

Rhodes University

Education Department

**Learners' participation in leadership: A case study in a secondary school
in Namibia**

Submitted by

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Declaration

I, **ANDREAS BISHI UUSHONA**, declare that the work presented in this document is my own. References to works by other people have been duly acknowledged.

Signed:

Student

I declare that this thesis has been submitted with/without my approval.

Signed:

Supervisor

Date: December 2012

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents, Matias Kilu Uushona (late) and my blind but brave mother Irja Niilonga Mashuna who has never seen my face in her life and battled for my survival as she had no milk in her breasts during my babyhood. This great woman, despite her blindness, always managed to find someone to take her to some Samaritan women with babies for her son (me) to breastfeed from them.

I further dedicate this study to Ms Lempie Abed Ileka, Ms Helena Reinhold-Shingenge, Ms GwaGideon (late) and Ms Namadhila Kamule who gave me life, after HIM, by sympathizing with my mother's condition and allowing me to twin-breastfeed with their babies.

Mothers you are my heroines. To me you broke the world's humanitarian record and deserve gold medals. May God bless you all!

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Abstract

Learner leadership is a worldwide issue in educational leadership and management. In pre-independent Namibia secondary schools had the prefect system and the SRCs as learner leadership bodies which had little influence on schools' decisions because they lacked credibility. In 2001 the Learners' Representative Council (LRC) was legitimized as a learner leadership body in secondary schools through the Education Act 16 of 2001. However, recent research suggests that even these bodies are not functioning effectively for a variety of reasons. This prompted me to undertake research to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia.

I used a qualitative case study, in an interpretive paradigm, in an attempt to achieve my research goal. The following questions guided the study: How is leadership understood by members of the organization? How learner leadership is understood? How are learners involved in leadership in the school? What potential exists for increased learners' participation? What factors inhibit learners' participation in leadership in the school? A population comprising of the school board chairperson, the principal, three heads of department, the superintendent, three teachers and five learners was composed from a senior secondary school in Namibia. Data were collected through focus groups, interviews, document analysis and observation and analyzed thematically for reflective discussion.

The findings revealed that the LRC is functioning but providing little opportunity for learner leadership development. The most significant challenge relates to traditional and outdated views of leadership on the parts of teachers and education managers. Hence, in addition to a number of practical recommendations, the study recommends a change of mindset towards children so that opportunities are provided to contribute to their growth and development.

List of Acronyms

BETD – Basic Education Teachers Diploma

CoW – City of Windhoek

ELM – Education Leadership and Management

HoD – Head of Department

LRC – Learners Representative Council

MoE – Ministry of Education

MP – Member of Parliament

NANSO – Namibia National Students Organisation

NCSL – National College for School Leadership

OBE – Outcome Based Education

RCL – Representative Council of Learners

SB – School Board

SGB – School Governing Bodies

SMT – School Management Committee

SRC – Student Representative Council

SS – Secondary School

SSS – Senior Secondary School

TA – Traditional Authority

TLO – Teacher Liaison Officer

TV – Television

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNAM – University of Namibia

VU – Victoria University

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study to help prepare readers for what is to come. It starts with a description of the context and background of the study followed by the rationale of the study. After a short statement regarding the research goal and a brief account of the methodology, an overview of the thesis chapters follows before the conclusion of the chapter.

1.2 Context and background of the study

Namibia attained independence in March 1990, and adopted ‘democracy’ as a guiding principle for governance. The Namibian Constitution, Article 20 provides that “All persons shall have the right to education” (Namibia. Namibian Constitution, 1990). In 1993 an educational policy document *Towards Education for All* was formulated, and states that “A democratic education system is organized around broad *participation* [italics added] in decision making and the clear accountability of those who are our leaders. ...We must work diligently and consistently to facilitate broad participation in making decisions about our education and how we implement them” (Namibia. MEC, 2003, p. 41). In a study of learner leadership in Namibia, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) states that since 1990 when Namibia gained independence, democratic participation has been encouraged in private and public institutions (p. 12). It was anticipated that, with learners being stakeholders in the education system, they would also play their role in school leadership.

Learners’ leadership has a long history in leadership in the schools in Namibia. Before Namibian independence there was a learners’ representative body called ‘the prefects’. This body consisted of senior students in the secondary schools, but it was not a legitimate representative of learners because it was not democratically elected. My experience with the prefects while I was a senior secondary school student is that they were more servants of the school management than representatives of learners. It is a historical fact that before

independence students were involved in school boycotts and demonstrations spearheaded by Namibia National Students Organisation (NANSO) in support of the struggle for independence (Nongubo, 2004). During the school boycotts there were divisions among the prefects, where some were supporting the boycotts while others were on the lookout for the demonstration leaders to report them to the management and eventually to the South-West African Police. In addition, “after Namibian independence there was a Students Representative Council (SRC) which continued to serve as learners’ representative body in secondary schools” (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 24). Like the prefects, the SRCs were not accepted by learners in Namibia, were illegitimate representatives and had little influence on decision making in the schools (Nongubo, 2004). However, being a teacher for the first three years after independence in the case study school, I noticed the difference between the prefects and the SRC. The latter showed leadership will-power and was a true representation of the learners, discussing issues pertaining to learners’ rights in the school.

