



## Lived Experiences of Selected Grade Seven Teachers' Integration of Democratic Values into Their EMS Lessons

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the lived experiences of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) teachers and how they integrate democratic values into their lessons. The study focuses primarily on EMS teachers' understanding of what democratic values are and how they were implicitly integrated into certain EMS topics. Methodologically, the study employed a Husserlian phenomenological approach to the data-construction process in which interviews and fieldnotes were the main sources of data. This approach assisted the researchers in eliciting rich descriptions of the teachers' experiences on how they integrate democratic values into Grade 7 EMS lessons. A total of 5 EMS teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study. Theoretically, the study draws on Husserl's 'lifeworld' theory and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology with a focus on *Dasein*, which has been integrated with Karl Maton's Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). The findings revealed that the teachers all integrated democratic values into their lessons. Their lessons were both rich in semantic gravity (SG+) and semantic density (SD+). From a Heideggerian perspective it showed how these values were cemented in their consciousness as part of their "Dasein" ("being there") as children. The findings could help expand our understanding of what goes on in the minds of EMS teachers when they teach democratic values.

**Keywords:** Economic and Management Sciences, Grade 7, teachers, phenomenology

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) is a school subject taught in Grades 7, 8 and 9 in South Africa (DoBE, 2011). According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the Senior Phase, EMS as a school subject can be defined as follows:

... the efficient and effective use of different types of private, public or collective resources to satisfy people's needs and wants. It reflects critically on the impact of resource exploitation on the environment and on people. It also deals with effective management of scarce resources in order to maximise profit (DoBE, 2011, p.4).

One of the main aims of EMS as a school subject is to "equip learners with real-life skills for personal development and the development of the community" (DoBE, 2011, p. 8). Thus, the main objective of EMS is to produce a learner who has the knowledge and skills set that can advance sustainable growth both for herself and for the community in which she resides. Therefore, when teaching EMS, teachers are expected to adopt learner-centred teaching approaches that are innovative and contextually relevant (Van Wyk, 2019). All seven principles stipulated in the CAPS promote the development of an informed learner who must become a responsible citizen (DoBE, 2011). For example, the curriculum promotes 'active

and critical learning' with a focus on enhancing 'high knowledge and high skills' in the subject, while teachers should take the importance of advancing 'social transformation' into account (ibid., p. 4).

The aim of this study is to investigate *the lived experiences of selected Grade 7 teachers in integrating democratic values into their EMS lessons*. A related aim is to determine the teachers' understanding of democratic values and how they prioritize these values in their pedagogical practices. Thus, the main objectives of the study are threefold: (i) to gain insight into Grade 7 EMS teachers' mental disposition toward democratic values, (ii) to gain access to their subconscious awareness with regard to the value they place on democratic values, and (iii) whether they are actively integrating these values in their lessons. Consequently, this phenomenological investigation methodologically draws on Husserlian phenomenology and relies on Heideggerian phenomenology to provide an interpretive description of the lived experiences of the teachers. The main reason for adopting a Husserlian phenomenological approach is to gain insight into the consciousness of Grade 7 EMS teachers for the sake of deeper insight into their being. More specifically, the study is focused on ascertaining why they do what they do when they teach democratic values. Given the dearth of phenomenological studies in South Africa that examine EMS teachers' understanding and integration of democratic values into their lessons, this study could add value to the existing body of literature on phenomenological EMS studies and provide a deeper understanding of the pedagogical practices of selected teachers when teaching democratic values

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Brief Review of South African Studies on EMS

As we were searching for the literature on democratic values in EMS, we found what appears to be a paucity of studies on how Grade 7 teachers integrate democratic values into their EMS lessons. EMS teachers in contemporary South Africa are confronted with the challenge of preparing their learners adequately for becoming effective citizens in a democratic society. As an EMS pre-service teacher educator (first author) and an EMS teacher (second author), this is a troubling reality, as we often engage with many of our colleagues and peers through personal conversations about how to prepare our learners for living in a democratic society, and particularly on how to integrate democratic values into our lessons. Many state that all they are concerned with is to complete their prescribed curriculum so that their learners can be ready for tests and examinations. A study conducted by Johnson and Van Wyk (2016) substantiates this claim, as they report that most teachers adopt a teacher-centred approach with little space provided for in-depth discussion with learners. This concern motivated us to investigate the lived experiences of Grade 7 EMS teachers and how they integrate democratic values into their lessons. As a starting point we thought we should first ascertain what the literature has say about research conducted in EMS or its related disciplines in the field.

