other research methods.

The other research methods, narratives and focus-group interviews will be explored in the next two sections.

#### **4.5 NARRATIVES**

In section 3.3.7 information pertaining to the relevance of narratives to this study was discussed. Consideration was made that narrative research would be conducted before carrying out the focus-group interviews. The purpose for this was so that common trends and themes that were mentioned in the participants’ narratives could be identified and incorporated into the focus-group interviews. All the grade seven learners in School A and School B were asked to write their narratives. The data collected from the grade seven learners were clustered according to patterns and relationships presented in the data which relate most strongly to the research aims and questions. The participants’ responses will now be presented (4.5.1) followed by the analysis, interpretations and discussions of this data (4.5.2) in order to explore different ways learners’ understand human rights.

#### 4.5.1 Presentation of narrative data

Narratives presented by the participants provided 'stories' which made explicit the meaning of human rights from a learners' perspective (3.3.7). To best present this data obtained, particular domains were identified to assist the sound articulation of this narrative data so that the research questions and aims of this study could be addressed (1.4; 1.5). The domains and sub-domains of how learners' understand human rights include:

- Superficial
- Competing ideas
- Contextualised
  - South African context
  - Value context
  - Education context
- Descriptive
- Mere listing
  - with reason
  - without reason

Table 4.4, provided below, presents responses drawn from participants' narratives. These responses from participants at both School A and School B are presented verbatim for the most part. In some cases, spelling has been modified in order to make the response easier to follow.

Participants were asked to write their narratives (in the form of a letter) in response to one broad question namely, *Write a letter to your friend about how you understand human rights in your own life and country* (Appendix F). The extracts in Table 4.4 highlight themes and/or contribute to the main argument presented by the participant in their narrative.

To ensure that there was time for reflection and logical consideration the participants were given ample time during allocated lessons to write this narrative. This letter had to present their own ideas and points of view and thus participants were instructed not to consult each other. Due to the fact that participants from English medium classrooms were allocated, participants wrote these letters in English. Before the participants started writing their narratives, the researcher very briefly explained to the participants what a narrative entails. No further information concerning human rights specifically was discussed to ensure that the data collected was an accurate reflection of how the

learners themselves understand human rights. As a further safeguard, the participants wrote the narratives during lesson times. They were not allowed to leave the classroom during that time.

Table 4.4. A presentation of the data gathered from narratives

<b>Response: School A</b> (21 Participants)	<b>Response: School B</b> (72 Participants)
<b>SUPERFICIAL</b>	
I have the right to swim because it is fun.....I have the right to money because I want to buy things.	What I understand about human rights is FREEDOM and DEMOCRACY..... Freedom is when you are a free person your mind is free. When you set free you must always be happy at bad times don't let it in speak to a person because when you feel bad you are going to become depressed and have all sorts of imaginary. I am free you are free every person in the world is supposed to be free and don't forget always be free.
<b>COMPETING IDEAS</b>	
Nelson Mandela was so brave to do that so that we can have freedom, democracy and now we have a choice to vote for a president. I am not so glad that people voted for ANC because they are not so good for our country. But that's what I think if he didn't steal that money and raped that girl I would have liked the ANC.	.....everyone is allowed to have human rights it doesn't matter if you black, white, or Indian because every person is allowed to be happy and to enjoy life.....I feel very good about Human Right but its not really fair that some people have Human Rights and others don't (like the people on the street).
	I think rights are very important in a community..... We have many rights here in South Africa, like the right for an education but some disadvantaged people can't get the education they need and I think it's unfair.
	South Africa has a lot of good human rights but they also have a few that I myself don't approve on. For example when people commit a crime they only get sent to prison for a couple of days or hours and then they are let free.... South Africa's penalty for people who kill or murder other people is very stupid because those criminals are released out of prison in three or four days. I think the penalty should be you should get killed if you kill someone else and if you steal your hand should be cut off..... The things that are good in South Africa is that no one is hurting or killing each other for racial issues but because they are sick in their hearts
	Human rights are good because we are all equal..... I know that sometimes people don't

	receive the right treatment in connection with human rights the reason being their circumstances. For example, if a person is a hobo (homeless) and they get a donation of money and they enter a shop trying to buy food they are immediately mistreated.
	I think that it's good that all the different colours (including albinos) all have the same rights..... It's a pity that some of the people from different colours actually think that they are better than other people from other colours
	Everyone is allowed to have human rights it doesn't matter if you black, white or Indian.... Its not really fair that some people don't have human rights
<b>CONTEXTUALISED</b>	
<b>• South African context</b>	
In our country we need human rights because children in South Africa are being abused and the human rights are helping those children	Human rights is rights people have. I was hoping for most people in the world to walk in some rural areas and the right for not being harassed when walking down the road.....I think that Jacob Zuma will make a difference in the country he is a clever man. If you think about it I would like to have people like Nelson Mandela or Mohatma Gandi in this world. I am not saying that Jacob Zuma is the next Einstein. I am hoping that he will make South Africa a better country and a better place.
If it was not for Nelson Mandela (my hero) we as people, we would not have these rights. When I think of human rights I think of the pain of women and children abused, raped, killed and molested by men. This is the reason why men like Nelson Mandela started the human rights.	I think human rights are a very special law which protects people in our country.... About 15 years ago, the human rights of black and Indian people were not equal. Today, they are thanks to a man who is now 90 years old.
I love human rights because Mandela saved us and when they talk about human rights the first thing I think about is democracy and the day Mandela saved our country	Quite a while back during apartheid times in South Africa only white people were allowed to vote for a president etc. but that was very unfair. Nelson Mandela stopped apartheid and fought for everyone's rights he also became president of South Africa. Today thanks to Nelson Mandela everyone has an equal say in everything and everyone is treated equally.
I think that human rights are helping a lot of people not like before, people were not respected and they were beaten and tortured and not helped by the government..... people in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century are free and they go to excellent schools and people don't judge you by the colour of your skin. And more black people are being teachers, doctors etc	People keep on saying the youth is the only hope for South Africa but lots of street kids are being left to fend for themselves on the street. The government is supposed to track these children down and give them a home with love, care, protection, food, new clothes and most importantly educate them so that when they grow up they can be great leaders and people.

	I think human rights are for everyone, every culture and most of all you..... Our legends fought for us they risked their lives to see us flourish. An example of a legend is Nelson Mandela, the first black president that changed South Africa.
	We all have rights and responsibilities in our country... We get a specific day just because of human rights. It is on the 16 <sup>th</sup> of June
	I think that human rights are being abused in South Africa because people are using the rights but aren't taking responsibility for their actions. For example the people living in DDP houses aren't grateful for the free water and electricity, they just want more and more and more. They wont make an effort to make an honest living, they'll rather say 'my life's bad and there's crime around me so I'll join them instead of trying to stop poverty
	Our new president Jacob Zuma is there to protect and serve South Africans and he makes the rights of South Africa. Even if you white, black, coloured or Muslim we all share the same rights
<b>• Value context</b>	
There must be the right to say no but children are using that right to their advantage just like saying no to their responsibilities	Every single person has got rights not to be harassed or be abused. Mostly women are being abused and that's not fair, not that men can't be abused.....if you have ever been harassed or raped or have been abused you must tell someone close to you.
Human rights in some ways express people's thoughts and ideas and children are taught these rights at school and they must defend themselves when people tell them something wrong to do then they can say no that's wrong	We all have the right to safety, and some people are still not safe. People are getting sick and people are dying but us children of South Africa are going to change the world I know that. People should be safe no matter where they go, people should not be raped, kids shouldn't be abandoned by their parents, people should love one another. We shouldn't be saying bad things about each other just because they are black or white. We should live together the way God put us. I might be a 13 year old boy but I have been through bad things but some people even worse but I will change the world I promise you, as us humans are better and I think that all us children in the world can create a better nation and set an example for our children and teach them to respect other cultures. We will change the world, I know we will.
	I am sure that we can turn this world into a better place if we educate other people about human rights and apply them in our daily lives to set an example because the future is in our hands and it is our responsibility to keep South Africa from falling
	Human rights are here for us to respect and treat different races and beliefs the same way you

	respect yourself and the ones you love
	I also understand that women are not allowed to be hit by men and that you have the right to say no to men forcing you to sleep with them. The human right also gives us an opportunity to have a wonderful free of violence family
	If people didn't have rights we would not be able to live in a free country. We would not be able to walk down the street without being murdered, or anything else. If that were to happen we would not live in a peaceful country that we live in and mostly the whole idea of this is that people have respect for each other
	Human rights have to do with everyone having equal rights and a say when something is not ok, when everyone is treated fairly and everyone has the right to live a basic everyday life where both races are treated fairly
	No one can abuse your rights because they are protected by your Bill of Rights because you have rights and no one can take them away and no one can hurt you
<b>• Education context</b>	
In our schools we need a principal and teachers to teach us so that we can be something or someone in life because without teachers and principals there wouldn't be good education and there wouldn't be peace in the school cause there wouldn't be teachers to teach or educate us so we can be successful in life	I was taught about human rights by my Life Orientation teacher. She said all humans held rights and responsibilities or else the world would be in chaos. Like the right to choose your own friends wisely and the responsibility to choose the right ones because some friends are very bad influences and don't care about you – just about themselves.
	I first heard about human rights in school and what I learnt about it is that its important because without it our lives and country would be in a disaster
	The first time I ever heard about human rights was when I was ten years old (grade four). The teacher told us all about the children's rights and the constitution but I don't think I quite understood until I got to grade five
	Children learn about human rights at school and you can only lean about it in LO
<b>DESCRIPTIVE</b>	
I live with my grandmother who is 79 years old and what she often says is that children confuse responsibility with rights. What I mean is that your mom might say to you Bonolo go and clean your room and you would say 'did the constitution of labour not say that children are not allowed to work at an early stage'. It's not like you going to work	I like the right of being able to choose your religion because some discriminate you about your religion. I like the right to practice your religion freely without having people disturb you

<p>for hours but you must also think about the hard work your mom/dad has done for you. And we must remember 'unity is strength'</p>	
<p>I think that the African National Congress is not that much concentrating at human rights at this stage because there are children out there who don't have food, clothes, shelter right now at this moment. My solution to this kind of problem is that the government must make shelters in the community and gather children who don't have personal needs to this shelter and treat them as their own children. If I must say and treat them equally with dignity and not inferior. I am concerned with this problem as Nelson Mandela/William Shakespeare said 'together we can do more but alone we can do less'</p>	<p>I hope the ANC doesn't change our rights to make them unfair or our country would go bust. After all it is now their right to change everything. Can you believe it Nelson Mandela said everyone was equal but now they're saying otherwise. Can you believe it?</p>
<p>I think that a women or a girl has the right to wear anything she want to wear. There was a woman who walked at the taxis rank with a short dress and the taxi drivers raped her, spit on her and swear at her. So some people need to be learned human rights</p>	<p>People from other countries do not know these rights and I think it should be spread around the world because where I come from it is terrible what poor parents can do to their children. I have seen a case where the parent sent her daughter to sell bread without shoes and with ragged clothing. It really pained me.</p>
<p>In the newspaper I read that a lot of people go to the home affairs and the people there say 'you were dead years ago' and it's not true. So human rights just need to do a little more.</p>	<p>Human rights keep order and gives you the right to do something your allowed to or want to do. For example, if you want to smoke it is your right but it's your responsibility to make sure you don't smoke around children and pregnant ladies.</p>
	<p>I heard about human rights on the news... I think that it is a good thing because if you have rights then you have freedom of speech.</p>
	<p>I am very thankful for living in a nice country that's the best in the world and I am glad to have fair rights not like in Zimbabwe where its bad.... If the crime and litter was less, South Africa would be a perfect country and by far the best in the whole world</p>
	<p>Most importantly everyone has to know their rights and speak out if they have been violated. Bad things happen when good people look the other way. Everyone must know their rights and have the right to use them or else you'll also be violating me right because then you could've help put one more criminal away and most of all never forget the most important human right to know your rights but don't forget the responsibilities</p>
	<p>One thing I hate about human rights is when people use them in a wrong way to escape their problems or to make a joke about it and I think its not right to use our human rights like that because its wrong and selfish of people to do this</p>
	<p>A good example of rights is Maslow's Hierarchy,</p>