The Education Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) came as a move in the right direction. Its section 60 (1) provides for the establishment of a body of learners to be known as the Learners’ Representative Council (LRC) in every public secondary school in accordance with the prescribed guidelines which must determine the composition, duties and functions of such a council (p. 33). Learners’ participation refers to the role of learners in the governance of educational institutions (Nongubo, 2004, p. 2). Learner leadership forms part of leadership capacity which suggests a broad-based, skilful participation in the work of leadership, and a systematic framework for school improvement (Lambert, 1998, as cited in Lambert, 2003). In signifying learners’ participation in school improvement, Rudduck and Flutter (2000) suggest that “to manage school improvement, we need to look at schools from the pupils’ perspective and that means tuning in to their experiences and views and creating a new order of experience for them as active participants” (p. 75).

Apart from participating in school leadership by heading the divisions according to the portfolio assigned to them as school board members, the LRCs have the responsibility to promote and protect individual learners and the interests of the school’s community. This

should be done through careful consideration of leadership decisions and policies made in the school which may have a negative effect on learners and the school in general.

1.3 Rationale of the study

Despite the education system's provision of platforms for learners' participation, their effective participation remains a challenge. The results of a study conducted in three English Local Authorities in the UK exploring distributed leadership, show that the two *lowest ranking items* [italics added] are the process of involving pupils in decision making and the encouragement of pupils to exercise leadership (MacBeath, 2005, p. 352). Furthermore, during my pilot study exploring the understanding of the concept leadership and who could be involved in leadership, one respondent (a traditional leader) replied that "learners cannot lead as they cannot lead themselves; they are there to be taught, and that is why they are named learners" (Uushona, 2012). I view this response as equating learners with empty vessels, which goes against the notion of democracy and participation.

Namibia has been a democratic country for 21 years now, and democracy has yielded some fruits regarding parents' way of dealing with ill-disciplined children. According to my own experience as a parent, Namibian parents stopped corporal punishment of their children and adopted a process of discussion and counselling. In that process children are given the opportunity to give their side of the story, particularly the reasons for the perpetration, and thereafter the parents will guide, advise and direct children towards more positive conduct; and both stakeholders will reach a consensus. As schools are institutions of teaching and learning, one might expect that democracy in all its facets would prevail. But MacBeath's (2005) study findings and the Traditional Authority (TA) representative views on learners, portray a potential danger regarding the deprivation of learners' rights and their opportunities to develop and grow. This is likely to result from the adult and leaders' mentality of making decisions for learners without consulting them first. On that note, my fear was for such a trend to continue unabated as it can spill over to the next generation. It is easy to assume that today's children may educate their children the way they were

educated, but such views are not supported in contemporary leadership and educational thinking.

Shekupakela-Nelulu's (2008) study on learners' participation in schools' governance in Namibia revealed that learners (LRC members) neither get support from teachers, nor undergo training before assuming duties as learners' representatives (p. 55). In her recommendations, she challenged researchers in the field of Education Leadership and Management (ELM) to pursue the topic further, particularly in Namibia. My study focused on learners' participation in leadership; hence the above findings necessitated the need for this study as they triggered my interest to find out what was happening elsewhere.

1.4 Research goal and questions

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 42) the research goal should provide an indication of what a researcher wishes to attain. This study aimed to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia.

The following specific research questions guided my study:

1. How is leadership understood by members of the organisation?
2. How is learner leadership understood?
3. How are learners involved in leadership in the school?
4. What potential exists for increased learners' participation?
5. What factors inhibit learners' participation in leadership in the school?

1.5 Methodology

This study is located within an interpretive paradigm. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) “Interpretations enable the researcher to gain new insight about a phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon, and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon” (p. 136). To achieve my research goal I carried out a qualitative case study. According to Wellington (2000), a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one potential event (p. 90). My study examined one phenomenon, learners’ participation in leadership in the school, in one setting, probing the SMT’s, teachers’, learners’ and the school board chairperson’s understanding, perceptions and experience of the phenomenon in the case study school. In an interpretive paradigm, human beings through experience of the world and other people, construct their own ‘realities’ and make their own meanings, which includes how they respond to the phenomenon and how they feel and, therefore I studied them in their natural settings.

With regard to data gathering, focus group interviews, individual interviews, document analysis and observation were used to gather data. Different data gathering tools were used to ensure adequate coverage and address the research questions and goals. I started my observation from the first day to the last day of my data collection period. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) state that “observations in a qualitative study are intentionally unstructured and free-flowing: The researcher shifts from one thing to another as new and potentially significant objects and events present themselves” (p. 147). Unstructured observation was applied in this study.

Documents were analysed because documents never change. I analysed documents, focusing on official documents (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), namely the Education Act 16 of 2001, the school rules and regulations, the LRC constitution, school board’s (SB) meeting minutes, the LRC meeting agendas, regulations made under the Education Act 16 of 2001 and the hygiene and cleanliness survey forms. Document analysis helped me to

understand the existing potential for learners' participation in leadership and verify the phenomenon through records.

Focus groups and individual interviews were guided by the following standardized open-ended questions:

1. In your own view, what is leadership?
2. How do you understand the concept 'learner leadership'?
3. Where and how do learners participate in leadership (lead) in the school?
4. In your opinion what should be done to enhance learners' participation in leadership in the school?
5. What can you do to encourage more learners' participation in leadership in the school?
6. What do you consider as hindrances to learners' participation in leadership in the school?

Data collected were analysed thematically. I segmented, coded and categorized data to identify themes. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) indicate the identification of patterns as “a process when data and their interpretations are scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns that characterize the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal” (p. 138). By triangulating the four data sources I was able to present a rich picture of data about the phenomenon.

