

**2015 DESKTOP REVIEW OF
ONEVOICE SOUTH AFRICA'S
LIFE SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE PROJECT
CONTENT AND MATERIALS**

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Purpose

The purpose of this review is to assess the extent to which the above materials are aligned to and in support of the Life Orientation Curriculum as expressed in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and broadly, the National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB. The review specifically excludes Physical Education and Study skills (aside from research techniques) as these are consciously not covered in the OneVoice South Africa Programme and its associated project.

The more specific questions in relation to the OVSA materials are:

- ☐ are they genuinely in support of the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are they aligned closely enough with the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are they adding to the quality of the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are there gaps in relation to the LO curriculum?

The following Learner and Facilitator materials are reviewed:

Life Skills (Speak out)

- ☐ Grade 8 Facilitator Manual
- ☐ Grade 8 Learner Notebook

- ☐ Grade 10 Facilitator Manual
- ☐ Grade 10 Learner Notebook

Enterprise Project

- ☐ Grade 7 + 9 Facilitator Manual
- ☐ Grade 7 + 9 Learner Notebook

The relevant national documents are listed in the reference list.

The focus

This review is by its nature mainly limited to documents produced by OVSA and the National Dept. of Basic Education. While both content and process are dealt with in the documents, this review is not an evaluation of implementation. The manner in which materials or policy documents are interpreted and implemented are critical but not addressed in this review due to its nature.

Curriculum changes in South Africa

This is covered extremely briefly in order to provide a context for understanding the review comments.

There have been four major developments in the school curriculum in South Africa since 1994:

- ❑ unification of the national curriculum – 1996
- ❑ the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (Outcomes Based Education (OBE)) – 1998
- ❑ the introduction of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) – 2002/2003
- ❑ the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) – 2011

OBE was framed in very ambitious, broad strokes in an attempt to bring about a drastic change in teaching and learning in South Africa. One of its key aims was to change from a focus on rote learning to the development of higher order thinking skills. This remains a core underlying aim of the curriculum. Aside from major conceptual flaws in OBE, it was based on the assumption that teachers were well-trained, had a rich variety of resources available to them, and understood the concept and implementation of participatory education based on critical thinking skills. This did not prove to be the case.

In an attempt to be more explicit and assist teachers, the RNCS were introduced in 2002. Learning and assessment outcomes were more explicit and applied to each Learning area for each phase of schooling. So, for example, there were RNCS for Life Orientation for Grades 7 – 9 etc. Unfortunately, the attempt to be more explicit while still retaining the underlying principles of Curriculum 2005, resulted in an avalanche of documentation which resulted in even more pressure and confusion for teachers. Basically teachers did not know what to teach, when to teach it or how to teach it on a daily basis.

In order to assist teachers and improve the disastrous learner results since 1994, CAPS was introduced in 2011. Although an attempt was made to insist that this was merely a refinement of the original conception of Curriculum 2005, this curriculum was radically different in a number of very significant ways. The most notable change was that “outcomes” disappeared from the terminology. The focus was on content, and not just content per phase but content per term per year. In summary:

- ❑ Learning areas now became subjects
- ❑ Outcomes were replaced by topics
- ❑ CAPS documents were produced for each subject per schooling phase per Grade
- ❑ Content was specified per term per year according to topics which were similar to themes from the previous curriculum revisions

The original OBE “critical cross-field outcomes” (now simply referred to as “aims”) were retained as aims to produce learners able to:

- ☐ identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- ☐ work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team;
- ☐ organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- ☐ collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- ☐ communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- ☐ use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- ☐ demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

It is clear that these outcomes/aims are seen as developing learners who are critical thinkers who are able to participate actively in the world around them.

In order to do this, it is imperative to avoid rote learning and for teachers to understand and believe in the pedagogical principles and methods which develop learners like this.

Problems with implementation of the new curriculum

One of the main problems with the implementation of the new curriculum from the start was that most teachers did not understand what was expected of them and were not adequately trained or retrained. Initially they were expected to develop their own content and methodology based on general learning outcomes. This did not work.

CAPS has now gone to the other extreme, where the content is specified for every hour of every term. However, the constructivist/participatory methodology which is meant to underlie the curriculum is not specified or reinforced. Teachers are now mainly reliant on textbooks or worksheets to teach. I have not seen or examined any of the commercial textbooks produced for LO, but based on my experience in other fields, my strong suspicion is that they vary greatly in quality which is often dubious.