	which put the most important rights in order. So that we can live up to it
	I love children's rights for one reason only. I get to tell people I have the right to this or to do that but I tend to forget the responsibilities and sometimes we don't care about them which is a big problem
	What I know is that even though there are rights you can not always use the words 'I have a right to do so' just to get yourself out of trouble because those words can get you into trouble because you chose to use your right carelessly
	I was amazed to see all the rights we children have.... Do you know that adults only have 8 human rights; it was a surprise to me. I was so shocked. Now you know that we as children have rights so let's us use them
	I know a couple of rights that I saw on the TV and they have a point somehow but still human rights are a blank side of my life. When I think of the words human rights my mind just goes blank. I want to study about human rights so that I can know about it
	Human rights are there for people to treat other people the way they want to be treated and cared for. Colour does not matter, it is where you come from that matters. Sometimes it is not racism that is the problem, it is the men that think they are in control
<b>MERE LISTING</b>	
<b>• Without reason</b>	
Children and parents rights. -Kids have the right to education, safety, be disciplined, to obey and a family -Parents are not allowed to drink in public, abuse kids, whip kids very hard and harass children	A few human rights are you have the right to talk, education, food, clothes, shelter and to vote. You should know the rest of all the rights
I want to tell you that each and everyone have human rights. My rights are shelter, education, food and clothes.	Some 'basic' needs/rights are the rights to food, clothing, shelter, care (love), medical care and education.
<b>• With reason</b>	
I think human rights are so good because they are there to protect women in our lives. Without women in our lives we won't be here so we must be grateful for the women in our lives.	The right to shelter. You need shelter to protect you from harmful things. The right to eat. People cannot survive without food. The right to water. Water is one of the most important basic needs because without water people will die of dehydration
We need human rights at school because if they were not there the teachers would beat us a lot and abuse us.	Food is a basic right. Without proper, healthy food you can or more than likely will die. Education is essential because with a proper education, most

	people can get a good job and provide for themselves and their families. Shelter is very important as proper housing provide security and safety against animals, weather etc.
I have a right to shelter because everyone in the world has a right to live in homes. We need to have homes so that we must be protected from harm and everything that is dangerous and especially for the people who live in the streets.	
I think my human right is to be loved because if you are loved and acknowledged about the good things you do then life on earth is the right place to be.	
I have the right to education because without education I can' do nothing. Education is the right to have because if you want to know how an appliance works like a playstation <sup>2</sup> you have to read the instructions.	
The right to education because we need to know what's happening around the world we live in and to know what is right and what is wrong	

Table 4.4 reflects the varied ways in which learners understand human rights. Although School B provided more participant responses, the researcher was still able to identify the trends that were most prominent in each school. One common understanding of human rights that became apparent at both School A and School B was the tendency for participants to contextualise their understanding of human rights in a South African context. The potential for participants to make the association of human rights with particular political events or icons unique to South Africa was evident.

However, the participants in these schools also presented vastly different approaches in their understanding of human rights. Participants in School A were more prone to present their understanding of human rights by articulating factual or legalistic information pertaining to human rights. Participants tended to list what they thought the human rights were; some participants provided reasons whilst others just merely listed these facts. Conversely, School B placed more emphasis on contextualising their understanding of human rights in two major patterns. One pattern draws on an understanding of human rights that has two sides or presented competing ideas rather than only giving one perspective. The other more prominent pattern which emanated from School B was the tendency for participants to contextualise their narratives on human rights within a value context.

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<sup>2</sup> An recreational electronic device

All participants presented a written narrative of how they understand human rights and by the varied responses I can confirm with the arguments presented in Chapter 2 of this study that all learners do not understand human rights in the same manner. To further elaborate on this stance, I will now present the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the narrative discourse presented in Table 4.4.

#### **4.5.2 Analysis, interpretation and discussion of narratives**

Participants' narratives have little value in research if they are not interpreted. As shown in 3.3.7, researchers have to critically reflect on the participants' narratives to gain an insight into what they reveal. Narratives as method were chosen with the specific intent of presenting an open-ended opportunity for participants to 'tell their stories' in connection with human rights. Due to the open-endedness of this activity, participants presented very varied responses. In order to highlight the main findings illuminated in the participants' very varied responses, I will analyse, interpret and discuss the common patterns which have influenced how learners understand human rights. Elements that relate to the research aims and questions of this study will be highlighted.

The following statements, which tie in with the domains selected in the presentation of the data, become evident for exploration in this section:

- Participants in both School A and B contextualise their understandings of human rights within the South African context
- Participants in School A draw heavily on listing their rights when they express how they understand human rights in general
- Participants in School B have competing ideas when it comes to the understanding they hold of human rights
- Participants in School B place emphasis on contextualising their understanding of human rights in a value context

#### **4.5.2.1 Common patterns of how learners' understand human rights**

##### **a. South African context**

In both School A and School B many participants portrayed their understanding of human rights by referring to political situations in South Africa. These include reference to political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma and political history such as the apartheid in South Africa (Table 4.4). This could be seen as a historical approach to understanding human rights based on chronological or prominent events in history. The implications of such an approach could thus be seen as presenting varied perspectives and interpretations of these times in history. However there are two prominent patterns prevalent in most of the participants' responses. Firstly, what is evident in the participants' responses is that they all view Nelson Mandela as the hero and liberator who fought for human rights in South Africa and who was one of the key players in the implementation of human rights in South Africa. Secondly, emphasis is drawn on the lack of human rights during apartheid times and how now that apartheid is abolished South Africa strives to uphold human rights principles such as equality. However, a few participants also stressed the weakness of South African government to uphold these rights.

Presenting their understanding of human rights in the context of their country has interesting implications. I argue that these implications can be two-fold. On the one hand, the participants might be drawing heavily on knowledge about political leaders such as Nelson Mandela and political periods of time such as the apartheid years because of what they have been taught at school, for instance in the learning areas Life Orientation and/or Social Sciences. Since many of these participants were born between 1996 and 1997, they had no experience of living in South Africa prior to the first democratic election. Thus my first inclination would be to assume that the knowledge they had of that time was based on what they learnt at school or through interaction with parents or older people in their family or communities. This type of knowledge might evolve from a form of declarative knowledge (2.3.1.1) that stems from the transmission of factual information without a deep understanding of the content of these facts. For instance, the fact that Nelson Mandela is portrayed as a personal hero would more than likely imply that Nelson Mandela had a direct influence on that person's life or situation. How could this be the case if this person was not even born in the time frame when these changes occurred? I argue that content pertaining to political leaders and events obfuscates the underlying moral and value purpose encompassing human rights and develops only a surface understanding (2.3.1.4) of human rights.

On the other hand, understanding human rights in a context could lead to what Elliot (2005:6) in section 3.3.7 sees as being one of the reasons for using participants' narratives in research. This she refers to as an interest in process and change over time and how this might influence the understanding a person holds of a particular domain. To put human rights in a context might accentuate the participants' ability to develop a deeper understanding (2.3.1.4) **for** human rights and not only knowledge **about** human rights (2.3.1.5). I argue that even though there is factual or declarative knowledge (2.3.1.1) when one presents one's understanding of human rights in a context such as South Africa, if this knowledge is supported with logical reason to substantiate it, then deep understanding for human rights has taken place. However, if the participant is just reiterating knowledge (as I described in the former standpoint) then an understanding of the underlying principles surrounding human rights will not develop.

#### b. Mere listing

A prominent feature at School B is that participants displayed how they understand human rights by presenting these rights in the form of lists. Lists pertaining to what the participants thought they are allowed to do and some with short reasons substantiating why they had that particular right were presented in bullet form. Nearly half of the participants wrote lists of what their rights were and why these were their rights when they were asked to write a narrative about "how they understand human rights in their own lives and country". This element was also evident in the observations made at School A as human rights were commonly presented to the participants in a legalistic form and as separate entities in the curriculum (4.4.2.2). The participants who presented their narrative of how they understand human rights in lists revealed a foundational and fixed (2.3.2.1) approach to human rights tied to legalistic implications, which disregards the moral and value-laden underpinning of human rights. A liberal (2.2.1.1) approach to understanding human rights which acknowledges that certain very general principles can be applied to different human rights dilemmas or decisions is somewhat limiting. I want to argue that a liberal approach to human rights (as I think is portrayed by participants in this domain) proclaims that human rights judgements are universal and not context specific. This disregards the fact that people hold different opinions. In South Africa's diverse classroom environment a stance such as this one is very restrictive and results in participants who might 'know their rights' but have no understanding of the implications of their rights.

### c. Competing ideas

When a participant presents competing ideas they take into consideration more than one perspective of the stance. Sometimes competing values might even lead to a contradiction in the arguments presented. In School B participants use competing ideas in the way that they put significant emphasis on expressing how they understand human rights by acknowledging the value that human rights brings but also the realities of human rights in our country. Participants take into account knowledge of *when, where* and *for what reason* a specific human rights action or feature should be demonstrated. This is referred to as conditional knowledge in section 2.3.1.3. A common example found in the participants' responses draws on the participants explanations of equality as a human right. However, they did not stop there; they went on to present discussions about the inequality experienced by certain members of society such as the homeless or economic deprived persons. This type of reasoning takes cognisance of the complexities found in human rights by acknowledging that human rights are more than fixed laws enforced on people where all people benefit. Consideration is thus given to the non-static and anti-foundational nature of human rights (2.3.2.1) that dominate our lifestyles every day.

### d. Value context

Yet another feature that was evident in the responses gathered from School B was the concentration on the value underpinning of human rights. Many of the participants' responses of how they understand human rights were expressed in a human rights values context (cf. Du Preez, 2005). Instead of the mere listing of human rights or the pronouncement of what is entitled to them, these participants took another stance, concentrating on the moral elements attached to human rights. Common patterns in this respect drew on the human rights values of non-racism, respect, human dignity, responsibility and equality. Participants' responses drew closely on issues concerning racism, women abuse, violence, lack of responsibility and respect in their discussions in this domain. Just as with 4.5.2.1.c participants did not view human rights as static and fixed in nature (2.3.2.1) but rather participants took into account the morals and values underpinning human rights. This is also closely linked to Du Preez's (2008:337) ideas of teaching-and-learning **for** human rights in section (2.3.1.5) in which human rights involve the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes pertaining to human rights throughout daily and future actions. Furthermore, importance can also be invested in the argument that human rights represent a moral position in the curriculum as the ontological stance of human rights (2.2) points in the direction of questioning why we have human rights as part of our curriculum. An investigation of moral education is

necessary as it clarifies one of the major reasons for the inclusion of human rights in our education systems.

#### **4.5.2.2 General conclusions regarding interpretations and discussions of narratives**

Prominent features of the participants' responses, which are displayed in Table 4.4, have been analysed, interpreted and discussed. It seems that the participants' understanding of human rights differ vastly. Some participants demonstrated a legalistic or fixed understanding of human rights while other participants were more inclined to take into account competing ideas. Certain conclusions could be drawn from the domain in which the participants found themselves. It seems that the way in which participants understand human rights influences how they conduct themselves in various daily situations. Support for this view can be found in the findings gathered during the observations, more specifically in the findings presented in tables 4.2 and 4.3.

### **4.6 FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEWS**

As was explained in section 3.3.8 the object of a focus-group interview is to obtain high-quality data in a social context where people share their views. Since the participants were grade seven learners, a focus-group interview encouraged them to comment and thus generate rich data (3.3.8). The focus groups consisted of between 4 and 6 participants. The data collected are presented (4.6.1) and then analysed, interpreted and discussed (4.6.2) to identify different factors that are influencing the way that learners' understand human rights.

#### **4.6.1 Presentation of focus-group interview data**

As with the data collected from the narratives in section 4.5.1 certain domains have been identified to guide the researcher in presenting the data in a sound manner which coherently addresses the research aims and questions (1.4; 1.5). The following domains and sub-domains were identified:

- Educational Factors
  - Curriculum content and assessment
  - Teacher
  - Peer
  - Excluded human rights queries
- Societal Factors
  - Family

- Religion, culture and/or tradition
- Value Driven Factors
- Other Factors.

Table 4.5, presented below, represents the responses obtained from School A and School B during the focus-group interviews that were conducted. These responses represent the precise responses as given by the participants. For the most part, minimal language editing was done with the responses although to allow for a logical flow in arguments, some of the grammatical errors were amended. The interview schedule (Appendix G) served as a guideline during the interview making it possible for the participants to articulate their responses in a semi-structured fashion. The responses from these participants were then clustered into particular domains as has just been stated above. The interviews were conducted in the participants' school environments in settings that allowed the participants to feel comfortable and not in any way threatened. Since the medium of instruction is English, the interviews were conducted in English, which participants were happy about. During the course of interview, the researcher constantly ensured that the participants fully understood what the semi-structured interview questions required. The participants were encouraged to ask if they were unsure or to make any further comments they felt they wanted to share.