A phenomenological study conducted by Schreuder (2009) reported how EMS teachers prepare learners for Accounting in Grade 10. One of the key findings of her study revealed that many EMS teachers are under-qualified to teach the Accounting aspects of the subject. In a phenomenological investigation into the lived experiences of FET Accounting teachers, Koopman (2018; 2020) reports on

the many challenges teachers face in implementing the curriculum. The investigation found that (i) the teachers' pedagogical strategies were outdated, (ii) poor teacher support was provided by the principals and officials from the Department of Education, and (iii) learners experienced a lack of motivation for their studies. Another South African study by America explores how EMS teachers understand sustainable development in relation to their teaching practices and revealed that "the EMS teachers' dominant conception is associated with notions of unparalleled economic growth with a limited reference to the interrelatedness of the economy, society and the biophysical world or to the incorporation of green issues" (2014, p. 159). The study highlighted the importance of adopting an integrated approach with regards to education on sustainable development in the EMS curricula or discourse (ibid.). Moreover, Mokgosi, De Jager and White (2018, p. 94), who investigated the effectiveness of EMS teachers' teaching/learning by using the lesson study approach, reported that "the lesson study model played a role in building an EMS community of practice, and developed teachers' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, pedagogical competencies, research skills, and reflective and analytical skills". A recommendation that flowed from Mokgosi, et. al's study pointed out that a professional development programme for EMS teachers should be offered to teachers that should focus on differentiated teaching skills. By focusing on differentiated teaching skills, teachers will be able to improve the "deep learning of diverse learners in the classroom" (Mokgosi et al, 2018, p. 94).

Numerous South African studies across disciplines show that traditional teaching approaches are still the norm, as teachers aim to deliver their content so that learners can pass the examination (See America, 2014; Koopman, 2018, 2017;

Koopman & Koopman, 2021). While teachers were used as powerful cogs in the machine to promote apartheid, they can also be used to promote democracy and democratic values. One way to do this is to devise effective ways in which to integrate democratic values (such as social justice, honesty and respect, truthfulness, accountability and equality) into the Grade 7 EMS curriculum to try and restore the damage that was inflicted on the people of South Africa and to enhance democratic citizenship. By promoting democratic values in the EMS curriculum, a sense of wisdom could be instilled in young children to understand the impact of selfish behaviour. Furthermore, it will enable them to participate, contribute to, adapt and survive in a very complex economic world that affects the livelihoods of others. This brings us to the question: What are values?

## **2.2 Meaningful Integration of 'Values' Into The Ems Curriculum**

Fataar and Solomons (2010) posit that value is a fluid concept that can be interpreted in many different ways. Values can be described as guides toward an action or the moral compass that we use to navigate our interactions with members of society (ibid.) Values are judgments that are based on what is regarded as correct and what is seen as wrong. Fataar and Solomons (2010) explain that values are also seen as involved in making decisions that are morally correct, after which one acts accordingly. Hill (cited in Green, 2004, p. 108), posits that values are "beliefs that are held by individuals and to which they attach special priority or worth, and by which they tend to order their lives". Rhodes, Bernard and Roux (2004) argue that a value can be compared to a belief that establishes a value of a principle that is rooted in a person or a group, a religion or a belief system. The beliefs of learners can be influenced by the teacher when teaching a subject such as EMS.

The Manifesto of Values recognises that values, which focus on language and culture, are familiar currency to make life important and to teach values at school that aims to help young people achieve higher levels of moral judgement, therefore enriching the individual and enhancing their value to society. This is indicative of the importance of 'teaching' a set of clear values to uplift our society (James, 2001). Therefore, teachers need to cultivate a good understanding of democracy in their learners and the importance of democratic values in engaging with the world. By doing so, they are critically engaging their learners in the classroom through discussions to be actively involved in the lesson. Acting responsibly is when learners learn how to be accountable for their decisions as they learn the significance of what it means to act responsibly in the classroom (Davids, 2018). The focus when teaching democratic values needs to be based on the fundamental values of the Constitution and its relevance to education (James, 2001). These values in the Constitution reflect the morality and perceptions of democracy, social justice, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), an open society, accountability, responsibility, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation. These values found in the Constitution of South Africa, that are also listed in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for EMS also form part of the classroom discussion (James, 2001). These values, therefore, should be incorporated practically into programmes by educators, administrators, governing bodies and officials as part of the needs of learners to prepare them adequately for society (Zajda, 2023).