For validity purposes a standardized open-ended question interview guide was piloted before being administered to research participants. Validity is defined by Hansen (n.d.) as the degree to which data provide relevant information about the research situation being explored. To ensure validity the focus groups and individual interviews were recorded to accurately capture the research participants' responses. Furthermore, to present a rich picture of the phenomenon, I drew data from all four data sources for triangulation. Triangulation is defined by Golafshani (2003) as a “strategy for improving validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings” (p. 603).

Furthermore ethical protocols were observed as permission to conduct the study was given and participants' anonymity and confidentiality of provided data were guaranteed.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter one is an overview of the study which presents the context and background of the study, the rationale of the study, statement of the study, a brief account of methodology and a brief account of thesis chapters.

Chapter two is a theoretical framework where democratic, distributed and participative leadership theories are presented. These theories advocate learners' rights in leadership, their participation in decision making and that leadership should be shared among and involve all members of the organisation. Other relevant theories to this study are also presented.

Chapter three is methodology. This chapter outlines the research study paradigm, method, sampling procedure, data gathering tools, data analysis process, validity and ethical protocols.

Chapter four presents the data gathered from focus groups, interviews, and observation and document analysis. Data are presented according to the identified themes. They are raw and reflect respondents' own words, and were allowed to speak to each other for triangulation.

Chapter five discusses the presented data findings in relation to the literature and the informing theories discussed in chapter two.

Chapter six presents the summary of findings focusing on the main findings, possible reasons for the current state of learner leadership in the school, significance of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for practice, suggestions for further research and the conclusion of the whole study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There is a saying (or belief) in developing countries and Namibia in particular, that ‘education is the key to a life of success’. The saying can be interpreted to mean that when one becomes educated one gets a key to enter into a successful life. But, turning this key to open doors to enter into a successful life requires the energy and power of everybody involved (all stakeholders), and this underlies the call for democratic principles under which Namibian schools operate. Learners¹ being the majority stakeholders in the school should add their strength to the turning of this key through participation in school affairs including leadership. Learners’ participation in the leadership of Namibian schools has not been explored much and there are calls from the few researchers who have done so, to conduct similar studies to intensify the exploration of the topic. Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, says:

I challenge researchers in the field of ELM to pursue this topic further. The scarcity of literature in this phenomenon does not augur well for the encouragement of contemporary leadership approaches. As Namibia is trying to overhaul its educational system with ETSIP and other related programs in place, students’ involvement in school governance could be one solution to our educational problems (p. 88).

From the quote one can see from the researcher’s claim about the scarcity of literature, that there is a need for a study on the phenomenon in a Namibian context. Furthermore the study could contribute to solutions to educational problems in Namibia. The quote attracted

¹ NB: In this literature review, and likely in other parts of this study’s thesis, the terms pupil, children and students means learners and are used interchangeably in the text. This is because different studies on learner leadership used these terms differently. Furthermore, the Oxford dictionary, apart from children, refers pupil, student and learner as somebody who is in school or in a process of learning.

my interest and therefore my research study aims to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia. This chapter is presented as follows. I start by looking at the concept democratic education theory, to be followed by leadership and management, traditional views of leadership, contemporary views of leadership, learners' participation and then the conclusion of the chapter.

2.2 Democratic education theory

Democratic education is a theory of learning and school governance in which “learners and staff participate freely and equally in a school democracy” (*Democratic education, 2012, online, p. 1*). The aim of democratic education is to develop real democracy through active participation by all those involved, either in classrooms or the whole school's affairs in general.

My study draws on the notion of democratic education theory and it aims to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in the senior secondary school in Namibia. Effective learners' participation in school leadership remains a challenge, requiring the school to be democratic whereby all learners have rights, and encouraging ethical behaviour and personal responsibility. In order to achieve individual rights and school goals, schools must accord learners with the three freedoms – freedom of choice, freedom of action and freedom to bear the result of their actions. This implies that learners' right should be accompanied by “freedoms that constitute personal responsibility” (*Democratic education, 2012, online, p. 1*).

Apart from learners' personal responsibility, a democratic school should also consider learners' social responsibility as Barber (cited in Miller, 2007) states:

A democratic school is not one that treats learners as if they were already responsible adults, but one that deliberately teaches them important things that they do not know about the world so that they can more intelligently engage in collaborative problem solving and be prepared to exercise a mature sense of social responsibility (p. 4).

Democratic education in a democratic school encourages the realization that learners should be valued as people and that they have positive roles to play in “creating a caring community within the school” (Walters, n.d., p. 1). Furthermore, democratic education is likely to develop a sense of community among groups of learners and partnerships between teachers and learners based on mutual trust in the capability and creativity of all those involved in a particular learning process. Based on the above statements this theory will help me to understand the case study school’s leadership, particularly the notion of learners’ participation in leadership in the school.

However, democratic education in secondary schools present a particular difficulty because learners may have the power to make some but not all decisions about their learning and leadership in the school. In schools there are some decisions which the school leadership considers as too sensitive for learners’ input. This is usually based on the ideologies of childhood to be discussed later in this chapter, which becomes a hindrance to learners’ participation in leadership.

In the next topic I look at the concepts leadership and management which are often understood as synonymous and usually used interchangeably. Since this understanding may emerge during my study I thought it wise to clear this up now.