Before the interviews were conducted the researcher took note of certain aspects. These will now briefly be elaborated on to set the context of the type of participants found in each focus-group interview. At School A, there were four participants in the focus-group interview, three girls and one boy. Three of these participants were twelve years old and one participant was thirteen. All four participants stated that their religious affiliation was Christianity. Although all these participants were receiving English medium education their first languages were Portuguese, Tshivenda and Setswana. All four participants were English second language speakers. At School B, five learners participated in the focus-group interview, three boys and two girls. Three of these participants were twelve years old and two of the participants were thirteen. The participants stated that they were Christian, Jewish and Moslem. Although all these participants were receiving English medium education their first languages were English, Korean, Arabic and Setswana. Afrikaans or English were their second languages.

Table 4.5. A presentation of the data gathered from the focus-group interviews

Domains and Questions	Response: School A (4 Participants)	Response: School B (5 Participants)
<b>EDUCATIONAL FACTORS</b>		
<b>• Curriculum Content and Assessment</b>		
Can you remember where and what you have learnt about human rights at school?	In LO. We learnt about the rights of people like, people who are maybe...who don't have homes and education then they have the right to shelter, education.	In LO we learnt that for every right there is a responsibility, people must obey their rights, must not abuse your rights like say they have the right to do whatever they want, respect and everyone is equal.
How did your teacher tell you about human rights?	In a LO lesson and then we had discussions and she explained it to us..... In the discussions we speak a lot about the right to your own opinion and this is important because for example, sometimes if your parents are fighting you have the right to say stop and tell them this is wrong. Or in a job when something goes wrong then you can go to the CCMA <sup>3</sup> .	She gives us a worksheet then she will explain it to us. If we have any questions we can just ask her..... She would have a discussion before she gave the worksheet.... She would give us a chance to ask questions on people's experiences.
Did your teacher ever tell you about any of the human rights documents?	She told us about the Bill of Rights and Children's' Rights. What is interesting is that they say that children who are homeless and who don't have food they can like have the right to get food and education and family	We learnt about the Bill of rights... that there are children's rights and adult rights... mostly learnt about children's rights.
How did you teacher assess you on human rights?	We do not do assignments or projects but we do writing in our books and learning for tests.... We get asked questions like when is human rights day.	We do tests... In the first and third term we do not write exams so we had to make a speech for marks.... Once we had to do a poster and paste pictures with words and pictures telling more about ourselves..... Sometimes we work in groups and do posters then we get assessed on that. Sometimes we do plays in front of the class.... We also do case studies sometimes.
Do you think human rights should be compulsory in school?	Yes because when you grow up and people tell you no its like this and if you know your human	

<sup>3</sup> CCMA is the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration

	<p>rights then you will disagree with them and say no the human rights says this and this and that..... to protect you when you have maybe lost your job and if you were unfairly dismissed. Then you just go and say the human rights says this and this and that. You can go to the CCMA and explain to them what happened. Then they help you because its in the human rights..... when you learn it now then when you older you know them all and know how things are and you will understand most of the things...</p>	
<p>When you are learning about other things in other learning areas, do your teachers ever talk about human rights?</p>	<p>Yes, like this time teacher X said that the box of oats – I don't know what it was- was open in the shop. Then when she was paying at the till she saw that there was a hole in the box. She told the lady at the till that she must close it or she must go take another one. Then the lady said, we don't have another one all of those are done. Teacher X said she wanted to see the manager. Then they got her another one. Because she was right and its part of the human rights.... if you took it and it was open then you could get diseases and germs. You have the right to get another one and just leave that one.</p>	<p>Make a poster of the rights and responsibilities of children in English....</p>
	<p>Yes she told us in economic management sciences. Like the consumers right. Like to have germ free, what do you say, um products. You can buy any product you want and make sure it is germ free. You can speak to the manager if the products are not right.</p>	<p>We had a worksheet about Nelson Mandela in history. About their rights and what they had in apartheid. We would read through it and then she would explain it to us. Then right down the answers to questions. We also discussed the 1996 Constitution in history.</p>
	<p>There was a time in Maths where some of the children did not listen and the teacher told us that they can just go. Children have the right to education and they need education. They can stand outside because they won't be listening.</p>	

<b>• Teacher</b>		
<p>When you are at school do you think that your teacher influences the way that you understand human rights?</p>	<p>Yes in the way she treats us. The way she explains things to us that we are doing. She must show us how to put human rights into our daily lives. Also the way she respects us. Like when a teacher just leaves you work and does not explain the work then they are not respecting you..... speaking nicely to each other, not screaming.... Giving each other a time to talk..... To say thank you..... To give us the right to education and not chase us out the class.</p>	<p>Yes because if the teacher explains human rights in a positive way then we will have a good view of human rights..... Yes the way she teaches it and the way she explains it... She should try to explain it in more than one way so that everyone understands it.... like with a case study she won't just give it to you. She will call a few children from the class and they have to read the case study to the class or they will have to explain it to the class so the class can get a background. Then she will discuss it more in-depth.... She will give us copies of the case study and then questions and see if everyone understands the case study.... The way she treats us, if she treats us fairly and equally then she is modelling a behaviour that makes us believe she realizes how important human rights are</p>
<b>• Peers</b>		
<p>Why do you say that the way peers treat each other influences the way you understand human rights?</p>	<p>The way we treat each other as children, we must treat each other with respect and care for one another.... By speaking to each other nicely, understanding each other. To treat each other in a good way... not fighting, gossiping and lying.</p>	
<b>• Excluded human rights queries</b>		
<p>What else do you think you would like to learn about human rights?</p>	<p>I want to learn where it started</p>	<p>We would like to learn more about human rights as a whole.... We only learn the basics.... Also like where they came from and who made the first one and stuff like that... How human rights affects peoples lives, communities and the world. We need to educate people about human rights because a lot of people do not know and we have to apply human rights in our daily lives... We as learners can do this through word of mouth and putting it on the internet... We can tell our communities.... Awareness of human rights is lacking and we can even start this in our own classrooms.</p>

<b>SOCIETAL FACTORS</b>		
<b>• Family</b>		
Where else have you learnt about human rights?	At home from my parents and from my older brother.... They explain it to us like when we don't understand – mum what's this and what's that then they will explain it to us.	Our parents, they teach us like when we are very young like 2 or 3 or 4 they teach us our responsibilities, to respect people and not to swear and not to do all these bad things and to listen to your parents.
Why do you say you think human rights starts at home?	Let me say that you see human rights starts at home. If your parents didn't teach you this or that then you are going to do it somewhere else. They must teach you not to do these things...	It starts at home, you must discipline the child. It's the parents' responsibility to teach them not to do these crimes or any of those things.
Do you think that our parents know about human rights?	Yes because if they did not know about human rights they would not have given us food, let us go to school and give us shelter..... and when they show something over the TV about human rights then they tell us. Now if they weren't going to show it on the TV and if our parents weren't going to tell us then they wouldn't have a clue what's happening.	
Do your parents tell you about human rights?	Only when necessary. Like when we pass by and we see children who do not have food then my father says that children have the right to food and shelter.	My mum and dad might talk a little bit about the rights to keep everything in control at home...
<b>• Religion, Culture and/or Tradition</b>		
Do you think that people's religion, culture and tradition influence they way that they understand human rights?	I think it's separate because we children do not understand our religion. We need to like maybe if you have an Indian friend, then we will like speak to them about their religion. Not tell them my religion is telling the truth and your religion is lying and all that stuff. We must understand each other and our religions. Understand their religion and what they do and in this religion what do we do..... sometimes	No because some religions think that the women is lesser than the man which is different to human rights.... Most religions and cultures have their own rights separate to say the children's Bill of Rights..... It just depends - some people like the other rights if they treat them better than the governments human rights. Sometimes the government has a few extra rights than the religious rights. ....Sometimes if the religious rights have been

	<p>the Indians always put these things on their heads and its not allowed at school then we laugh at them and you don't know what's going on.... Sometimes because maybe you go into a shop and then you say, I do not want to buy food where they buy food. You like be discriminating and all those stuff.</p>	<p>taught before the governments human rights then people will follows those rights. It's the rights they are made accustomed to first.... If you like the rights of your culture then you go with the rights of your culture and if you don't then you go for the other rights..... Maybe in your culture it says if you get married you get this but in the government's human rights you don't. The one they understand is the one that they go with.</p>
	<p>Yes because being a Christian is all about helping, being humble to one another and just caring about one another. Basically that's about being a Christian..... If you are a Christian you also have to adopt human rights into your life by knowing that you have the right to shelter and seeing someone with no shelter and then it learns you to help people helping them because there is a right to shelter</p>	<p>It might influence because if you are from a young age from a particular culture then you will know what they are. But if you come from a different country like the three of us maybe if you learn from South Africa rights then you might be a little confused and say no that's wrong because the way I learnt it is something else..... In many countries the rights and the majority religion of the people in that country is the same. For example maybe this country is a Christian country. The majority of the people are Christians in this country and the rights of Christianity and the rights of government might be the same because they might vote for that government because they also believe in Christianity so their rights will be the same.</p>
<p><b>VALUE DRIVEN FACTORS</b></p>		
<p>Why do you say that teacher X says that sometimes you know your rights but not your responsibilities?</p>	<p>When you are talking and the teacher says stop talking and then you say I have the right to talk, you using it in the wrong way..... Or if the teacher says we have the responsibility to do our homework.... Being responsible is important because when you grow up then you know you are responsible and you know what to do. You know how to care for yourself if you are living alone. You know your responsibilities. Today I have to do this and this.... and how to handle</p>	

	money. It's to teach you more about life and to be able to look after yourself.	
What does being responsible mean for you?		To have a good house we must look after the house and keep it clean inside..... Not to abuse your rights. So you must be careful – don't overdo them or overuse them.... If you are driving recklessly in a car and the police stop you and you tell them that you have the right to freedom and that they can't arrest you then you are using your rights irresponsibly.
You say that your religion has competing views with human rights. Why?		Also in our religion it's against our religion to be gay. But the country says you are allowed to be gay. I personally do not like the thing about being gay but I will respect gay people. I won't like make a big problem with him and say "a you gay" but I will respect it. I don't like it but I will respect it.... I think that that one law of respect all religion whether I believe in Christianity and you believe in Islam.
		I think it's a good thing that if people steal their hands must be chopped so that they can learn not to do it again and so that can be disciplined.
		He said that if they steal, they chop their hand off. I do not think that is reasonable. If you steal you make a mistake, you can have time in jail and then learn from the mistakes. It's not helping by cutting peoples hands off, you just pushing the problem away. The thing that is going to happen is that you are going to end up cutting everybody's hands off. You need to sit with these people and tell them about stealing so that people can learn. I mean just talk to them, educate people and then maybe just maybe people will stop stealing and not many hands will be chopped off.....  Another participant said: I don't actually agree because look at South Africa look at the crime

		<p>levels compared to any other country we are over the board. If you look at all the rape cases and robberies. I think try that and see what happens because I mean look at Iraq and Palestine, when there was no war and Libya, places where they chop your hands off. People who told you to steal – you can choose. You can do gardening, wash a car you can get a job. Why do you have to steal other people's things?</p>
		<p>Talking about rape. In certain countries if you rape they will put you into a cage on the main street and stone you to death. They say that you can't mistakably rape someone, that's not a mistake. You have a choice.</p>
		<p>I say they should bring the death penalty back so that people can see that if you do a crime then there are consequences. If the people steal their hands should be chopped off. Here in Africa the people just go to jail and learn more from the other people that have been doing rape and that stuff and the people do worse. Only 5% or something come out of jail clean.... I don't really agree with the death penalty. It's wrong what the person did, just too wrong but you can't take another persons life just because of what that person did. Put your hands in blood just because of what that other person did. Its not going to solve the problem. And again they are talking about how South Africa is wrong. Why don't we do something about it? We don't like how it is right now; there is no point in complaining its not going to help..... I don't think a person should take other persons life. In LO we are taught about the abuse cycle. If somebody abuses you they'll just follow it. So if somebody steals then they follow and I don't think that they are actually going to do any good by just killing another person.</p>