According to James (2001), democratic values formed part of Curriculum 2005, the National Outcomes-based approach, and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). These values have been forged out of our different heritages and our different

positions in society (James, 2001). James (2001) states that there are ten fundamental values for South African society that must be practiced to achieve a real democracy. They are democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect and reconciliation. This study focuses mainly on the values that pertain to the Grade 7 CAPS: EMS curriculum: social justice/honour, equality, honesty and respect, and accountability.

### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework links Karl Maton's legitimation code theory (LCT) and Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology with each other. The purpose of using LCT is to develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogical practices of teachers with specific reference to the integration of democratic values into their lessons. To understand the teachers' lived experiences, this study applied Heidegger's (interpretive) philosophy as an analytical lens, which allows the researcher to craft an interpretive narrative of how the EMS teachers integrate democratic values into their lessons. More detail on how Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* is linked to this theory will follow after a discussion on Maton's LCT.

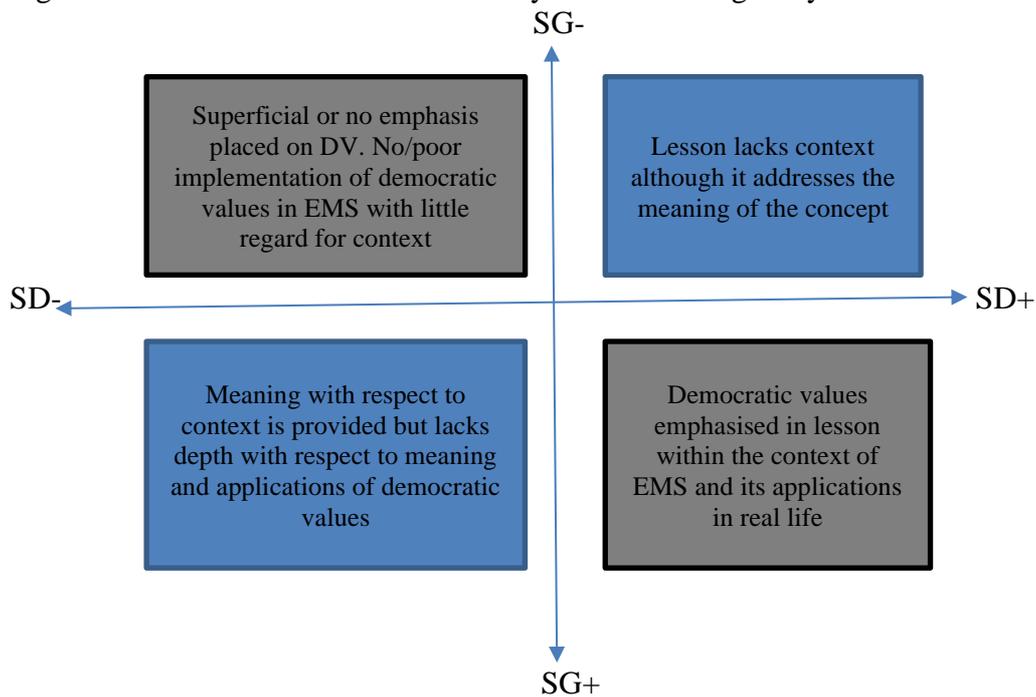
#### 3.1 Legitimation Code Theory

According to the scholarly work of Maton (2015), LCT provides for a deeper interaction between data and theory to build knowledge in a particular field. This research methodological process of knowledge building is rooted in the dialogical relationship between data and theory to generate explanations that could go beyond the context and meaning of a study. Limits of space prevent a discussion on the foundations of the theory based on Bernstein's model of 'code theory' and Pierre Bourdieu's 'field theory'. In simple terms, LCT is an explanatory framework

that allows a researcher to develop an understanding of the underlying practices and dispositions that guide teachers. This is because all practices, especially teaching, are interpreted as ‘languages of legitimation’ in which the organizing principles are conceptualized as legitimation codes (Maton, Hood & Shay, 2015). In teaching, these codes can be classified as strong or weak dimensions that depend on how a teacher engages with his or her learners in a lesson. The data will be generated based on their experiences as EMS teachers by looking at their dispositions toward these values and the emphasis that is placed on these values when they teach. According to Maton (2015), such data can be generated qualitatively via interviews.