2.3 Leadership and management

For the past four decades leadership has gone through several conceptualizations which make it a contested and subjective concept. Its status of subjectivity makes it difficult for academics and scholars alike, to come up with a single generic definition of leadership. However, most definitions reflect assumptions that leadership involves a social influencing process. According to Bush (2003), leadership is the ability to influence the actions of individuals or groups and it is associated with vision and the ability to articulate this vision through an organisation, the ability to direct change and of being future-oriented (p. 5). In addition, Yukl (2000) explains that “leadership involves developing and change” (p. 3). In reconciliation with the two authors’ position, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge, & Ngcobo, (2008) state that “ it can be argued that leadership in educational contexts comprises the ability to understand emerging trends in education and guide a school through various challenges by achieving a vision based on shared values” (p. 6).

Management on the other hand is a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of an educational organisation and “it is directed at the achievement of certain educational objectives” (Bush, 2003, p. 2). This means that management involves dealing with systems, structures and the culture of the school for effective and day-to-day operations (Naidu et al., 2008, p. 6).

The two concepts are different in operation but are also interrelated and inseparable. For example, it is the role of the leader to formulate policies but policy implementation is an executive role of managers. Conceivably if managers were not mandated to implement policies, then policy formulation would be unnecessary. Likewise, should there be no policies formulated, then managers would have nothing to implement. In addition, a leader can perform management roles and the inverse is true. For example, the principal is a school leader, but when he/she teaches the subject he/she manages the subject and the classroom. Similarly, an ordinary teacher is a subject and class manager but can perform leadership roles when he/she executes duties of a financial committee which he/she is assigned to head.

By defining leadership and management and their relationship alone without knowing their 'roots' and origins, one may not understand the theories' developmental trends and how contemporary leadership theories including learner leadership came about. It is therefore imperative to look at traditional views of leadership in respect of theories, which form the basis of current leadership and management theories including educational leadership and management and, particularly when and how they came about.

2.4 Traditional views of leadership

Traditional leadership theories may be interpreted, using a metaphor, as 'roots' of the currently known 'tree', in this context, education leadership and management that 'stems' from contemporary thinking and 'branches' into multiple educational leadership and management theories. To further expand on this metaphor, the tree is 'watered' by scholars with academics as its 'fertilizer' and contemporary educational leadership and management theories, including learner leadership, as its 'fruits'. The metaphor depicts leadership and management theories' development and locates learners' participation in leadership or learner leadership in the contemporary educational leadership spectrum which forms the justification in discussing traditional leadership theories in this study.

Gorton, Aston, and Snowden as cited in Tng (2009) identify trait, behavioural, and contingency as seminal research theories relevant to education administration (p. 2). The three traditional theories were developed at different times with the second and third resulting from the ineffectiveness of their predecessors. I will now briefly discuss the trait theories.

2.4.1 The trait theories

Similar in some ways to 'Great Man' theories, trait theories assume that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership. It was founded in the

1940s (Tng, 2009, p. 2) when leadership started with trait studies on the attitudes of natural leaders, focussing on their personalities, motives, values and skills. Apart from observing the display of advantageous managerial traits of these leaders, none of those traits were clearly superior. Furthermore, no universal traits could be discovered for leadership effectiveness, hence the introduction of behavioural theories discussed next.

2.4.2 Behavioural theories

Behavioural theories of leadership are based upon the belief that leaders are made, not born. The behavioural leadership studies started from the 1950s (Tng, 2009, p. 2) focusing on “the action of leaders and not on mental qualities or internal states” (Van Wagner, n.d., p. 2). Based on these theories people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation. On that basis one could then argue that learners can also learn to become leaders through participation where teaching and observation mostly occur. In support of the above argument, Lambert (2003) says “everyone is born to lead the same way that everyone is born to learn” (p. 422).

Behavioural theories consist of two behavioural sets of the leaders’ actions which Blake and Mouton as cited in Tng (2009) refer to as concern for people and concern for production. However, to strike the balance between the two dichotomous concerns is challenging, even for school leaders, as leadership efforts will usually be skewed towards one of the two. This implies that leaders’ actions cannot be consistent considering the ever-changing contexts and situations they are presented with, and hence the need for an approach that is contingent upon emerging situations as discussed in the following topic.

2.4.3 Contingency theories

After the search by previous approaches for universal characteristics of leadership was inconclusive, the contingency approach was introduced. Contingency theories studies started around the 1970s and recognized that leadership effectiveness was dependent on the

organisational situation. In these theories, the focus is placed on variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation, because “no leadership style is best in all situations” (Van Wagner, n.d., p. 1). However, one may wonder whether a leader can possess all the suitable leadership styles that may suit the emerging and ever-changing contexts and situations. This can be a challenge to many leaders and may be the reason for some organisations’ ineffectiveness.

In contingency theory, organisational success is barely achieved through a single variable, namely a leadership style, but focuses on the additional value of consideration and a combination of “other aspects of the situation and qualities of the followers” (ibid). In my study context it is the quality of the school principal’s followers, as a variable for organisational success, that accommodate the learners’ views of leadership in the school. In a coda of traditional leadership views, the trait theories are silent on both leadership learning as well as the quality of followers as variables to organisational success, contrary to behavioural and contingency theories.

In the following topic I present contemporary views of leadership which are considered informative and supportive of learners’ participation in leadership in the school.