The Life Orientation Curriculum

Life Orientation (LO) is regarded as a vitally important part of the South African school curriculum. It is compulsory in the Senior Phase of the GET (Grades 7 – 9) and is one of only four fundamental compulsory subjects in the FET National Senior Certificate (Grades 10 – 12).

According to the LO CAPS documents:

“It is a unique subject in that it applies a holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners. This encourages

the development of a balanced and confident learner who can contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all.”

LO is however a contentious subject for various reasons and there are currently strong pressures to remove it as an examinable subject from Grade 12 of the National Senior Certificate. Some of the problems of LO are:

- ☐ very few teachers are trained to teach it
- ☐ it is seldom seen as a worthwhile specialist subject despite its obvious value
- ☐ many of the topics cover sensitive issues which teachers are unwilling or unable to deal with (most notably these relate to sexuality and HIV/AIDS)
- ☐ it is difficult to examine a subject specifically based on values and attitudes (this may explain why the focus in LO seems to be shifting to a more concept-based, factual approach to the topics)
- ☐ learners, teachers and parents often have negative attitudes towards LO, seeing it as repetitively focused on HIV/AIDS and requiring rote learning

The OVSA Courses in relation to the LO curriculum

An analysis of this nature is difficult because it requires an analysis of the spirit and underlying principles of LO as well as a technical comparison of the topics and timing of the LO curriculum. A number of the workshops in the OVSA programmes are not constructed in terms of the LO curriculum topics but nevertheless contain a number of cross-cutting issues which address some of the LO topics more indirectly.

OVSA has a clear and admirable vision and mission with a human rights based approach aimed at “helping young people learn how to take responsibility for their health, lifestyle and future”. With a clear gender rights focus, it concentrates specifically on HIV/AIDS, STIs, TB, WASH, and Enterprise Development. The OVSA Schools Programme has a clear goal to complement and strengthen the LO curriculum.

OVSA Programmes in relation to the general aims and spirit of the LO curriculum

The great strength of the Life Skills and Enterprise Projects, is in my view that they are constructed around a series of workshops and projects which create and ‘demand’ an active and participatory approach to learning and teaching. The Facilitator Manuals describe in detail how Facilitators are to run the workshops and projects, and the Learner Notebooks encourage active engagement on the part of the learners. The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) Diary also creates a sense of empowerment and involvement.

Just as a comment, in my opinion, the Life Skills Programme has a much stronger focus on active group participation and problem-solving than the Enterprise Programme which is more individually based. I am not clear to what extent this was intentional.

Overall, the approach, the materials, the content and the tasks are fully aligned with the key critical aims of the curriculum in general and the LO curriculum in particular. They constantly reinforce the importance of critical thinking, participation and action, and are much less likely to result in compartmentalisation than the current content and time-driven CAPS approach.

OVSA in relation to the specific topics and timing of the LO curriculum

The CAPS document for LO clearly states time allocations per annum. These are as follows:

Grades 7 – 9:	70 hours per annum (35 hours for Physical Education and 35 for the other topics)
Grades 10 – 12:	66 hours per annum (33 hours for Physical Education and 33 for the other topics)

By contrast, the OVSA Life Skills Programme consists of the following:

Grade 8:	14 workshops x 45 minutes = 10.5 hours p.a. (30% of LO total)
Grade 10:	9 workshops x 45 minutes = 6.75 hours p.a. (20% of LO total)

The OVSA Enterprise Project consists of the following:

Grade 9 + 11:	7 workshops x 45 minutes = 5.25 hours
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If this is averaged out with a repeat of one workshop per year it consists of the following timing:

Grade 9:	4 workshops x 45 minutes = 3 hours (9% of LO total)
Grade 11:	4 workshops x 45 minutes = 3 hours (9% of LO total)

It is clear from the time allocations above that the OVSA Programme cannot act as a substitute for the LO curriculum but can certainly claim to enhance and strengthen certain aspects of it. The tables below indicate the topics and subtopics grouped by Phases and Grades. I have indicated where I see the content of the OVSA Workshops as covering the LO topics. Yellow indicates the Life Skills topics and Green indicates the Enterprise topics. Grey shades show where the topics are more indirectly addressed. I have included grades not covered by OVSA Programmes (namely Grades 7 and 12) in order to show the overall focus and emphasis in each phase as a whole.