Semantic gravity refers to the degree to which the meaning relates to its context. The stronger the semantic gravity (SG+), the more meaning depends on the context; the weaker the semantic gravity (SG-), the less meaning depends on the context. SG can be described on a continuum of strength with infinite capacity gradation. Furthermore, Maton (2015), argues that this continuum flows from strength to weakness that can be analysed on the basis of what information the teachers convey to their learners. In the case where teachers provide a rich description of democratic values within the context of the topic and its applications in real life, it can be viewed as having a strong SG, whereas the opposite reveals a weak SG. The following diagram (Figure 1) shows the dimensions of semantics.

Figure 1: Dimensions of semantic density and semantic gravity



Semantic density on the other hand relates to the relative thickness of meaning that is conveyed within a practice. In the context of this study, SD refers to the meaning that is conveyed through the information the teacher shares in a lesson. The focus is on how the teacher relates the notion of democratic values to the lived world of the learner. If the lesson is well

articulated and well sequenced, and the learner develops a good grasp of the concept, it means the lesson has a strong

SD+, whereas the opposite means the lesson has a weak SD-. Therefore, the stronger the SD+, the more the meaning will depend on its context. Semantic density traces a scale of relative strengths,

with endless scope for progression (Maton, 2015). In EMS, SD can be seen as how well the teacher integrates democratic values with regards to its applications.

### 3.2 Heidegger's Interpretive Phenomenology: *Dasein*

Linking the LCT to Heidegger's (1967) notion of *Dasein* was important for this study to determine how the teachers' own upbringing as children, their educational journeys or even their experiences of living in South Africa in general has contributed to them placing a greater emphasis on the integration of these democratic values into their lessons. What was of critical importance was ascertaining the way they were raised as children and how it contributed towards helping them understand and value these democratic concepts of respect, accountability, honesty, and equality. Heidegger's philosophy helped to reconcile the way they integrate democratic values into their lessons with the way they think about these phenomena in a real-life setting. These two theories also helped to create a more meaningful narrative to understand why the teachers in this study feel the way they do about knowledge integration and why they think it is important to do so.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology describes the basic structures of human experience and understanding from a first-person perspective (Carman, 2002, p. viii).

This study adopted a Husserlian phenomenological approach to the data-construction process to synthesize a deeper meaning beyond that which is made visible through lived experience. To do so, the researchers applied Husserl's phenomenological dictum of returning to "the things themselves" (1975, p. xix). In the context of this study, this means (i) developing an understanding of how

teachers perceive democratic values and (ii) how they relate to democratic values and their integration into their EMS lessons. Within lifeworld theory, human existence is labelled and understood as personified and socially and culturally rooted as being-in-the-world.

### 4.1 Sampling

A total of 5 purposely selected EMS teachers from 5 different schools in the Western Cape province were selected to participate in the study. These schools ranged between high, middle and lower quintile rated schools. Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 schools have been declared as no-fee or low-fee schools, while quintiles 4 and 5 are high-fee paying schools. Table 1 below provides more details about the biographical information of each research participant.

### 4.2 Data Collection

Semi-structured, one-on-one, virtual interviews via MS TEAMS were augmented with fieldnotes to develop a detailed narrative of the lifeworld of each participant. The purpose of fieldnotes is to record every participant's mood, non-verbal cues or actions, and are usually made during the interview or early the next day while it is still fresh in the mind of the researcher (Seidman, 2013).

The duration of each interview depended on the flow of the conversation, for example, whether they were willing to open up and share their lived experiences and truly explore the issues in depth or not. The teachers knew how long the interview would be and what was expected from them. The first part of the interview was to get to know the research participants by gathering background information, for example, where they grew up, how their parents treated them, what their parents taught them, and what the actions and/or behaviour of the people living in their community was, etc. The second part of the

interview focused on how they integrated democratic values into their Grade 7 EMS

lessons, or whether they plan to do so or not.