2.5 Contemporary views of leadership

Contemporary theories of leadership are multiple and contesting, therefore the identified theories that are considered informative and supportive to this study are constructivism, distributed and participative leadership. Moreover, contemporary theories are seen to be democratic in spirit, promoting widespread participation. In this context contemporary theories embrace the notion of learner leadership. Learner leaders use their previous knowledge, experience and skills to contribute to the leadership in the school and acquire new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, learner leaders play out their leadership roles through sharing leadership with school leadership (school board) and have legitimate decision making rights to effect leadership in the school. In relation to the contemporary theories’ view one may argue that learners learn better by interactions through

participation. Similarly, learners' leadership learning (skills) is gained through participation in leadership in their communities and schools (Lambert, 2003). This argument necessitates the need to understand how learners learn and this is the focus of constructivist theory which is the next topic of discussion.

2.5.1 Constructivist theory

Constructivism is a theory which suggests that learners construct meaning based upon their previous knowledge, beliefs and experiences (Lambert, at al., 2002, as cited in Seefeldt & Foster, 2007, p. 2). In theorising further, Lambert (2003) reveals that constructivist theory focuses on the ability of participants in an educational community to construct meaning that leads towards a shared purpose of schooling (p. 423). But the fulfilment of the learning process depends on constructivism's emphasis on using reciprocal processes, at all levels of learning, namely listening, questioning, reflecting and participating. On that basis one may argue that the same processes are expected of learners when participating in leadership in the school. If so, then there is a relationship between learning and leading as Lambert (2003) states when he says that "learning and leading are intertwined since these conceptions arise from our understanding of what it is to be human. To be human is to learn and to learn is to construct meaning about the world that enables us to act purposefully" (p. 423).

According to Hanley (1994, p. 3), in constructivism, students' activities are student-centred and students are encouraged to ask their own questions, carry out their own experiments, make their own analogies and come to their own conclusions. Furthermore, Seefeldt & Foster (2007) allude to the importance of constructivism, that:

It demands its leaders to practice participation based approach to lead and direct teachers and learners toward the fulfilment of critical reciprocal processes. With this approach participants share responsibilities for decision making, goal setting... and developing processes that spur the growth of everyone involved in the educational experience (p. 4).

If constructivism is to be effective in schools then teachers are expected to know how to implement a constructivist format. Yager (1991) as cited in Hanley (1994) suggests the following ideas for teachers:

- Promote students' leadership collaboration, location of information and taking actions as a result of learning;
- use student thinking, experiences and interests to drive lessons;
- encourage students to challenge each other's conceptualizations and ideas;
- involve students in seeking information that can be applied in solving real life problems (pp. 56-57).

One may consider Yager's ideas of implementing constructivism for teachers as constructive and convincing as they imply students' participation support that enables them to acquire helpful and necessary knowledge for participation in leadership and decision making in the school.

While Seefeldt & Foster (2007) affirm the reality and effectiveness of constructivism based on thorough grasp of knowledge and "how learners shape and develop meaning from experience and ideas" (p. 5), there are criticisms of education constructivism. Mayer (2009) as cited in *Constructivist learning theory*, (n.d., online), argues that "not all teaching techniques based on constructivism are effective and efficient for all learners, suggesting that many educators misapply constructivism to use techniques that require learners to be behaviourally active" (p. 10). Mayer further refers to constructivism as an example of a fashionable but thoroughly problematic doctrine that may have little benefit for practical pedagogy (ibid.). Another criticism is that constructivism may have negative results when students acquire misconceptions, incomplete and disorganised knowledge through unguided learning instructions. Notwithstanding criticisms levelled against constructivism it is arguably a very appropriate approach to promoting and enabling learners' participation in leadership. While constructive leadership focuses on the use of learners' previous knowledge and skills in contribution to leadership and learning of new knowledge and skills, distributed leadership, on the other hand, provides opportunities for learners' participation in leadership through a shared leadership practice.

Next, I present distributed leadership - an approach which advocates organisational members' participation in the leadership of organisations.

2.5.2 Distributed leadership theory

Distributed leadership can be defined in terms of leadership as “a shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school” (Grant, 2008, p. 85). Based on the above definition, studies of successful leadership have highlighted the importance of distributed leadership practice in securing and sustaining school improvement (Early et al., 2002 as cited in McGregor, 2006, p. 5). However, it is not enough to know whether leadership in the school is distributed, but how it is distributed. This argument leads me to discuss distributed leadership types namely, authorized, dispersed and democratic distributed leadership.

An *authorized* distributed leadership or delegated leadership, as it is sometimes referred to, is where tasks are distributed from the principal to others in a hierarchical system of relationships where the principal has positional authority (Grant, 2008). With this leadership one may assume there is a danger of a tendency to delegate tasks, which even the principal does not understand and cannot execute, to staff members for the sake of delegation. But MacBeath (2005) says “this formal process of distribution has an advantage of lending a high degree of security, not only to staff who occupy those formal roles but also to those who as a result know where they stand” (p. 358).

Dispersed distributed leadership refers to a process where much of the working of an organisation takes place without the formal working of a hierarchy. Dispersed distributed leadership, in its practice, affirms that leadership is not the sole province of the principalship (McNeill, Cavanagh and Wilcox, 2003). Through sharing leadership tasks more

widely and redefining roles in the school, “the power relations are shifted in the achievement of the pre-defined organisational goals and values” (Grant, 2008, p. 53).