<p>Children have the right to education why do you think some of them do not go to school?</p>		<p>No one told the children to live in the streets. They left, they their parents and a lot of things. They might have left because of abuse and maybe the government can take them to schools. But the government also needs to take care of a lot of charities, AIDS orphans, a lot of things..... The street children they have a choice, they don't have to be there but they there so that they can sniff glue. They can go to school..... Some of the children they chose to go out into the street but the parents as well they should take their responsibility. Some of them they leave because they abused very badly. Some of the parents should have the responsibility to teach the children and help them so that they don't have any problem. Also in South Africa some of the schools they are too expensive so the parents they cant afford. In Canada they have half the people we have here but they are able to make their schools be free, health care, because here in South Africa the government does not want to give the money out they want to keep it to themselves.</p>
<p><b>OTHER FACTORS</b></p>		
<p>Do you think that human rights should be part of our everyday lives or do you think that we only really use them when we need them?</p>	<p>Everyday lives.... Like children have the right to education but they don't want to go to school. They bunk classes and they need to go to school to be educated and find jobs, so that they can reach their goals and get goals.</p>	<p>Everyday lives because if you just say when you need it then life is going to be a big disaster. If you make a mistake over and over again then you can say you have the right to make a mistake. If you have it in your daily lives then you will learn from them.</p>
		<p>I think we should have them in our daily lives because then there would not be things like xenophobia. We must unite because are one, one mankind. we can save a lot of things. We have the right to be free and do whatever we want but we also have the responsibility to take care of our rights.</p>

Do you think school rules are important?	Yes, the less you listen and respect teachers the more rules there are but the more you listen and respect teachers the fewer the rules..... When children make jokes in the class and other children want to learn. Then they disturb the class. Rules are there to help us so that we can learn and other do not disturb us.	Yes because they say for example no swearing, no hitting and if you grow up in an environment like that then when you grow up you will be a better person. Not fight and not swear. You know it influences how you respect people's rights.
		In my culture we don't really have rules. As you become a teenager you live with your grandmother for a year and she shows you what to do and teaches you.... You are 12 when you start being a teenager. You live with your grandmother and she teaches you because she must protect you because when you are a teenager Satan wants to come into your life.
Are there any other things that you can think of that might influence the way you understand human rights?	Your friends and your community.... The way they treat you and the way they treat each other. Interacting with each other.	TV programmes
	The policemen and women when they don't want to help you when you are in trouble like being high-jacked.... Makes me think that human rights are supposed to be there to help you and then it does not help you..... Like doctors, you have the right to good health and let's say you get hurt and you get them and then they don't help you. ... You know they say human rights help you but some people don't want to help you like that doctors and nurses. It makes me think that human rights are only good when people are doing what they are supposed to do.	A government organisation from Limpopo that asked me to deliver a speech on the voice of the child... I was one of the guest speakers at this event... mostly adults were present but it was open to the public... the purpose of the event was to let people know and create awareness. Educate people about their rights. To make people aware we have these rights.
	Like the time when there was xenophobia, the people who came here they were tortured and we are all Africans here and they did not treat them as equals.	My family do not really talk about human rights as that we talk about our rights as Muslims in Islam. We go to Madressa in the afternoons, and you learn about you know - what kind of person you have to be and what another person deserves,

		what rights they deserve. Things like that we learn in the Madressa.
	<p>People maybe they do crime and at court they have the right to an attorney although they are wrong. Or you stole or something but you still have the right to an attorney because you are not guilty until proven guilty. So we have the right to an attorney..... Sometimes you will not know if the person is guilty until proven guilty. Maybe some other person killed that person but left or the evidence on someone else and said it's him and it's not true.</p>	<p>South Africa is lucky that they have all of these rights. I went to visit my grandparents there in Jordan and they don't have all these things like here. They are not free to what they want there it's all different. Like if they go to prison there and they had committed a small crime they would be killed and if they steal they have their hands chopped off. This is based on the Islamic religion. Here they are very lucky because if you go to Iraq they have no rights at all. The soldiers control everything.</p>
	<p>Like the children in Zimbabwe not going to school... It's against their human right... Mugabe should be helping the children in Zimbabwe to get education.</p>	<p>In South Africa the crimes are sky-high, we know that. Its not our fault, I don't know what happened that there is all these crimes and things but then the government does not create jobs and so many people that are uneducated. Children and teenagers in lower communities fall pregnant and they need grants. It starts with the government they need to educate the people, so the people can learn. The people don't have the skills to do the jobs that other people might have. Job creation is very thin..... yes, the crime will be low because people wont have to steal for things that they need because they will have jobs. A lot of things might just stop happening. People that can't control themselves like the people who rape people; they will be put into jail. But other people who really just steal because they need to eat, its something that the government really needs to think about.</p>
		<p>Talking about education and stealing. Look at India it's a poor country, majority of the people don't have jobs. You don't find major robberies like in South Africa. Compared to India, India has a massive population compared to South Africa. But the unemployment is nothing compared</p>

		<p>to India's they did a survey on the people that are not employed in India but you won't find these robberies and rapes.... Even if you are not educated you must be able to do something. Wash a car or do some gardening you don't have need to be educated for things like that. You don't need to steal; you must just not be lazy. And these people they say there are no jobs in South Africa but you can go to many businesses and you will see there are jobs they need people to work. But these people plain and simple do not want to work they just want to steal and that's what they do.</p>
		<p>Even in Canada they have the freedom like here but there they have the death penalty but they actually educate the people. They should target the areas where people are not educated. And all these streets kids lying around, they should take them and put them in schools. But the government they don't want to.... The government is like this because they have got the power to do anything and everything.</p>

From Table 4.5 certain aspects pertaining to the factors that are influencing learners understanding of human rights became evident. Within the domains; educational factors, societal factors, value driven factors and other factors came to the fore. These will be considered in the next section.

What became evident was that participants from both schools presented lengthy arguments in their discussions on human rights and religion. It seems that the majority of the participants reasoned that a person's religion, culture or tradition does not in fact influence their understandings of human rights. Each group of participants used different arguments to support their reasons. These ranged from a lack of understanding diverse religions to the inability of people to stray from the 'rights' pertaining to an individual's religion. In terms of the domain dealing with aspects of human rights values, participants in both schools took into account that human rights are not without certain responsibilities. In line with human rights values, School B participants discussed some of the competing views between religion and human rights. These included arguments on sexuality and the death penalty. The last domain encompassed the common factors which influenced their

understanding of human rights. Prominent factors in this domain included a global outlook on what is happening in other countries in terms of human rights the South African government's approach to human rights. This was in line with what participants wrote in their narratives in section 4.5, namely that, participants from School B incorporated human rights values in their discussions while participants from School A drew on and discussed more tangible and concrete examples. A possible reason for this could be the fact that some learners in School B have had first hand experience of human rights issues in other countries placing them in a position to be able to make a comparison.

In the next section (4.6.2), I will elaborate of certain aspects that emerged from the participants' responses. These will include educational factors such as the legalistic and compartmentalised approaches taken by schools in teaching-and-learning of human rights, which also featured prominently in the observation data (4.4.2.2). A further aspect that deserves attention is assessment relating to human rights. During the focus-group interviews, participants from School A referred to assessment that tended to be summative, while School B participants referred to formative assessment. This could influence the way in which the participants understand human rights teaching-and-learning.

In the next section, I will analyse, interpret and discuss the data obtained during the focus group interviews (see Table 4.5) and address the research aims and questions (1.4; 1.5).

#### **4.6.2 Analysis, interpretations and discussions of focus-group interviews**

The observations conducted (4.4) and the narratives collected (4.5) informed the construction of coherent and valuable focus-group interviews. These methods facilitated familiarising the researcher with the environment in which the research was being undertaken and to go beyond the allocated interview questions to extend aspects that the participants discussed in their narratives or displayed during the observation period. The analysis and interpretation of the focus-group interview questions will use the headings identified in the presentation of the data.

The following statements will be used to guide the discussions of the implications that these statements might have for understanding human rights:

- Participants tended to instinctively refer to the Life Orientation learning area when they were asked where or when they had heard and/or learnt about human rights.

- In terms of assessment, School A and School B had very different approaches resulting in one school being focused on the assessment **of** human rights while the other school was more concerned with assessment **for** human rights.
- Heated discussions emanated from religion and human rights, which generated another lens to consider how the participants understand human rights.
- Participants did not hesitate when they commented that 'with rights comes responsibilities'. The meaning participants gave to the concept responsibility determined whether the participants really acknowledge responsibility as a human rights value.
- Non-sexism, respect, social justice and human dignity were human rights values that surfaced amongst participants in School B in different contexts further illustrating the stance taken by learners' in their understanding of human rights.
- Participants focused on other countries or the South African government when discussing human rights.

#### 4.6.2.1 Human rights in the curriculum

When participants were asked where they had heard or learnt about human rights participants from both School A and School B referred instinctively to the Life Orientation learning area. This created the impression that themes related to human rights were naturally embedded in Life Orientation more than in all other learning areas. It was only after the participants were prompted to consider where else (besides Life Orientation) they had dealt with human rights that consideration was given to other learning areas such as English, History and Economic Management Sciences. It was as though the participants would not even have acknowledged other learning areas if the researcher had not insisted that they reflect on where human rights had featured in any other learning areas. This is similar to what was noted during the observation period. Then human rights came across as being compartmentalised (4.4.2.2) into subjects or themes. During the interviews participants displayed a similar understanding of human rights as relating to what they should do and how they should behave. Little was said by the participants, for instance, about why they should honour their rights or be responsible about using their rights. Such an outlook on human rights can be generated from two positions.

One position could stem from the ontological realisation and comprehension of why human rights should feature in the curriculum or, from a more compartmentalised outlook, why human rights should feature in Life Orientation as the second outcome. This ontological question (2.2) of why human rights should feature was not evident from the participants' responses. When the

participants were asked whether they think human rights should be compulsory in the curriculum the participants responded by saying yes they did. The reasons given for this view were that being informed or knowledgeable about human rights would protect you if you landed in situations such as losing your job and so forth. This type of reasoning related to security does demonstrate that the participants consider being knowledgeable of human rights could solve their problems resulting in a type of procedural understanding (2.3.1.2) of human rights. An understanding such as this could be dangerous as it might regard human rights as a 'tool' or 'weapon' that can be referred to when in conflict situations making human rights no more than a legalistic device when used negligently.

The other position elaborates on how learners are taught about human rights. This would predominantly take cognisance of the methodological stance employed by teachers in relation to the facilitation strategies and methods they used in teaching-and-learning. Participants gave some indication of this stance when they were asked to describe how their teachers had told them about human rights. Most of the participants referred to their teachers' giving them worksheets and initiating discussions about the content of the worksheets. Here the teachers might adopt a mediator's role (2.4.2), that is one in which the teaching-and-learning environment is not dominated by the teacher conveying information or being the only source of knowledge. The discussions held, questions asked and experiences shared guide the parties involved to recognise all possibilities and alternatives that can be explored in order to illustrate that there is not only one solution to any given problem. Rather than having the teacher adopt a behaviourist approach (2.4.1) towards human rights teaching-and-learning which involves mere transmitting and receiving of information, with the teacher as the only provider of information.

Therefore the reason for having human rights in the curriculum was not clear in the participants' responses. This suggests that there is little attention given to the ontological implications of human rights. However, the methodological approach that the participants claim that their teachers adopted during human rights teaching-and-learning suggests that both the teacher and learners are part of the learning process. This reveals that opportunities are created for learners to develop their own understanding and construct their own knowledge of human rights rather than be indoctrinated by the teacher's view, even though these contexts might be compartmentalised and limited to the Life Orientation learning area.

#### 4.6.2.2 Assessment *of* and *for* human rights

Assessment takes many forms and can serve various purposes (2.4.3). Due to the fact that school classrooms are made up of learners who have different learning styles and abilities, it is vital for

more than one approach to assessment to be considered (2.4.3). From the participants' responses, it became evident that School A and School B adopted very different approaches to assessment. The responses from the participants in School A indicated that one form of assessment namely tests dominated the approach used to assess human rights. The participants explained that these tests included questions such as 'when is human rights day?' The nature of this assessment lends itself to displaying content about human rights which is factual and excludes interpretation and explanation. Assessment **of** human rights predominates since the emphasis is on content about human rights (2.4.3). This type of approach could lead to an understanding of human rights as knowledge that is fixed and thus portray human rights as something that is static (2.3.2.1). School B has somewhat of a different stance to assessing human rights. In School B assessment consists not only of tests but also assignments, posters compilation, role play and case study analysis. Such forms of assessment could encourage knowledge and understanding through addressing different styles of learning. Assessment **for** human rights is likely when more than content pertaining to human rights is assessed (2.4.3). There is also an emphasis on moving beyond human rights content and acknowledging human rights skills and values as well. Assessing for this type of outcome will enhance the way that human rights knowledge and understanding is developed and furthermore acknowledging that human rights are not fixed, preconceived or static (2.3.2.1).