It is important to note that the topic headings are sometimes not as general as they seem. The content is only clear in the sections in each CAPS document entitled, “Annual Teaching Plan”. It is in this section that it is clearly stated: “It is compulsory to cover the given topics in the term indicated. The sequence of the topics within the term is however, not fixed.” Teachers therefore have discretion about the sequence of topics and sub-topics within each term but not between terms.

Grade 8 – 10 Life Orientation

	Gd 7	Hours	Gd 8	Hours	Gd 9	Hours
Development of the self in society	Concept: self-image	10	Concepts: self-concept formation and self-motivation	9	Goal-setting skills: personal lifestyle choices	10
	Changes in boys and girls: puberty		Concept: sexuality		Sexual behaviour and sexual health	
	Peer pressure		Relationships and friendships		Challenging situations: depression, grief, loss, trauma and crisis	
	Concepts: personal diet and nutrition					
Health, social and environmental responsibility	Substance abuse	10	Social factors that contribute to substance abuse	8	Concept: volunteerism	7
	Concept : environmental health		Environmental health issues			
	Common diseases: TB, diabetes, epilepsy, obesity, anorexia, HIV and AIDS		Decision-making about health and safety: HIV		Health and safety issues related to violence	
Constitutional rights and responsibilities	Human rights as stipulated in the South African Constitution	7	Nation building	9	Issues relating to citizens' rights and responsibilities	7
	Fair play in a variety of sport activities		Concept: human rights violations		Constitutional values	
	Dealing with abuse		Concept: gender equity		Contributions of various religions in promoting peace	
	Role of oral traditions and scriptures of major religions		Concept: cultural diversity in South Africa		Sport ethics	
			Contributions of various religions to social development			

World of work	Importance of reading and studying	8	Different learning styles	9	Time-management skills	11
	Career fields		Six career categories		Reading and writing for different purposes	
	Simulation of career-related activities		Relationship between performance in school subjects, interests and abilities		Options available after completing Grade 9	
	Value and importance of work in fulfilling personal needs and potential		Decision-making process (careers)		Knowledge of the world of work	
					Career and subject choices	
					Study and career funding providers	
					Plan for own lifelong learning: goal-setting for lifelong learning	
		35		35		35
Physical Education		35		35		35

Grade 10 – 12 Life Orientation

	Gd 10	Hours	Gd 11	Hours	Gd 12	Hours
Development of the self in society	Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-development	8	Plan and achieve life goals: problem-solving skills	11	Life skills required to adapt to change as part of ongoing healthy lifestyle choices	9
	Power, power-relations and gender roles		Relationships and their influence on well-being		Stress management	
	Value of participation in exercise programmes		Healthy lifestyle choices: decision-making skills		Conflict resolution	
	Life roles: nature and responsibilities		Role of nutrition in health and physical activities		Human factors that cause ill-health	
	Changes towards adulthood		Gender roles and their effects on health and wellbeing		Action plan for lifelong participation in physical activity	
	Decision-making regarding sexuality					
	Recreation and emotional health					
Social and environmental responsibility	Contemporary social issues that impact negatively on local and global communities	4	Environmental issues that cause ill-health	3	Environments and services which promote safe and healthy living	3
	Social skills and responsibilities to participate in civic life		Climate change		Responsibilities of various levels of government	
			Participation in a community service addressing an environmental issue		A personal mission statement for life	

Democracy and human rights	Diversity, discrimination, human rights and violations	7	Democratic participation and democratic structures	7	Responsible citizenship	4
	National and international instruments and conventions		Role of sport in nation building		The role of the media in a democratic society	
	Ethical traditions and/or religious laws and indigenous belief systems of major religions		Contributions of South Africa's diverse religions and belief systems to a harmonious society		Ideologies, beliefs and worldviews on construction of recreation and physical activity	
	Biases and unfair practices in sport					
Careers and career choices	Subjects, career fields and study choices: decision-making skills	11	Requirements for admission to higher education institutions	8	Commitment to a decision taken: locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources	8
	Socio-economic factors		Options for financial assistance for further studies		Reasons for and impact of unemployment and innovative solutions to counteract	
	Diversity of jobs		Competencies, abilities and ethics required for a career		Core elements of a job contract	
	Opportunities within career fields		Personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest		Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school	
	Trends and demands in the job market		Knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socioeconomic			
	The need for lifelong learning					
Study skills	Study skills and study methods	3	Study styles and study strategies	4	Reflection on own study and examination writing skills	4
	Process of assessment: internal and external		Examination writing skills		Strategies to follow in order to succeed in Grade 12	
	Annual study plan		Time-management and annual study plan			
			Goal-setting skills			
		33		33		33
Physical Education		33		33		33

Comments per Grade

It is important to note that the gaps that are identified below are not set in stone. There may well be sound arguments to claim that they are in fact covered by the OVSA workshops. It will hopefully be useful for the OVSA facilitators and course developers to use this as a basis for a further discussion.