Democratic distributed leadership shares similarities with dispersed distributed leadership in potential concerted action, an emergent character of widely circulating initiatives (Gunter, 2005 as cited in Grant, 2009). But what differentiates democratic from dispersed is the non-assumption of political neutrality. According to Grant (2009) democratic distributed leadership questions the status quo of the school hierarchy as it raises questions of who is included and who is excluded in the leadership relationship and in relation to the multitude of social practices within the school (p. 53).

Notwithstanding its increasing popularity, distributed leadership is criticised based on lack of conceptual clarity to allow for clear operationalization of the concept in empirical research. In addition, there is little evidence of a causal relationship between distributed leadership and school achievement, though “one conclusion has been that there is an indirect causal effect” (Hallinger & Heck, 2003, as cited in Hartley 2007, p. 202). The English National College for School Leadership (NCSL)’s website states “it is essentially about sharing out leadership across the organisation, but we are aware that, while there is a strong belief in the idea, there is no great deal of evidence about how it works in practice” (Hartley, 2007, p. 203).

The next topic is participative leadership, another leadership approach that advocates organisational members’ participation in leadership decisions of the organisation.

2.5.3 Participative leadership

Participative leadership assumes that many minds make a better decision than a single mind. This theory further suggests that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account. Participative leaders encourage participation and contributions from

learners and help them feel more relevant, committed to the decision making process and more motivated and creative. This implies that the School Management Team (SMTs) and the entire school leadership move from the traditional ways of leading schools and become participative leaders and managers who consider all valuable contributions of other stakeholders.

One may find it imperative to know whether the school operates within democratic or participative practice in order to understand learners' participation in leadership in the school because participation within the two practices may yield different learner leadership benefits. Participative leadership may not be easily differentiated from democratic leadership because they overlap (Coleman, 2005; Walters, n.d.). However the distinct difference between the two practices is in stakeholders' input rights. In democratic theories participant rights for input are guaranteed and free, while in participative leadership the leader retains the right to allow inputs of others.

Coleman (2005) states that participative leadership has a relationship with a collegial style of management (Bush, 2011), and its promotion through the medium of education involves important procedural values. According to Walters (n.d.), the important procedural values required for participation in leadership include the following:

Tolerance of delivery; mutual respect between individuals and groups; a respect of evidence informing opinions; a willingness to be open to the possibility of changing one's mind in the light of such evidence; the possession of a critical stance towards political information and finally, seeing that all people have equal social and political rights as human beings (p. 1).

The above values are transferable to learners through participation in leadership in the school as these values have the potential to shape learners toward becoming future responsible adults which is one of the educational purposes.

However, the two main critiques of participative leadership practice are information sharing and time (Shuenu, n.d., p. 6). School leaders might not be inclined to inform everyone about sensitive information as they are afraid of a possible information leak which may result in conflicts among implicated members and decision makers. In contrast to the noted practice above, participative leadership advocates vital information to be shared regardless of its sensitive nature. With regard to time management, the time it takes from problem to solution may be an inconvenience (ibid.). For example, when a group of people are supposed to deliberate on a problem and possible strategies to address that problem, they are required to have structures and guidance to help them be more time effective when arriving at a decision. For group members to verse themselves with these procedures and guidelines may be time consuming, thus they may not meet the set deadline.

To conclude this section on contemporary leadership theories there is evidence of leadership development from traditional views, as their roots, to contemporary leadership theories. MacNeill et al. (2003) state “when Guilla (2003) tracked variations in the definition of leadership from 1940s she noted that in the 1990s the support for the leader was more an inter-dependent relationship between the leader and the led that is significantly different from the traditional uni-directional view of leadership” (p. 14). Furthermore Timperley (2007) says that “a new achievable and sustainable conceptualization of leadership has been coming increasingly to the fore to replace the model of a single ‘heroic’ leader standing atop a hierarchy, bending the school community to his/her purposes” (p. 395). The alternative involves thinking of leadership in terms of activities and interactions that are distributed across multiple people and situations (Camburn et al., 2003; Copland, 2003; Spillane et al., 2004 as cited in Timperley, 2007, p. 395).

As major stakeholders, school learners’ participation and involvement in school leadership are embedded in the advocacies of democratic, distributed and participative leadership. These contemporary theories, therefore, will be revisited against the background of the LRC and the notion of learner leadership during the discussion of data findings, but the important question is, how do learners participate in leadership in the school?

2.6 Learners' participation explored

Learners' participation is regarded as the best means for learners to acquire knowledge, experience and the skills necessary that shape them to become future responsible adult citizens and leaders (Lambert, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Theron & Botha, 1990). There are limited studies done on learners' participation in leadership in Namibia and I could only find one study done by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), which was helpful for this study. Hence I needed to draw information from studies done elsewhere. Learners' participation exploration is central to this study and is presented in the following sections: learner leadership defined; potential of learners' participation; the prefects, SRC, LRC; and the factors hindering learners' participation. I start by looking at the definition of learner leadership.

2.6.1 Learner leadership defined

There is no single generic definition of what learner leadership is, but there are some characteristics of learner leadership which some of the authors (Theron & Botha, 1990; Mordaunt, 2009; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000; Clarke, 2007; McGregor, 2006) stressed in their deliberation of this topic, and these characteristics are:

- It is a relational process;
- it involves interactions and building relationships with other students, peer leaders and other members of the school;
- it involves external community;
- it has an outcome of developing leadership skills in students;
- it involves many types of leadership;
- it may develop through participation.