**Table 1: Demographic and biographical details of research participants:**

	<b>Liza</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Charmaine</b>	<b>Megan</b>	<b>Hlumelo</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female
<b>Race</b>	White	White	White	White	Black
<b>Age</b>	63	37	46	48	40
<b>Qualifications</b>	Bachelor of Education Degree	Bachelor of Education Degree	Diploma in Education	Bachelor of Education Degree	Degree in Accounting, Diploma in Tourism and a Degree in Education
<b>Years of Experience</b>	44	11	23	28	4
<b>District</b>	Western Province District	Western Province District	Cape Winelands District	Cape Winelands District	Western Province District

### 4.3 Fieldnotes

Koopman and Koopman (2020) state that fieldnotes “assist the researchers in moulding and deepening their understanding of the participants’ lived world” (p. 69). These fieldnotes “relate what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks during the data-construction process” (ibid.). Fieldnotes thus served as a reminder of what happened during the interview, which assisted the researcher in capturing the mood, non-verbal cues or behaviour of the research participant.

## 5 DATA-EXPLICATION FRAMEWORK

In phenomenology, the researcher has to develop a holistic understanding of each participant’s lived world by following an iterative step-by-step analysis without using any software application programmes. The researcher must read and re-read every transcript personally to highlight all of the important words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. This approach is aligned with Hycner’s (1985) notion that ‘explication’ means

summarizing the exact truth as reported by the participant. By doing so, the researcher must be mindful of the context and the experience of the participant. This involves the following steps:

- Bracketing and phenomenological reduction;
- Delineating units of meaning;
- Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.
- Summarizing each interview, validating it and where necessary changing it. For example, general and unique themes were extracted from all the interviews that are amplified with fieldnotes that are integrated into the explication process.

### 5.1 Applying Heidegger’s Theory Of *Dasein* In Crafting The Interpretive Narrative

To truly understand a person’s actions and behaviour within the Heideggerian framework means that the researcher will need to work through all the layers of meaning in regard to the participants’ experience to develop a true

understanding of what is embedded in their consciousness. What is important for Heidegger is the impact of the world on the constitution of the self and how in turn these influences thinking and acting (Koopman & Koopman, 2020).

Context is a central aspect in Heidegger's philosophy because it opens a connection to *Dasein* as a foundation of meaning in education (Koopman & Koopman, 2020, p. 38). Heidegger's theory allows the researcher to zoom in on the actions of teachers as they think about or reflect on their roles as teachers. Information needs to be gathered on why teachers do what they do in a classroom set-up (Koopman & Koopman, 2020, p. 38) – particularly, what teachers focus on when they teach and why. Heidegger's philosophy helped us to understand how teachers' consciousness in this study relates to their interaction with and in the world. This means understanding how the teachers' disposition toward EMS as a school subject is fleshed out in their classroom practice.

## 6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before starting the data-construction process, the researchers received ethical clearance for this study from the University of the Western Cape Human and Social Sciences Research Committee (HSSREC). After that, permission to conduct research at schools under their auspices was granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED): Research Directorate. In addition, the principals of these schools granted permission to conduct interviews with selected EMS teachers. When approaching the research participants, the researchers ensured them of confidentiality and anonymity.

Since this is a phenomenological study in which sensitive questions were asked, the researchers took special care during each interview to 'bracket'

themselves from the participants' responses and allowed them to respond to the questions without interjecting. To ensure trustworthiness of the findings, reporting was done honestly, without editing, changing or altering the different responses of the research participants after allowing member checking of each individual transcript. This means that the reporting of the data was done truthfully in an ethical manner.

## 7 FINDINGS

### 7.1 Research Participant: Liza

Liza is a white female who grew up in White River, Mpumalanga, where she also completed her primary and high school studies. The community in which she grew up was a close-knit Christian community where everybody was involved in each other's lives. Liza grew up in a home with strict rules and values that her parents reinforced in her. She described her parents as "very hard working" and integrated this value of "hard work" into her life. Liza mentioned how her parents taught her the importance of "self-discipline" and "setting goals" in life. To Liza, accountability is a key value that she feels her learners need to know and live by.

Liza firmly believes that integrating democratic values into her EMS lessons is crucial. For instance, she emphasised that she teaches her learners that a country needs people (entrepreneurs) who are creative, visionaries, and who are responsible so that they can create new jobs. To encourage her learners to be more creative and to think out of the box, she teaches them what entrepreneurial qualities are and how they need to see a problem as a business opportunity to solve that problem. A simple example that she uses is a can opener. In the past people struggled to open the cans, now this problem is easy to solve and everyone needs and can use a can opener. The values of how she was raised come naturally when teaching the content,

in particular to respect others, to be accountable and to have discipline.