Grade 8

The first three topics (including their sub-topics) are substantively covered aside from:

- ☐ Social factors that contribute to substance abuse (it is mentioned in relation to sexuality but not dealt with directly)
- ☐ Contributions of various religions to social development

The main gap in Grade 8 is the broad topic World of Work, which in LO is focused on an understanding of careers and subject choices in relation to these. This is an intentional omission on the part of OVSA.

Grade 9

The Enterprise Project deals with the topic World of Work but excludes the sub-topics involving study skills, subject choices and funding providers. The underlying approach supports a number of other topics indirectly. It is also important to note that the content of the Enterprise Project is covered more directly and extensively in the Senior Phase in the compulsory subject: Economic and Management Sciences.

Grade 10

The Grade 10 Life Skills Programme focuses on the first three topics of the LO curriculum but excludes the sub-topics of:

- ☐ Value of participation in exercise programmes
- ☐ Life roles: nature and responsibilities
- ☐ Changes towards adulthood
- ☐ Recreation and emotional health
- ☐ National and international instruments and conventions
- ☐ Ethical traditions and/or religious laws and indigenous belief systems of major religions
- ☐ Biases and unfair practices in sport

The topics of Careers and career choices, as well as Study Skills are not covered.

Grade 11

The Enterprise Project covers more than half the sub-topics in Careers and career choices. The sub-topics excluded are:

- ☐ Requirements for admission to higher education institutions
- ☐ Options for financial assistance for further studies

It is also important to note that the content of the Enterprise Project is covered more directly and extensively in two other Subjects in the National Senior Certificate Phase: Business Studies, and Consumer Studies.

General concluding comments

To return to the more specific questions of this review of the OVSA materials:

- ☐ are they genuinely in support of the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are they aligned closely enough with the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are they adding to the quality of the LO curriculum?
- ☐ are there gaps in relation to the LO curriculum?

In addition a further question was:

- ☐ are the OVSA Programmes in support of the National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB?

The OVSA materials are clearly genuinely in support of the LO curriculum. It appears though that some of the sections of the Facilitator Manuals referring to outcomes are still based on previous versions of the LO curriculum. As discussed above, CAPS is a fairly dramatic change from previous versions of the curriculum. I would suggest that some of the introductory sections are revised with direct reference to the CAPS documents.

The question as to whether the workshops are aligned closely enough with the LO curriculum is debatable. As discussed earlier, some of the workshop topics are cross-cutting and I believe that this is one of the main strengths of the OVSA materials. I would hesitate to recommend that OVSA changes the workshops to fit into the LO topics in a lock-step fashion. Particularly as the LO curriculum often seems to focus on concepts rather than attitudes and values related to these concepts, it is important to maintain a holistic approach that is in line with the guiding principles of the curriculum.

There is no doubt in my mind that the OVSA workshops are adding to the quality of the LO curriculum. The participatory and action-focused approach embodies the key aims of the school curriculum as a whole and the LO curriculum in particular. It also enables OVSA

Facilitators to model the kinds of activities that LO teachers are supposed to use. The OVSA projects must also provide specific assistance to learners and teachers in relation to Assessment which involves projects in every grade.

As identified above, there are gaps in relation to the LO curriculum. Purely from a time perspective, it would be impossible for OVSA to cover all the topics in the same amount of detail. Given OVSA's strengths, time and resources it would, in my view, be unrealistic and counter-productive to attempt to cover all the topics and sub-topics of the new CAPS curriculum. This would result in a superficial approach which would not have any long-lasting benefit. I suggest that it would be better to acknowledge the gaps and to proudly proclaim the OVSA focus.

There is no doubt that the OVSA Programmes meet the objectives of the National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB. The target age group of grades 8 to 11 falls within the key populations identified and the overall approach to these health issues is holistic and structural as outlined in the document. The four strategic objectives of the NSP are all covered in the OVSA topics and materials.

It was noted above that a number of topics in the Enterprise Project are covered in other subjects in the same grade: Economic and Management Sciences, Business Studies and Consumer Studies. It may be worth investigating opportunities for collaboration with the relevant teachers of these subjects in the OVSA Schools.

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