According to Theron and Botha (1990), learner leadership is a system of pupil leadership found in every school by means of which pupils take an active part in activities in a directive capacity (p. 145). The above definition alludes to learners' participation in a directing capacity, which may sometimes imply a management aspect but does not extend to the outcomes or purpose of pupils' leadership. However, Mordaunt (2009) encapsulates the above characteristics when he defines student leadership at Victoria University (VU) in Australia:

Student leadership at VU can be defined loosely as an organic, dynamic and relational process. This involves interactions and building relationships with other students, peer leaders, and other members of the university and external community with the outcome of developing leadership skills in VU students. Students' leadership may have many types of leadership including educational, political, social and/or recreational leadership (p. 2).

For a definition of the concept learner leadership and a general understanding of the phenomenon one may consider looking at the potential that exists for learners' participation in leadership which is presented in the next topic.

2.6.2 Potential of learners' participation

The potential of learners' participation in leadership can better be viewed and understood through, among others, the international and national provisions and policies on childrens' rights, leadership teaching and students' engagement within the school. I start by looking at provisions and policies.

2.6.2.1 Provisions and policies

In Britain, the first formal declaration on the rights of the child signed in 1924 focused on support of children who had lost families and homes in the 1914 – 1918 war (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 76). In a global context the United Nations (UN) convention of 1989

guaranteed children protection and participation whereby the “rights of young people to talk about their experiences and to be heard and to express a view about actions that might be taken in relation to them, was seen as a basis for protection” (ibid.). It is based on this convention (UN Convention of 1989) that many countries, including Namibia, accorded children with rights pertaining to their social lives including the right to life, education, health and leadership.

In Namibia, the Education Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) came as a move in the right direction. Its Section 60 (1) provides for the establishment of “a body of learners to be known as the Learners Representative Council (LRC) in every public secondary school, in accordance with the prescribed guidelines which must determine the composition, duties and functions of such council” (p. 33). This does not mean that there had been no learners’ leadership bodies in schools, but it was a move to legitimize the learner leadership body in secondary schools that worked within democratic principles. The provision came into force substituting the existing student leadership bodies, namely the prefects and the Student Representative Council (SRC). Policy provisions only stipulated the legal framework of the issues, in this case learners’ participation in leadership, and did not elaborate on the ways and means the learner benefited from the issue, therefore in the next topic I discuss leadership teaching as a means of benefitting learners’ participation.

2.6.2.2 Leadership teaching

Leadership teaching, in this context, refers to learners’ participation in projects and other initiatives outside the school’s academic programme, which foster the acquisition of leadership knowledge, experiences and skills through participation. Leadership teaching is autodidactic, in other words it is not taught formally in schools. In Namibian secondary schools there is no subject leadership in classroom timetables. McGregor (2006) states that “leadership skills are not commonly taught in schools. It is too often thought to be for

someone else, it is only about prefects or teachers, head teachers or entrepreneurs” (p. 12). But according to MacBeath (2005) and McGregor (2006) leadership is for everyone.

In Namibia, the Namibian Parliament has a platform for learners to participate and exercise their leadership potential namely, Children’s Parliament. The Namibian Children’s Parliament consists of 27 girls and 16 boys, and its mission statement reads as follows: “The mission of the Namibian Children’s Parliament is to create a developing society with a high sense of responsibility, of which children and the youth are part, with adults as partners” (Namibia. Namibia Parliament, 2008, p. 1). Similarly, Warwick University in the U.K. gives training to students as researchers where some students have been enrolled in an accredited course and a visit to their local Member of Parliament (MP) at the House of Commons is part of an initiative to create their own student learning parliament (McGregor, 2006, p. 12). Another leadership teaching platform in Namibia is the Junior Council offered by some town councils and the City of Windhoek (CoW). According to Zimunya, (2010), the CoW’s junior council consists of 26 grade 10 and 11 students from 20 public schools and 6 from private schools (p. 1).

The leadership knowledge, experiences and skills learned from participating in projects and programmes, other than the school programmes, such as children parliaments and junior councils are necessary and important to participating learners. Those learners may use the gained knowledge, experiences and skills in contributing to discussions and decision making as leaders in the school. Such decisions may, directly or indirectly, have a positive effect on the entire learner community in the school. Apart from leadership teaching, learners’ participation can also be understood through students’ engagement within the school as discussed in the next topic.

2.6.2.3 Students’ engagement within the school

In this study students’ engagement within the school is understood as a platform and a means to identify learners’ qualities and problems through participation in school

programmes. It helps the school leadership, and learners' leadership alike, to understand individual learners' behaviour and performance by which they determine how to deal with them effectively. In this platform the teachers may find some "factors giving rise to students becoming at-risk very early in the child's pre-school and school experience" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 458). In Namibia, the school feeding programme is one of the classic examples of attending to vulnerable and at-risk students for the promotion of school attendance, learners' engagement and general school achievements.

Not all students display similar interests and characteristics as Leithwood and Jantzi (1999,) state:

Students' engagement with the school has both behavioural and affective components. The extent of students' participation in school activities both inside and outside the classroom is the behavioural component. The affective component is the extent to which students identify with the school and feel they belong (p. 457).

The school leadership can detect student problems when they experience a change in student participation and identification. Furthermore it can also predict student outcomes by studying learners' experiences through engagement as Brendschneider, 1993; Dukelow, 1993; Finn & Cox, 1992 as cited in Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) state, "the modest amount of evidence suggests that students engagement is a reliable predictor of variation in typical student outcomes" (p. 452).