By linking Liza's integration of democratic values in EMS to Maton's (2015) LCT, her approach to integrate democratic values could be categorized as having strong semantic gravity (SG+) and strong semantic density (SD+). This is because she pays much attention to the social importance (SD+) of disciplinary knowledge by using context-dependent scenarios (SG+). These practical and context-dependent scenarios (SG+ and SD+) when teaching EMS help her to transpose democratic values that go beyond the topic stipulated in the CAPS. This and many other socio-cultural issues (SD+) and the various practical examples that are context-rich (SG+) that she uses in many of her lessons illustrate a strengthening of SG+ and SD+ by allowing her learners to see beyond the content as the learners can directly see how these values relate to a real life context.

## 7.2 Research Participant: Ben

Ben, a white male, was brought up in a time when there was much political instability in the country in the shift to post-apartheid South Africa. As a child, he was very liberal and free because there were very little interest in social media to influence him. The area where he grew up was predominantly white. In contrast, his father came from a very tough background, and his parents were very poor. His father was an Afrikaner, a drinker, a smoker and a car salesman, whereas his mother was temperamentally the total opposite. She is funny, friendly, English speaking and gentle. "Respect" was a very important value that was instilled in Ben's subconscious mind by his parents. From this perspective, he pointed out how his mother taught him to treat all people with respect and not to judge people because of the colour of their skin. Ben further

underscored how his father taught him to be "disciplined", a value that he holds dear.

With regard to the integration of democratic values into his lessons, Ben states that his job is much more than just conveying content. He realises that he has an opportunity to influence 30 individuals in his class at a time. Inculcating these values might not necessarily be part of his lesson plan, but he does incorporate them. He mentioned that his tasks are not themselves value-driven but rather very content-driven, and that from now on he will incorporate values into his tasks and tests as well. When teaching about socio-economic imbalances, Ben asks his learners to raise their hands if they have more than one bathroom in their house. Then he asks whether they have 2 or 3 bathrooms at home; most learners have 2 to 4. He then connects the questions with squatter camps, where families do not even have bathrooms and that the closest thing they have is concrete slabs on the ground with a hole in the middle that is shared between 500 people on average. He conveys this information to the learners to teach them about gratitude and make them aware of how privileged they are. When teaching the learners about a statement of nett worth, he gets them to draw up their own statement of their nett worth. During the next lesson, he makes the learners realise that their individual nett worth is much more than the nett worth of many entire households. He creates an opportunity where learners realise how blessed and fortunate they are and that they should be grateful. Ben tries to make his learners see the bigger picture, meaning he wants them to understand what is happening in society and not to judge too quickly, since learners are influenced by their parents. Many of the parents of Ben's learners model the same views as his father. Even today, in the new democratic South Africa, there are still white parents who are very racist. It is evident that Ben is trying to teach his learners that "equality" matters.

By linking Ben's integration of democratic values into his EMS lessons to Maton's (2015) LCT, his lessons could be categorised as having strong semantic gravity (SG+) as well as strong semantic density (SG+). The reason is that he pays much attention to context-dependent scenarios and lessons that are learned from real-life experiences. These practical context-dependent approaches to teaching EMS help him connect with the learners and teach democratic values in a way that goes beyond the CAPS. This and many other examples that are context-rich (SG+), which he uses in many other lessons, illustrate a strengthening of semantic gravity and semantic density by allowing his learners to see implications beyond the content. Overall, Ben's lesson leans more toward SD+, given his emphasis on the socio-economic challenges that many families face with the aim of creating deeper understanding. Although inequality is situated within a very complex semantic structure with a range of different reasons and meaning, Ben tries to make his lessons more practical for children to understand how lucky they are with respect to their living conditions.

### 7.3 Research Participant: Charmaine

Charmaine, a white female, was born and raised in a house full of teachers and therefore school and teaching have always been part of her life. She describes her parents as being very conservative. Values that were very important to her parents were "honesty, loyalty, to be hardworking" and to "always give people another chance". She grew up in the 1980s, when *racial conflict* flared up in ways never seen before. She pointed out that she wasn't much affected by the racial tension during that time and focussed on how she was taught from a very young age to "respect" everybody. She feels that people should not be judged in general. She mentioned that she spends a lot of time preparing for her lessons before teaching the content. By

doing so, she expressed the value of "hard work" and "accountability".