#### 4.6.2.3 Human rights and religion

When participants were asked whether they thought that a person's religion, culture and tradition could influence how he or she understands human rights, participants of both schools presented very interesting arguments. Observations done in School A indicated that teachers often used religion as a point of departure for presenting human rights values (4.4.2.4). However, during the interview, learners' comments did not reflect what teachers had done during observation, namely that they had used religion as the point of departure for human rights. Three out of the four participants explained they did not think that a person's religion, culture or tradition influences how he or she understands human rights. This view was reflected in their argument they as children do not understand their own religion or other religions. An example illustrating this point was when one participant in School A demonstrated a reaction to the *hijab*. This participant assumed that all Indians are Muslim when he said that "sometimes the Indians always put these things on their heads and it's not allowed at school then we laugh at them". Another participant supported this stance by asserting that there is a lack of understanding of religions other than his own and other religions do not understand his religion. This position taken by learners at School A suggests that these participants view religion as particularistic in the sense that human beings react differently in specific religious situations and it is, therefore, not possible for a religion to have a general set of

principles (2.2.1). These participants' understanding of religion can be seen as reflecting different underlying stances making it complex and different across religions and also within the same religion. Human rights, on the other hand, are perceived by learners' as more straightforward since that they are universal in that all humans are entitled to human rights as a general set of principles (2.2.1).

Four of the five participants at School B responded that most religions and cultures have their own separate rights, as opposed to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for instance. One of the examples used to support of this view was that some religions believe that women are inferior to men. The argument presented by these participants is based on the realisation that religion has no influence on human rights as these are in fact different domains. These participants do not adopt a liberal view (2.2.1.1) which in essence sees human rights (or religion) as having certain specific principles that can be applied to in different dilemmas, contexts or decisions. These participants' discussions suggest that rights are related (2.2.1) to various elements. For instance, they presented the view that people will base their judgements and decisions on either: which 'rights' (government or religion) treat them better as well as which 'rights' (government or religion) the person has become accustomed to first. These points were elaborated on by one of the participant's when they exclaimed that "in one's culture it says that if you get married you get this but in the governments' human rights you don't". In other words, they saw people as adopting or adhering to the 'rights' they most agree with and/or that they understand best.

This approach is argued by Du Preez and Roux (2010) as the "over simplification of values" and the negotiation of certain values. Firstly, it is evident that these participants turn to cultural rights because they perceive these as less complex and more understandable. Secondly, the participants negotiate and move between, what they define as, government and religion rights depending on the system that they consider suits them best in a particular situation. In other words, they see people as able to juggle these rights to suit their situations. This suggests that a particularist position (2.2.1) to human rights is favoured by these participants: human beings react differently in different situations making it unattainable for human rights to hold a general set of principles. Du Preez and Roux (2010) state that a stance such as this could lead to particularist hostility and that dialogue should be employed as a means of justifying the competing ideas of emancipatory rights (what participants have been referring to as government rights) and transcendental obligations (what participants have been referring to as religion rights).

#### 4.6.2.4 Rights and responsibilities

It was quite remarkable that practically all the participants at both schools were familiar with the notion of 'rights and responsibility'. The participants used this notion confidently in their answers to the focus-group interview questions and in their explanations in discussions. At first I was given the impression that these participants used this notion as a memorised expression and asked them to clarify this notion. One of the participants in School A explained that if, when you are talking the teacher requests you to stop talking, you reply saying that you have the right to talk, then you are not using rights responsibly (Table 4.5). Another participant in School A reasoned that it is important for you to exercise your rights responsibly because when you grow up you will be able to look after yourself and be more informed about life. From their explanations it became clear that the human rights value *responsibility* should not be perceived as the hobby-horse phrase that is automatically presented in human rights discourses. Deep understanding (2.3.1.4) of this human rights value was evident as the participants demonstrated their understanding by using reasoning which transformed information into valuable and meaningful knowledge.

#### 4.6.2.5 Human rights values

Without my deliberately making the participants from School B aware of or asking them direct questions related to human rights values, values featured strongly in their arguments. However, these participants intuitively drew on human rights values in the reasoning that they provided, and they did not directly refer to these values by name. I will now mention three instances when participants referred to human rights values in order to augment this stance.

One participant in School B displayed an understanding of **respect** by stating that even though in his religion "being gay" is prohibited and that he personally does not agree with the notion of being gay, he respects gay people. Furthermore, another participant in School B referred to the fact that in some religions women are perceived as being inferior to men. One needs to take cognisance of sexism and the human rights value of **non-sexism**. The last example I shall refer to was mentioned by more than one participant in School B (Table 4.5). Three of the five participants at School B substantiated the viewpoint that the death penalty should be re-introduced in our country. Included in this opinion was the argument that in order to decrease crime and theft rates, criminals should have their hands chopped off to ensure safety in our country because the prisons are over-crowded and ineffective. The other two participants presented a counter argument to this stance in the discussion. They argued that violence would not solve the problem because it encourages a cycle of violence, which has many consequences. Moreover, education should be the solution to the

problems of crime, abuse, theft and so forth. These debates illustrate that the human rights value **human dignity** was being discussed perhaps even the complexities of the notion of human dignity are implicit in the suggestion that the guilty party is infringing on another person's human dignity. Therefore, these participants intuitively emphasised these human rights values and their explanations illustrated that they were implicitly aware of the anti-foundational (2.3.2.2) nature of human rights which has the potential to generate various viewpoints and understandings of human rights.

#### 4.6.2.6 Global countries and South African government systems

The participants' narratives raised the question as to why the participants contextualised their understanding of human rights in relation to South Africa (4.5.2.1.a). To clarify and explore why the participants expressed themselves in this way, I asked the participants during the focus-group interview to provide reasons for this method of thinking. Participants from both schools made it evident that placing their understanding of human rights in a context did not reflect short-sightedness or a display of memorised content related to that context. Instead, the participants' responses in the interview led me to more confident about the counter argument I presented in section 4.5.2.1.a pertaining to the effectiveness of expressing human rights through contexts.

Two common contexts that the participants used to contextualise their understanding of human rights included firstly looking at how human rights were demonstrated globally and secondly how human rights are understood in the South African context. Participants seemed to have mixed perceptions of the global context. Some proclaimed that a country like Canada is a more stable and secure country because the government takes initiatives to educate the people about human rights and responsible behaviour. Another, however, stressed that people in countries like Jordan and Iraq they are much worse off than South Africans because they do not have any rights or any say at all (Table 4.5). This participant in School B made it clear that instead of freedom and security the soldiers control everything. On the other hand, participants that expressed their understanding of human rights in a South African context reflected one position. These participants drew on the incompetent conduct of the current government and government's service providers to ensure the security and prosperity of all South Africans. Emphasis was placed on the fact that policemen, policewomen and medical doctors were falling short of their responsibility and this sent the message to the public that the members of society responsible for promoting and upholding human rights were in fact neglecting them. The outlook of these participants reflects a bleak future for South Africa from their perspective and understanding of human rights.

In order to articulate their understanding of human rights in way they could relate to, participants situated their arguments in the South African situation. This supports the view that they have a deep understanding of human rights as it provides evidence that these participants are able to think flexibly about human rights (2.3.1.4). The participants have also demonstrated that they can relate human rights ideas to different contexts and also apply human rights knowledge in an integrated, holistic and well-structured manner.

#### **4.6.3 General conclusions regarding the interpretation and discussions of focus-group interviews**

The focus-group interviews were conducted, the data were collected, presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed. These findings were explored by identified domains in section 4.6.2. In some instances the findings made in during the observation period (4.4) and the narratives received (4.5) were further enhanced by the findings of the focus-group interviews. However, other factors that influence the way learners' understand human rights also came to the fore. It became evident that the curriculum presents a compartmentalised view of human rights so discussions of the human rights curriculum centred on the Life Orientation learning area. When participants were not asked about human rights in the context of the curriculum, their arguments were less elusive and more persuasive. This generates the perception that participants have a deeper understanding of human rights when they can refer to contextualised situations that n their everyday lives. Another finding generated by the focus-group interviews was the implicit manner in which the participants referred to human rights values in their reasoning and also the vivid standpoints they projected during the discussions on human rights and religion.

#### **4.7 RESEARCH FINDINGS INDIRECTLY RELATED TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study has developed rich, descriptive data that could be used to answer the research questions with a high measure of confidence and achieve the research aims (1.4; 1.5). The data in this study produced findings that require further exploration.. Some of these aspects include:

- Learners have many unanswered questions about human rights such as the historical underpinning of how, why and when human rights started.
- Learners want more clarity of how to apply human rights in their everyday lives.
- There are conflicting ideas of what human rights entail between learners at school with their teachers as well as learners at home with their parents or guardians.

- The influence of schools rules, classroom organization, discipline and other managements systems in the school often contradict what learners are being taught in human rights education.
- Learners prominently identify human rights as something that will provide power to minimise violations such as women and child abuse.
- The governmental structures and way of life in South Africa are compared with international countries.
- Current political and social affairs that are displayed by the media have a profound effect on the way learners shape their knowledge and understanding of particular issues.
- Teachers are ill-informed about the home circumstances of the learners sitting in their classes, for instance whether the learner is the eldest, youngest, only child at home, what responsibilities of the learner has at home and what the situation the parents of this learner are in.

These aspects present worthwhile possibilities for further research studies.

#### **4.8 TRIANGULATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF OBSERVATIONS, NARRATIVES AND FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEWS**

As was noted in section 3.3.9, triangulation forms part of ensuring the validity and trustworthiness of the research study. In this study triangulation does not only occur in one form or at one time, rather it features throughout the study and across the chapters. In this way, triangulation features through the literature review (Chapter 2), focus-group interviews, observations and written narratives as a means to cross-check the data collected and enhance the quality of the research. Triangulation goes deeper than 'comparing' the data received from participants through different data collection methods; it also acknowledges the relationship these findings have with the literature or theory forming the body of scholarship.

Good research employs triangulation as an unremitting process that involves various forms of validation to ensure the data is trustworthy and relevant to the research aims and questions. In this study triangulation, as a means to seek trustworthiness in the data collected and to create a more complete interpretation, was ensured through the continuous grappling with validation elements such as member checking, content validity, inter-code validity, thick descriptions, referential adequacy (3.3.9). Once more, these forms of trustworthiness were not displayed as one-off methods but developed into a continuous habit throughout the research study. Since only one

grade was used in the two schools, I had the time to develop a relationship of trust with the participants. Such an atmosphere made it possible to ask the participants to re-phrase and confirm their experiences and viewpoints. This made it possible to confirm that the findings had been accurately depicted. Moreover, the environment that was created made participants feel confident about expressing themselves and sharing their views. An environment such as this provided opportunities for me to ask open-ended questions and invite participants to respond with in-depth responses. In this manner rich and thick data providing ample relevant and valid information applicable to this study resulted.

Once the data had been collected, I paid attention to the referential adequacy and the trustworthiness of this data. The nature of such exercises demanded that a constant re-visiting and re-working of data be employed. This required me to engage with the interpretations made in order to seek for the most relevant interpretations based on the primary data the interviews, observations and written narratives. When I was reflecting on and interpreting the data, I paid due attention to the need to have a high level of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was determined by taking into account the truthfulness of the data, the consistency of the findings and whether the deductions made of the data presented true and logical findings and not findings constructed solely by me. Constructive interactions were held between my promoter, knowledgeable colleagues and me very early in the research process to discuss the validity of the research methodology and design to be employed in this study. This was very helpful as it prompted and simulated reflections about the validity and trustworthiness of these research processes to this research study. I also ensured beforehand that I had allocated enough time to consult with my promoter when critical decisions concerning the coding of data needed to be taken. Consultation between the researcher, promoter of this study and other knowledgeable colleagues was further means of validating the coding of data.