Concerning the integration of democratic values into her lessons, Charmaine teaches her learners to have a vision and to think out of the box. Thinking out of the box means teaching learners how to think in broader terms and to explore ideas that are creative, that are not limited or controlled by rules or tradition. When working with budgets, she teaches the learners that they are able to work with their own money and that they can also work hard and be self-employed. Charmaine teaches her EMS learners to be "independent", "hard working", "self-motivated" and "loyal". If learners have internalised those values, they have a better chance of being successful entrepreneurs. She encourages her EMS learners to associate with people who share the same values. Teaching values is essential for Charmaine.

English is not the first language of Charmaine's EMS learners; therefore, she needs to make all her lessons practical, and her approach can be seen as rich in semantic gravity (SG +) because she combines content with practical illustrations to help the learners. Without these practical examples, the learners would not understand the content at all. Often the language barrier forces her to pay more attention to the content than to integrating values into the various topics, especially when she has to teach Entrepreneurs Day – where the learners sell different products to their peers and parents. Entrepreneurs Day can also be viewed in simple terms as a market day. By preparing her learners for Entrepreneurs Day can be considered as having weak semantic density (SD-), indicating that meaning is condensed, and her learners might not be able to unpack the technical concepts of many of the topics in the EMS curriculum and how they relate to real-life scenarios in simple terms. Charmaine's narrative reflects that she

strives to adhere to the aims of the CAPS by integrating democratic values into her EMS lessons, and in the various examples she described she has attempted to integrate the democratic values of independence and mutual respect.

#### **7.4 Research Participant: Megan**

Megan, a white female, grew up in a small mining town in Gauteng. Her mother was a housewife and her stepfather worked at Sappi. She stated that she had a very happy childhood growing up. Her parents taught her to be a “hard worker”, to always “respect” others and to have “empathy”. She grew up during the apartheid era with racist parents; hence, during that time she thought racism was “right”. Her father was the authority figure in the house, and the children were “heard and not seen”. She mentioned that she always has “respect” for other people’s time, for other people, for their beliefs and for them to also voice their opinions.

With regard to the integration of democratic values into her lessons, Megan stated that she uses a scenario in which she encourages her learners to ask questions about the scenario. Afterwards, she would have a general conversation about the scenario. In this way, the learners would not only hear the opinions of their peers, but also her (Megan’s) opinion and in this way absorb the value learned from this scenario. She then gives her learners a few questions that are related to the topic, which her learners should investigate. The investigation develops into a class discussion about their findings to answer the questions. She seemed very excited when talking about this lesson and stated that even if they gave her the wrong answers at first, she would help them explore the right answers. Megan implements democratic values, but not in the sense that she tells them what value they are going to focus on in that lesson. She teaches values by creating different

scenarios in class where learners are given the opportunity to express their opinions and speak up for what they believe in. Another practical example where she implements democratic values is when teaching about Entrepreneurs Day. During the COVID-19 pandemic hard lockdown, she arranged an online Entrepreneurs Day. While teaching the learners about being an entrepreneur, she shared the story of one of her friends who lost his job because of the pandemic and how he started to sell wood. This real-life story illustrated the values of “tenacity” and “courage” and that “hard work is always rewarded”.

By linking Megan’s integration of democratic values in EMS to Maton’s (2015) LCT, her approach could be categorized as having a very strong semantic gravity (SG+) and strong semantic density (SD+). This is because she pays much attention to making the content “come to life” in her classroom by using context-dependent scenarios (SG+). These practical context-dependent approaches (SG+ and SD+) to teaching EMS help her to relate the notion of democratic values to the lived world of the learner. This and many other practical examples that are context-rich (SG+) that she uses in her other lessons illustrate a strengthening of semantic gravity and semantic density by allowing her learners to see the implications of democratic values beyond the content.

#### **7.5 Research Participant: Hlumelo**

Hlumelo who self-identifies as a black female, grew up with four siblings. She stated that she was raised to “respect” people, to respect other cultures and other people’s opinions. “*Just because you don’t believe in something, that doesn’t mean you should look down on that and not respect that*”. The values that her parents modelled were always to be “kind” and to “respect” others. Her parents did not discuss racism with her. She shares the same values as her parents; she is a very kind person and

respects people, irrespective of who they are.