As a result it became evident that triangulation is by no means a 'last-step' or afterthought in the research process. It is an energetic and continuous activity that becomes an admirable habit in the production of valid and trustworthy research.

#### **4.9 CONCLUSION**

The findings of the data that have been presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed in this study indicate that there are varying ways which define how primary schools learners' understand human rights teaching-and-learning. The factors that influence this understanding stem from elements extending from the curriculum and in society. It seems that learners find conveying their

understanding of human rights from particular perspective/s an intricate process. From a curriculum perspective human rights were perceived as compartmentalised in specific learning areas making it difficult for learners not to rely solely on factual and legal components pertaining to human rights. This meant their narratives were loaded with information pertaining to human rights legal documents and/or information **about** human rights content.

On the other hand, when learners were asked to reflect on factors which directly influence their lives in terms of human rights their responses were more logical and rich. Arguments that drew on religion, politics, human rights values, society, family and global occurrences surfaced. Confident reasoning with sound arguments came to the fore illustrating current and true events revealing a deep understanding of human rights. It became clear that learners were at ease with **what** human rights encompass, **how** it comes to the fore in their lives and **why**, it is a part of our lives.

These findings also highlighted the intuitive and implicit manner in which these participants acknowledged human rights values without directly referring to them in the questions they were asked. Linked to this were the constant debates on competing ideas in an attempt to not only justify different points of view but to illuminate the fact that human rights often do not have clear-cut and straightforward answers. The need to acknowledge and explore these complexities became prominent in the observations as issues such as competing ideas of discipline (4.4.2.3) arose. Du Preez and Roux (2010) draw on the need for dialogue as an attempt to transform our diverse, democratic society so that the multicultural ideas of a democratic education system in South Africa are not jeopardised. I believe that this highlights the need for a paradigm shift away from human rights as a product towards human rights as a praxis. Similarly as curriculum as product endorses that the teaching-and-learning environment can be manipulated and controlled due to the fact that learners are seen as objects and teaching is regarded as a product (2.4.4.1). Human rights as a product means that human rights content is simplified and generalised into a "one-size fits all" approach to knowledge, which is evident in the participants' responses. Alternatively, education should strive towards a curriculum as praxis approach (2.4.4.3) where human rights as praxis are promoted. This stance acknowledges that emancipation, reflection and critical consciousness are key principles in the development of deep understanding in the human rights teaching-and-learning context.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this research a qualitative research study was undertaken which involved empirical research and which was centred on an exploratory research design (3.2). The aim was to contribute to theoretical discourses on how human rights teaching-and-learning is understood with the intention of providing another lens to view human rights in education. Learners from public and private schools using outcomes-based education were used as participants in this study. The aim was to provide a voice to learners whose education is embedded in a 'Human Rights Across The Curriculum' (Department of Education, 2002) approach.

This final chapter will give attention to the following:

- an overview of the theoretical and empirical findings in this study;
- recommendations based on the findings of this study;
- identified limitations in this study;
- issues emanating from this study to be considered for further research; and
- a short conclusion of this research study.

#### 5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

**Chapter 1** orientated the study by providing a background to the study and articulating the general research problem identified for exploration (1.5). It became evident that although human rights are perceived as a priority in curricula in the South African education system, there is still confusion and conflict on human rights issues. One way of identifying some of the challenges would be to go to the sites where an understanding of human rights is being developed. Role players might include government, education departments (national and provincial), school management and governance, teachers and learners. This study considered the learner's perspective and used another lens through which to view human rights teaching-and-learning. The intention was to highlight how human rights are understood and the factors influencing this understanding.

### 5.2.1 Theoretical findings

In **Chapter 2** understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning was situated in a theoretical and philosophical framework that takes account of ontological (2.2), epistemological (2.3) and methodological (2.4) stances: a tri-articulate body of scholarship. These stances although tri-articulate are not in isolation from one another just as the review of literature explores the views presented in relation to others in the field.

Attention will now be given to the theoretical findings prevalent to this study.

#### 5.2.1.1. Curriculum, classroom practice and the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning

Section 2.1.3 showed the various forms that a curriculum can take. Within a human rights teaching-and-learning context, curriculum adopts forms that explicitly and implicitly deal with human rights. Since human rights teaching-and-learning claims to take a holistic or 'across the curriculum' stance in South African education system, the theory used in this study had to reflect this stance. If curricula only dealt with human rights explicitly through formally designed curricula, then human rights would lean heavily on legalistic notions. Although there is a place for this approach, curricula must also adhere to human rights implicitly by taking into consideration morally related human rights behaviour that is not overt and/or used for examination purposes. Human rights has to take a whole school approach (1.3) which does not involve educating people in human rights content only.

Understanding human rights teaching-and-learning in this way relies on acknowledging that classroom practice takes account of the pedagogical interactions taking place in the classroom as well as the external factors that are influencing these interactions (2.1.4). The theoretical underpinning of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development (2.1.4) was used to demonstrate this theoretical position. It presents a logical explanation of the dynamic influence external factors that learners bring with them into classroom have on the teaching-and-learning process. It has become evident through this theory that learning does not only take place in the classroom. It is often assumed that learners take what they have learnt at school into society. However, it must be acknowledged that experiences that are gained outside of the classroom are brought into the classroom and influence the teaching-and-learning processes just as evidently. In this way, theoretical findings have illustrated that curriculum and classroom practices profoundly influence how human rights are understood.

### **5.2.1.2. The interconnectedness of morality and human rights in influencing how human rights are understood**

Philosophical discourses have brought to the fore the necessity to evaluate the reasons that human rights should be included in our curricula and educational systems. These *why* questions result from too much emphasis being placed on human rights content and the methodological (facilitation) implications of this content. Little attention has been given to the purpose behind human rights teaching-and-learning (2.2). Theory has confidently pointed to moral education as a reason for the inclusion and demonstration of human rights teaching-and-learning in our schools. Moral education can take various metatheoretical positions namely liberalist (2.2.1.1), traditional communitarianism (2.2.1.2), communitarian pragmatism (2.2.1.3) and ethicists of care (2.2.1.4). Each of these metatheoretical positions exercises its own influence on how human rights are understood. Moral metatheoretical positions taken by educational systems, curricula and teachers to human rights influence the understanding of human rights learners are given. It seems that an “ethicists of care” (2.2.2) stance should be promoted because it adheres to the basic universal judgements underpinning morality, even although it also acknowledges that morality can be expressed in different ways. This highlights the interconnectedness of morality and human rights and the ability for these two to embrace the purpose behind the inclusion and implementation of human rights in pedagogy.

### **5.2.1.3. Types of knowledge and understanding initiate the type of human rights teaching-and-learning developed**

Types of knowledge and types of understanding can shape how human rights teaching-and-learning evolves. Although this could be prescriptive, theoretical findings have portrayed the potential of human rights teaching-and-learning to be influenced in the way in which knowledge is approached (2.3.1) and the level of understanding (2.3.1.4) that is gained. It is then apparent that different types of human rights will emanate when different types of knowledge and understanding predominate. It is worth acknowledging that positions held by static knowledge, such as declarative knowledge (2.3.1.1) and surface understanding (2.3.1.4) initiating teaching-and-learning *about* human rights (2.3.1.5), generate fixed understandings restricted to human rights content (2.3.1.6.a). This approach to human rights teaching-and-learning will provide knowledge centred on human rights but will not sustain a holistic approach to human rights teaching-and-learning which acknowledges knowledge as well as skills, attitudes and values. An approach such as this will rely on a type of knowledge such as conditional knowledge (2.3.1.3) to generate deep understanding (2.3.1.4) and teaching-and-learning *for* human rights (2.3.1.5).

#### **5.2.1.4. Anti-foundationalism as a paradigmatic position for understanding human rights teaching-and-learning**

The body of scholarship on the understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning sees a foundational understanding of human rights as depicting human rights as secure, certain and fixed (2.2.1; 2.3.1.6.a; 2.3.2.1). As has been argued by many theorists, human rights teaching-and-learning relies on more than educating about human rights content. To avoid the implementation of a legalistic approach to human rights teaching-and-learning and/or a position of accepting human rights as static and bound to fixed principles, anti-foundationalism as a paradigmatic position for understanding human rights teaching-and-learning must be adopted. Anti-foundationalism (also referred to as coherentism) is not without flaws as it regards knowledge as relative since this could degenerate into relativism (2.2.1.3.a). However, anti-foundationalism provides possibilities which inhibit human rights teaching-and-learning being solely dedicated to educating about human rights content and regarding human rights as isolated from values and morals. Anti-foundational human rights knowledge dismisses the acceptance of one truth but allows knowledge to become relevant to changing times and various contexts making it ever changing and evolving. As theory has demonstrated, human rights teaching-and-learning benefits from an anti-foundational approach as it includes attitudes, moral and values as a fundamental part of its priorities and allows for relevant epistemology to originate in our diverse and ever changing society (2.3.3).

#### **5.2.1.5. Curriculum frameworks as departure points in learners understanding of human rights**

It is plain that the stance taken by curriculum towards human rights teaching-and-learning will influence understanding of human rights that is presented. The review of theory in this study considered the paradigmatic positions of curriculum as product (2.4.4.1), curriculum as practice (2.4.4.2) and curriculum as praxis (2.4.4.3). Unlike the findings presented in section 5.2.1.4 curriculum as product promotes a foundationalist (2.3.2.1) view of human rights teaching-and-learning as it sees the curriculum as a product that can be controlled and manipulated. In contrast, curriculum as practice (2.4.4.2) and praxis (2.4.4.3) will provide develop an understanding of human rights inclusive of reflection, critical thinking and meaning making (2.4.5).

**Chapter 3** explored the framework of a design, methodology and methods best suited to address the research aims and anticipated problems. This framework which provided the theoretical foundation of the study included an exploratory research design (3.2.3) embedded in empirical

research (3.2.1) and qualitative research methodology (3.2.2). The research processes (3.3) and research methods (3.4) complemented the designs and methodologies as they further supported addressing the research problems anticipated. This chapter also gave consideration to procedures that will be employed to ensure trustworthiness and validity (3.4.5) by considering triangulation as well as other relevant trustworthy and validity elements. Ethical concerns must form a fundamental part of any research process. This research study took account all of the necessary ethical considerations (3.5).

## 5.2.2 Empirical findings

Data were presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed in **Chapter 4**. Key empirical findings were used to arrive at complex answers to the research questions. The most salient of these empirical findings will now be highlighted.

### 5.2.2.1. **Understanding human rights teaching-and-learning in relation to discipline**

It became apparent through the observations that teachers refer to values and morals when instilling discipline in learners (4.4.2.3). The disciplinary actions that were observed in the research environments rarely involved violent or abusive reactions by teachers or learners. Teachers' reactions were predominantly aimed at motivating the learners to behave differently or to reflect on their actions. It might be argued that human rights play a role in positive disciplinary actions as it seemed that teachers strove to identify good and bad values and morals. Learners' reflection on their actions and endeavours to improve are examples of indirectly dealing with human rights values.

### 5.2.2.2. **Value of narratives for understanding human rights**

Narratives allow people to tell their stories and in the process share experiences and communicate meaning (3.4.3). When participants were asked to share their narratives of human rights a common trend amongst the participants was to contextualise their stories. The most common themes related to contextualising their stories in South Africa education and values in general (4.5.1). It became apparent that the participants' understanding of human rights was related to 'real' events and that they were able to share their own experiences in a South African education or value context. Narratives provided a space for reflection in which real life experiences and points of view were expressed. It seems, therefore, that narratives allow human rights understanding to be articulated in a manner that does not rely on legalistic trivia or curriculum content particulars alone. Narratives

might draw on these but because narratives are able to communicate an individual's understanding uniquely, they also reflect the individuals own experiences. The findings revealed that participants most commonly understand human rights in the context of historical and current political and social events in South Africa: awareness is created in educational settings as well as from experiences which have a value laden connotation. These findings explain why learners are able to articulate their understanding of human rights confidently when they are asked to reflect on their own experiences.

### **5.2.2.3. The notion 'rights and responsibilities'**

It was significant that when many of the participants answered interviewed questions (4.6.1) and wrote their narratives (4.5.1) they mentioned that rights come with responsibilities. Since all participants reflected this view, a question related to this was asked in the focus-group interview. When participants were given the opportunity to explain the way that they used this phrase, their understanding of human rights emerged clearly. The emphasis on the connection between rights and responsibilities emanated predominantly from a discipline and basic needs viewpoint (4.6.2.4). The findings can be interpreted as learners' seeing the need for responsibility if human rights are to be a success. It can be argued that unless human rights are portrayed responsibly, human rights are bound to fail. This is a profound finding as it acknowledges that learners view "rights" as having implications, which will have consequences. One of the participants demonstrated this point by articulating that "it is important that you are responsible with your rights because when you grow up you will be able to look after yourself and be more informed about life" (4.6.2.4).

### **5.2.2.4. Human rights are compartmentalised entities in the curriculum**

As a result of the observation (4.4.1) and focus-group interviews (4.6.1), attention was automatically drawn to the Life Orientation learning area when the question of where human rights knowledge and understanding was acquired arose. The observation in both schools revealed human rights as being compartmentalised; human rights were content specific within a particular learning area with particular learning area outcomes (4.4.2.2). A stance such as this encourages a fixed and static understanding of human rights and hinders the implementation of human rights across the curriculum as is anticipated by the National Curriculum Statement (2002) curriculum in South Africa.

The focus-group interviews issues regarding human rights and the curriculum were two fold. Firstly, findings indicated that learners had little understanding of the ontological underpinning of human

rights (4.6.2.1). Secondly, that even though the teaching methodologies adopted by teachers allowed learners to construct their own knowledge and understanding and not become limited by the teacher's knowledge only, human rights were still seen as a separate entity in particular areas of the curriculum (4.6.2.1).

#### **5.2.2.5. Input of religion in understanding human rights**

It became evident during the observation (4.4.2.4) that the two participating schools have different stances on religion. School A is a private Christian school and the school's ethos is based on Christian ideals. This school acknowledges the role of Christianity across the curriculum and has made efforts to apply religion in the teaching-and-learning of all learning areas and through day-to-day actions such as discipline. Even though the school set-up is founded on Christian principles it is also driven by OBE curriculum and has learners who are not necessarily Christians. This became evident from the observation in the classrooms as well as in the focus-group interviews. Learners made it clear that children do not understand 'their religion or the religion of others'. Their perception of human rights was embedded in its universality and understood more broadly (4.6.2.3). School B is a public school that does not promote any religion but acknowledges the diversity of religions of the South African context. No religious input was apparent during the observations. A question regarding religion was put to the learners during the focus-group interview and they referred to human rights as something that can be negotiated within religious and cultural rights. They claim that most religions and cultures have their own rights separate from the human rights in Chapter Two of the Constitution (1996). Furthermore, people are more inclined to adopt the rights which treat them best or which they are most committed to. The analysis of this remark suggests that learners do understand human rights as something that can be negotiated on the basis on certain principles such as situational preference and religious commitment (4.6.2.3).

#### **5.2.3 Concluding findings**

Theoretical and empirical findings have addressed the research aims and question (1.4; 1.5) in this study. These findings have determined how learners' understood human rights teaching-and-learning as well as identified some of the factors that have influenced how this understanding enveloped. The proposed recommendations can play a vital role in this study as they acknowledge the theoretical and empirical findings obtained. The recommendations also propose how learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning will influence classroom practice. The recommendations identified in this study will now be discussed.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations suggested by this study must be viewed in the context of the advice presented by Nieuwenhuis (2007a:vii), namely that human rights education is more than a field of study and that it must be understood in terms of the values on which it is founded. These suggestions will contribute to exploring how human rights are understood and acknowledging what factors are influencing this understanding. Recommendations emanate from research done in the Schools A and B in this study with the intention of improving classroom practice.

#### **5.3.1. Understanding classroom practice in teaching-and-learning to infuse a culture of human rights**

Classroom practice encapsulates the social construct which takes into consideration not only the 'overt, explicit, documented or written' aspects of human rights teaching-and-learning occurring in the classroom but also external aspects and issues that the learners bring into the classroom (2.1.4). In this way, teachers need to acknowledge that learners are not conditioned to act in a certain way in the school environment and in another way outside of school. Learners bring their 'baggage' with them to school and this often generates competing ideas between peers and teachers. In order to infuse a culture of human rights in the classroom teachers need to be aware that the learners come from various backgrounds comprised of different cultural, religious, economic and social circumstances. Through the acknowledgement of diversity teachers can facilitate teaching-and-learning in such a way that promotes a human rights culture that includes developing teacher-learner relationships that are based on respect and dignity. This approach should create an effective learning environment where intolerance, abuse, violence and other human rights infringements are not accepted.

#### **5.3.2. Human rights teaching-and-learning unbound of predetermined entities**

Human rights are too often automatically referred to as the content found in the Life Orientation learning area (4.6.2.1). Labelling human rights as predominantly in the field of Life Orientation, places human rights into a predetermined entity. A position that adheres to human rights as limited to Life Orientation is limiting human rights to only one of its aspects. I recommended that efforts are made to integrate human rights into all learning areas. Two possible ways of using teaching-and-learning to achieve this include highlighting human rights themes across the curriculum so that teachers can more explicitly refer to them in all learning areas. Approaching human rights in this manner will minimise the chances of human rights being seen as belonging only in the field of Life

Orientation. Teachers should identify human rights issues in other learning areas. However, it can also be argued that if teachers do not have a culture of human rights across the curriculum, then the manner in which human rights are handled in Life Orientation must be such that all human rights issues are adequately addressed.

Secondly, the ontological purpose for the inclusion of human rights needs to be brought to the attention of both the teachers and the learners (2.2.2). The purpose of including human rights and the aims of human rights in education need to become part of teaching discourse and teachers should adapt their teaching strategies (2.4) to enhance the promotion of human rights across the curriculum. It is also important that learners acknowledge the purpose of human rights in the curricula. Only once teachers and learners have acquired an understanding of human rights across the curriculum and have recognised the purpose underlying human rights will they begin to question and critically reflect on human rights teaching-and-learning content and strategies, and be able to reflect rather than just accept and implement this aspect (2.2).

### **5.3.3. Generating an understanding of human rights implicitly**

This research study has revealed the tendency for teachers to acknowledge human rights and more evidently human rights values implicitly during teaching-and-learning (4.4.1). It was found that human rights were only explicitly drawn upon during Life Orientation. What became evident again was the emphasis given to discipline to generate reflections concerning human rights (4.4.2.3; Roux *et al*, 2009). If discipline is viewed from the perspective of Valley (2005:3) who argues that disciplined behaviour refers to behaving in a manner that displays respect and responsibility so that human rights values respect and responsibility are apparent. An approach to discipline that adopts this stance is more likely to generate an understanding of human rights amongst the teachers taking disciplinary action and learners being disciplined. It is recommended that more schools advocate an approach to discipline of this nature. This type of 'positive' discipline allows for learners to interact with each other and with their teachers through dialogue which allows both parties to reflect. Reflection of this nature will generate an ambition in the parties to better themselves and through this process embrace human rights values. Moreover, it is a necessity to recognize that human rights cannot be understood only from a legal perspective, they must be understood in terms of the values on which they are founded (Nieuwenhuis, 2007a:vii).

An implicit approach to human rights should not only feature through discipline but also become a whole school approach. A whole school approach entails a situation in which human rights are embraced in the school system, ethos, organisations, curriculum, and pedagogical relationships

and so forth (1.3). When human rights are implicitly adopted as a whole school approach they invite human rights to become a 'habit of the mind' whereby human rights are not seen as separate entities in particular fields of study but rather as a continuous, integral part of everyday actions and activities. To further enhance a stance such as this one, teachers' should initiate teaching-and-learning strategies which extensively provide opportunities for learners' to reflect on human rights and deepen their understandings of them. This recommendation would require teachers' to have a change of mind-set.

#### **5.3.4. Making human rights authentic**

The research made it evident that when learners were asked where they had learnt about human rights they referred automatically to specific curricular content within particular learning areas (4.6.2.1). However, when learners were given the open-ended context of a narrative to express how they understand human rights their responses were less closed. They referred to authentic experiences and not only the content they had acquired through the content provided on human rights in a particular learning area (4.5.1). Narratives thus allowed the learners to explain their perception of what human rights involve and why. Human rights teaching-and-learning material, therefore, needs to become more authentic in nature. It needs to be tangible and something learners can relate to in their own lives. A means of attempting to do this would be to regard human rights content as anti-foundational (2.3.2.1) by presenting more than universal human rights truths during teaching-and-learning. Human rights content should present human rights as an authentic element with 'real' issues and life challenges. Dialogue surrounding human rights should edge learners towards "dissatisfaction" (Du Preez, 2009). Such a move could result in learners thinking divergently and questioning what is being presented. When situations of dissatisfaction are created through stimuli such as authentic human rights situations, learners are prompted to go beyond their comfort zones. It is through having such moments of disruption that learning is more likely to take place.

#### **5.3.5. Human rights beyond the curriculum**

If schools intend to endorse the National Curriculum Statement 2005 which accentuates that education should aim to "develop learners as local, national and global partners who are sensitive to diversity across a range of social contexts" (Department of Education, 2005b:2), then their curricula need to extend beyond the classroom. Theoretical and empirical findings in this study acknowledge that the understanding learners' acquire of human rights originates from more than just the prescribed curriculum. Learners' understanding drew not only on global crises,

governmental exploitation, and family violence but also freedom, peace, democracy and equality amongst others. These findings made it clear that learners have gained insight into human rights through sources other than the curriculum content presented to them in classrooms. A recommendation would be to transform understanding learners' understandings of human rights obtained from beyond the classroom circle into academic opportunities. Teachers should acknowledge the potential of these knowledges and introduce debates that could develop into academic discourse and dialogues. These discourse must complement existing human rights content in the curriculum and make these teaching-and-learning occurrences more contemporary and authentic (5.3.4).

#### **5.4 SELF-REFLECTION AND REFLEXIVITY OF THE RESEARCHER**

In the project *Understanding human rights through different belief systems: intercultural and interreligious dialogue* (Roux *et al*, 2009), reflective journaling was used to help make teachers reflective practitioners. The intention was to enhance teacher education as well as personal growth and development. Through the interactions that I had with this project and the processes of reflective journaling, I decided to adopt this approach in this study. I kept a journal to reflect on and clarify my ideas during the research processes and also to reflect critically on the aspects that could significantly influence the research study as well as my particular responsibility to the participants. On the other hand, reflexivity also featured when I reflected on my personal professional development, which included aspects of metacognition, empowerment and/or emancipation. As (Wellington, 2000: 42) reminds us, the 'x' in the word reflexive signifies the self.

The journal writing was informal, not academic. For this reason the journal has not been included. Three aspects featured prominently in the self-reflection and reflexivity: the stance taken by the researcher, the scope of the literature and the research methodology and methods used in the study.

##### **5.4.1. Position adopted by the researcher**

According to Nesbitt (2004:6) "reflexive awareness requires probing reflection on the extent to which one is an insider or an outsider to the community which one is observing". This statement made by Nesbitt (2004:6) acknowledges the need for the researcher to take a stance within the research processes. Traditional research does not allow intersubjectivity to emerge as it views the researcher and research as very separate enterprises. However, in this study I engaged in reflexivity about my position as a researcher and embraced the role of intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity is the way that the knowledge and experience between the researcher and the researched is shared and is based on the understanding that the researcher is part of the knowledge construction in this study (Roux, 2007a:506). Within this research study I ,as the researcher, adopted positions which portrayed both 'insider' and 'outsider' stances.

I was an 'outsider' in the sense I am from the Western Cape so the North-West Province was an unfamiliar region in which to conduct the research. I approached the North-West Department of Education as an 'outsider' unaware of how they approached educational research in North-West schools (3.3.1). The schools and participants that were selected also held 'outsider' positions as I had never had any contact with the schools or participants before the study was conducted. (3.3.2). I was more of an outsider in School A than in School B because School A is bases its approach on Christian ideals in an Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) framework. I found this type of environment strange but after sufficient time was spent in this school I became more accustomed to this approach to education. As a qualified teacher, I was more familiar with the OBE approach to education at School B so was an 'insider' in this respect.

During the research processes an 'outsider' approach was administered by the researcher at first in the way that the observation was done and the narratives were handed out and collected. Later in the research processes an 'insider' approach was taken as a means of establishing a rapport with the participants and enabling them to feel comfortable about sharing their views. Adopting an 'insider' stance also emanated from the necessity for me to perceive the world from the participants' perspectives in an attempt to develop a deeper understanding based on the social context of the participants. Maintaining this type of relationship with the participants facilitated validation processes such as content validity and trustworthiness.