With regard to the integration of democratic values into her lessons, Hlumelo implements democratic values when teaching about socio-economic imbalances. She talks about apartheid, why people did not have safe homes and why people had such limited resources. When teaching, Hlumelo believes that learners should know what is going on in our country and that they need to engage. She makes it clear in her lessons that we live in a country where there are three levels of class, which she alludes to as "high, middle and lower class". She uses this lesson on class to teach learners that they need to stay in school and study hard so that they will get a good job, and with regards to democratic values, this teaches the learners about being accountable while also working hard and having determination. She continued to say that on Entrepreneurs Day she emphasises to her learners to be responsible and honest as they are working with money. She actually teaches them about responsibility when planning their business venture for Entrepreneurs Day. She makes them understand that they are responsible for making or losing money. Since some learners do not have parents who can provide their children with products to sell on Entrepreneurs Day, Hlumelo asks the others to work together and help those who do not have products. In this way, Hlumelo believes that her learners learn the value of sharing, showing kindness, as well as the value of equality. In addition, Entrepreneurs Day also teaches learners the value of honesty, in other words, by reporting truthfully on profits made or losses suffered.

By linking Hlumelo's integration of democratic values in EMS to Maton's (2015) LCT, her lessons could be categorized as having strong semantic gravity (SG+) and strong semantic density (SD+). This is because she also pays much

attention to the social importance (SD+) of disciplinary knowledge by using context-dependent scenarios (SG+). These practical context-dependent (SG+ & SD+) approaches to teaching EMS help her transpose democratic values that go beyond the curriculum. Values-driven education is very important to her, and she integrates these values in her daily teaching, which gives her methods of teaching a positive semantic gravity and semantic density.

## 8 DISCUSSION

A total of 4/5 of the participants focussed on respect for others, 3/5 emphasised the importance of hard work while 3/5 highlighted the value and significance of responsibility/accountability amongst others values which they integrated into their practices. These values are important for human existence/co-existence with regards to our relationships with others and the world in which we live. For example, when we practice the value of "respect" towards others, it shows that we "respect" ourselves. When we "work hard" and act "responsibly", it shows we care about our futures and those of others. Welz (2010, p. 17) writes: "The self as relational is open to that to which it relates. ... this is how we are ourselves, we are in relation to others". This means the relational value of respect, hard work, and taking or accepting accountability for their (teachers in this study) actions, has inhibited their being and therefore their sub-conscious mind. Heidegger (1967) refers to this as *Dasein's* disposition and directed towards the(ir) world. Grumet (2005) describes *Dasein* as an act of care or a caring towards the world and others.

The reason the teachers place such significance on these values is that they were instilled in their subconscious minds by their parents. As such, the findings reveal how their lifeworlds provide the grounds for how they think and dwell in the

world of teaching. This provides a meaningful understanding of their “being” (as EMS teachers) with all encounters with people, their learners and objects (in this case teaching) within the world. Thus, their understanding and application of democratic values in their lessons should not be seen as their responsiveness to the curriculum, but how their lifeworlds are reflected in their practices as EMS teachers. From this perspective the findings reveal how their understanding of democratic values dwell in them and therefore should be seen as transcendent acts that arise out of lived experience.

## 9 CONCLUSION

The findings clearly show that when EMS teachers integrate democratic values into their lessons, the lessons not only become rich in semantic gravity but also rich in semantic density. Consequently, their lessons also make a theoretical subject such as EMS, with its focus on key abstract concepts, practical and context-based that are socio-culturally responsive to their learners. By so doing the learners can see how the content can be applied in the real world. For example, a question that teachers often ask themselves is: How can I make the content more practical so that my learners can see how it relates to real-life issues? By using semantic codes, this study has highlighted how values such as accountability, responsibility, honesty, equality, and kindness can be condensed into simpler forms of knowledge for a Grade 7 learner. In other words, the use of semantic codes, such as practical context-related and socio-cultural practices, can lead to knowledge construction or knowledge building in EMS.

From a phenomenological perspective, the findings provided insight into the teachers’ mental dispositions toward democratic values. Particularly, how they gave expression to democratic values in their lessons and how these values

were instilled in their consciousness as children. Using the Heideggerian interpretive lens, this means their sub-conscious awareness around democratic values has its roots in the way they were raised as children and the ontological significance they placed on democratic values.

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