#### 5.4.2. Scope of Literature

Firstly, I drew on literature specifically related to the theoretical underpinning of how learners understand human rights teaching-and-learning. Most of the literature consisted of theoretical findings based on a hypothesis. No literature was found which combined a theoretical exploration with empirical research. The literature provided an awareness of current trends and discourses but I found no empirical research that demonstrated these. This study, therefore, contributes to empirical research in this field. I limited the attention I gave to post-paradigmatic paradigms which have become popular in current academic discourse (5.4.2). The reason for limiting the scope of the literature in this way was to prevent the study from becoming too overwhelming or overlooking

the essence of the study, which is to interpret, make-meaning and understand the research problem at hand.

#### 5.4.3. Research methodology and methods

I relied on self-reflection and reflexivity when it came to acknowledging my stance during the employment of the research methodologies and research methods in the empirical study. Conscious effort was made to identify aspects that might introduce subjectivity or bias when analysing the data. This included constantly being aware of the need for validity and trustworthiness (3.4.5).

Since I was engaged in qualitative research, my research activities could not be entirely objective. My choice to do qualitative research was because I wanted to gain an understanding of a particular social setting from the perspectives of the participants' in that particular setting (3.2.2).

### 5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to pay attention to two limitations of the study.

#### 5.5.1 Theory of narrative research

Narratives were used in this study to give learners a voice and allow them to share their 'stories' concerning human rights (3.4.3). The literature on narrative research is extensive (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008; Chase, 2003; Elliot, 2005; Hutto, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007). However, it does not offer specific guidelines. The books consulted provided only very general guidelines and theories. Although these were sufficient for the purposes of the narratives in this study, it would have been useful to be able to refer to context specific literature dealing with narratives and children. Due to the fact that grade seven learners' narratives were used (children mostly age 12 and 13), narratives were approached in a particular manner. I had to be aware that because of the age of these children, their experiences would adopt certain stances.

There was very little available on the theory and procedures of data analysis procedures that were relevant to this audience's narratives, so this could be seen as a limitation in this study. However, the researcher rigorously interacted with the available data on narrative research and gained sufficient insight into the research processes involved.

### **5.5.2 Body of scholarship**

This study does draw on elements from different research paradigms namely the interpretive and critical. This study is grounded in the interpretive paradigm also known as the historical-hermeneutical paradigm (Grundy, 1987:13; Habermas, 1971:176). This paradigm allowed the understanding that learners' have of human rights to be expressed through making-meaning, understanding and interpreting processes. What could be perceived as limiting to this body of scholarship is the exclusion of discourse surrounding post-paradigmatic paradigms. In current academic discourses the postmodern/poststructuralist paradigm has become increasingly influential in research (O'Donoghue, 2007:10). Postmodernism is often referred to as the fourth paradigm. This paradigm recognises multiple ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting, making meaning and defining 'truths', as opposed to the recollection of only rational and logical ways of knowing (Hammersley, 2007:130; O'Donoghue, 2007:11). It encourages open spaces for thinking and reflecting on a multitude of ways for thinking about situations. It could have been valuable to explore the literature on postmodernism as a means of acknowledging movements towards post-paradigmatic paradigms in research.

## **5.6 ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Particular areas for further research arise from this research. These will now be outlined.

### **5.6.1 Human rights and diversity**

The dynamics surrounding the influence of diversity in classroom contexts has become evident in this study. Diversity can take many forms which entail cultures, religions, belief systems, traditions and generation gaps amongst others. In the current education dispensation in South Africa, diverse school environments have become the norm. It is necessary to embrace this diversity and acknowledge it in teaching-and-learning. For this to become a reality, facilitation must be provided to teachers in the form of guidance for dealing with diverse classrooms. This guidance can take the form of in-service and facilitation programmes which will initiate a deeper understanding of diversity. Once a level of understanding diversity is acquired only then will the classroom be infused with a culture of human rights.

### **5.6.2 Voice of the teacher**

The teacher plays a prominent role in generating understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning amongst learners (4.4.1; 4.5.1, 2.6.1). In this study, the stance adopted by the teachers, whether through pedagogical interactions or through the curriculum, had a far reaching effect on how the learners understand human rights. Educational researchers should undertake more studies on how teachers are implementing human rights with a view to gaining knowledge about how teachers interpret human rights across the curriculum; and to observing their methodological approach to human rights teaching-and-learning. These findings could provide teachers with the opportunity to voice their views on how human rights should be implemented. This could reveal curricula or methodological areas where teachers are failing to comprehend and/or implement human rights. It could also identify useful strategies which could benefit pre-service and in-service teachers.

### **5.6.3 Gender and human rights violations**

It became apparent that the understanding learners hold of human rights is deeply embedded in human rights violations (4.6.2.5; 4.6.2.6). Prominent amongst these is the reference made to family violence, women abuse and child violations. These findings initiated particular 'target groups'. It will bring about new insights if researchers investigated the relationship between gender and human rights violations. This might be done with the intension of empowering boys and girls to deal with human rights violations and bringing an awareness about these sensitive issues into class discussions.

### **5.6.4 Research methods to enhance gathering empirical data on sensitive issues**

A research inquiry undertaken by human rights researchers could leave participants feeling that their privacy had been invaded. Since research of this nature is vital because of the contributions it can make in communities, cutting-edge research in this sensitive field of study should creative research methodologies and methods should be considered. These might include strategies such as narrative research (Elliot, 2005) and visual participatory methodologies (Mitchell & De Lange, 2008). Methods such as these will contribute to giving a voice to the voiceless through creative methods which allow them to express themselves in secure stress-free situations.

### **5.6.5 Comparative study**

A comparative study involving an international country and South Africa could produce valuable insights into the ways in which each of these countries accommodates human rights education. Elements in the research would include the government education policies, curriculum as well as teaching-and-learning strategies in classroom practice. The purpose for doing such a study would be to create other lenses which could be employed in human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

From the research conducted it has become evident that human rights teaching-and-learning is frequently viewed as a separate entity and thus compartmentalised in a particular learning area namely, Life Orientation. This stance will result in human rights being a legalistic endeavour that disregards the morals and values underpinning human rights. Human rights must be made authentic so that learners will feel confident about the understanding they have. The implicit implementation of human rights is important. However, this would rely on the ability of teachers to become well acquainted with human rights values and, therefore, not dependent on explicit curriculum content. This would require teachers to reflect on their practices in order to expand their pedagogy by embracing events that allow for the exploration of implicit human rights learning opportunities. Furthermore, by acknowledging human rights beyond the classroom, teaching-and-learning will develop learners as global partners who can apply human rights understanding in various contexts. This will facilitate diversity and respect in educational environments: implementing human rights intuitively could result in a whole school approach.

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## APPENDIX A

## Letter to Schools and the Department of Education



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

30 March 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

Request for permission to conduct research in a primary school in the North West Province

I hereby request permission for Ms Shan Simmonds to do empirical research at the School X.

Ms Shan Simmonds (student number 21815992) is an enrolled MEd student at the School for Curriculum Based Studies, at North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). The title of this dissertation is: *Primary school learners' understanding of human rights teaching and learning in classroom practice*.

Ms Shan Simmonds would like to conduct her empirical research in a school in this environment as it fits the profile required by the research project. Her research is centered around human rights teaching and learning and the perceptions that learners hold concerning this issue. Her research will therefore require the participation of grade seven learners.

This research will aim to provide another viewpoint for in-serve and pre-service teachers to explore the complexity of human rights and to make them more sensitive towards human rights issues in our schools.

All the information that is gained from the school and the learners will be handled confidentially and within the ethical rules of research determined by the North-West University. Aspects such as informed consent, voluntary participation and respect for anonymity will be adhered to.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to accommodate Ms Simmonds and I thank you for your assistance in this regards.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Roux'.

.....  
Prof Cornelia Roux

**Prof Cornelia Roux**  
Research Professor  
School for Curriculum-based Studies  
Faculty of Educational Sciences (Potchefstroom Campus)  
Potchefstroom  
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## education

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### DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

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### CES: Professional Support Services

30 March 2009

Prof C Roux  
Research Professor  
School for Curriculum-based Studies  
North West University  
Potchefstroom Campus

#### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS' UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CLASS ROOM PRACTICE

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct research in Primary school in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District under the following provisions:

- the activities you undertake at school should not temper with the normal process of teaching and learning;
- you inform the principal of your identified schools of your impending visit and activity;
- you provide my office with a report in respect of your findings from the research; and
- you obtain prior permission from this office before availing your findings for public or media consumption.

Wishing you well in your endeavour.

Thanking you

7/1 *J.P.B. vega*

DR S H MVULA  
DISTRICT EXECUTIVE MANAGER  
DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

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*"A vibrant, top achieving district offering accessible quality education"  
"Business unusual: All hands on deck to speed up change"*



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**Ethics Committee**

Tel +27 18 299 4850  
Fax +27 18 293 5329  
Email [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)

**ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROJECT**

2009-06-22

The North-West University Ethics Committee (NWU-EC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-EC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title:	
Primary school learners' understanding of Human rights teaching and learning in classroom practice	
Ethics number:	N W U - 0 0 0 1 7 - 0 9 - 1 A 2
Approval date: 21 May 2009	Expiry date: 20 May 2014

Special conditions of the approval (if any): None

General conditions.

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-EC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project,
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-EC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-EC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-EC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-EC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The Ethics Committee would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Committee for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

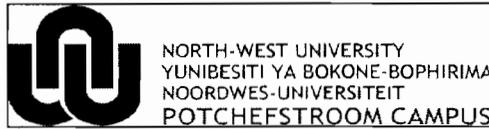
Yours sincerely

Prof MMJ Lowes  
(chair NWU Ethics Committee)

Prof M. Monteith  
(Chairman, NWU Ethics Committee: Teaching and Learning)

## APPENDIX D

## Ethical code signed by participants parents/gaurdians



**Dear Parent / Guardian**

I, Ms Shan Simmonds, hereby request permission to use your child as a participant in my research project. I am currently enrolled at North-West University where I am doing my MEd. My dissertation title is: *Primary school learners' understanding of human rights teaching and learning in classroom practice.*

The study will involve your child as a participant during a focus group interview where they will take part in a discussion on human rights. This discussion will take between 30 – 45 minutes. It can also be guaranteed that this discussion will **not** have any negative impacts on your child academic responsibilities. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary and he or she is free to withdraw from participating at any time. Confidentiality of all participants responses will be protected and participants identity will also remain anonymous.

Kind regards

Shan Simmonds

*If you are willing to give your child consent to participate in this research, please could you fill in the box below and send it to school with you child no later than Friday 24 April 2009.*

I \_\_\_\_\_ (parents/guardians name), give permission for my child  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to participate in the research being conducted by Ms Shan  
 Simmonds in connection with her MEd dissertation. I have read the above letter and understand its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date





## APPENDIX G

### Focus-Group Interview Schedule

- ***The researcher will take note of the following***

A1	Participants gender
A2	Participants age
A3	Participants first language
A4	Participants second language
A5	Participants religious affiliation

- ***Questions asked to the participants***

B1	What do the terms <i>human rights</i> mean for you?
B2	What have you learnt at school about human rights? In what context(s) or learning areas was this learnt?
B3	What would you still like to know/learn about human rights?
B4	Do you think human rights education should be compulsory in schools? Please elaborate.
B5	Give me an example of when your teacher has addressed human rights.
B6	How does your teacher assess you when it comes to human rights?
B7	Do you know what your human rights are?
B8	Can you tell me only one of your rights as a learner in South Africa?
B9	Where did you learn this?
B10	Do you think that human rights are part of our daily lives or are they only used when we need them?
B11	Do you think that your teacher influences how you understand human rights?
B12	Can you please elaborate whether you think that a person's religion, culture or tradition could influence how they understand human rights?
B13	Any other comments or viewpoints that participants would like to share.

**APPENDIX H**

**Certificate for language editing**

Dr Elaine Ridge  
Free Lance Editor and Translator  
ridge@adept.co.za  
Cell: 083 564 1553  
Landline: 021 887 1554

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to attest that I have edited the language of Shan Simmonds's MEd dissertation. The title of this dissertation is: *Primary school learners' understanding of human rights teaching-and-learning in classroom practice.*



.....  
(Dr) Elaine Ridge  
Free Lance Editor and Translator

1 November 2009