From the affective component point of view, students feel a stronger sense of belonging and identification with the school if their performances in engaged activities are successful. For example a recognised class captain or project manager in the school will always wish to be associated with the school and that activity in particular. This influences his/her motivation for further engagement and pursuit of valued school-related goals. The inverse of the above example is also true whereby unsuccessful students are likely to hate the activities and may not be willing to be associated with the school.

To inform this study, the main concern may not be whether students engage in activities, but what types of activities and how they perform those activities may be of keen interest. In support of the above concern, McGregor (2006) identifies areas of students' engagement which provide opportunities for them to exhibit dimensions of leadership namely, peer monitoring, students as teachers and classroom assistants, and students as researchers (p. 7). The latter is identified as the clearest example of "sustainable and process-based leadership development activity" (ibid.). Macgregor's areas focus on academic or classroom-based work, and exclude others and out-of-classroom opportunities such as sport, choirs, service to communities, and societies and clubs (Theron & Botha, 1990; Clarke, 2007). Notwithstanding the fact that potential exists as discussed above, in Namibia, learners' participation in leadership has been different, from diverse times and places and from school to school; hence, learner leadership is believed to have benefitted learners differently. One may believe that this is due to existing student leadership bodies and their effectiveness. Based on the above argument I now move to a discussion of student leadership bodies namely the prefects, Student Representative Council (SRC) and Learner Representative Council (LRC).

2.6.3 The prefects, SRC, and LRC

The idea of learner leadership might be seen as a recent development but it has a long history. The general understanding of leadership is that wherever there is a group of people you expect one or two people from the group to assume leadership. Schools being organisations that impart knowledge and learning, with learners being in different grades, learner leadership is very likely to occur. Although different learner leadership bodies were not regarded as equally important the fact that they existed and were recognised is an indisputable fact.

The prefect system is an old-fashioned leadership body of learners in schools. In pre-independent Namibian schools, and presumably in South Africa, this body was constituted by senior students in secondary schools (standard eight in junior secondary and standard 10

in senior secondary schools). There were no prefects in rural primary and combined schools in Namibia, but Nongubo (2004) indicates that there were prefects in primary schools in South Africa constituted by learners from standard seven. Although prefects were elected by learners it was done with some level of educators' input and influences (ibid). In South Africa, as in Namibia, the prefects were not favoured by learner communities (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008) and were not regarded as legitimate representatives. Clarke (2007) explains:

It seems most of the antagonism to the idea of prefects is based on the manner in which they are appointed and used by some principals in the apartheid era. Because of the perceived links of prefectship to an authoritarian leadership and illegitimate educational establishment the prefects are seen to be somehow undemocratic (p. 58).

The structure of any organisational leadership does not exist in a vacuum, but its members are expected to perform several duties on behalf of the organisation. Likewise, the prefects held portfolios based on available portfolios in the school governing body. According to Theron & Botha (1990) the possible prefects' portfolios were:

- School spirit
- Service (to school and to the community)
- Discipline
- Sport
- Societies and clubs (p. 145)

Theron and Botha's suggested portfolios, with the exception of discipline, seem more of an extramural nature, and this implies that prefects had little, if anything, to do with academics or teaching and learning which is at the core of education and the school's purpose. Hence, the above portfolios had little power to affect learners' education. In order for a student council to function effectively it needs autonomous decision making power in school leadership. In support of the argument above, "Student councils are nothing more than a

‘sham’ and have very little decision making power” (Mintz, 2003 as cited in Apple & Beane, 2008, p. 130). Mintz’s contention is that the more the students can be empowered and involved in making decisions about their education, the more powerful they can be as a force towards helping students take true responsibility for their own education.

Power, which is understood as empowerment, and ‘giving’ power, which includes decision making power, to someone without knowing what to do with it may sometimes be dangerous. Empowering an organisational leadership body begins with the training of its members. In view of the above Theron and Botha (1990) state:

The headmaster must give his prefect council the opportunity to attend prefects’ council courses as presented by the department of education or by other institutions with the permission of the department of education. Here they receive basic training which among other things covers the following aspects of leadership, namely, formulation of objectives, styles of leadership, meeting procedures, group work, problem solving, planning, human relations, communication and public speaking (p. 145).

Although the prefect system was ousted in Namibian schools the portfolios still exist and are occupied by LRC members. This means that the LRC, in Namibia today, perform some of the functions which were performed by the prefects. But before Namibia’s independence the prefects were replaced by a body called the Student Representative Council.

The SRC was a short lived student leadership body in Namibian schools. This body was operational in Namibian schools some years after independence until the promulgation of the Education Act 16 of 2003. As with the prefects system SRC members had no right to participate in school committees, currently known as school boards, thus they had little, if any influence on school leadership and less on learner community representation.

In South Africa, the SRC was recognised in the mid-1970s and started challenging authority on the basis of their rights as Sithole 1995 (as cited in Nongubo, 2004) explains:

Through the SRC, the students not only challenged the education departments and withstood the repressive apparatuses and strategies of the former apartheid state, but they also questioned the prerogatives of principals and parents to take decisions without consulting them and challenged their traditional views on schooling (p. 11).

In Namibia the SRC was replaced by the LRC upon the enactment of the Education Act 16 of 2003.

Thus, learners' participation in leadership in the school can better be understood through the operations of the current learners' leadership body the Learners Representative Council (LRC). Unlike the prefects and the SRC, the LRC is a legitimate and democratic representative body of learners in the school. It may also be regarded as a vibrant and valuable forum for learners' opinions and an opportunity to learn and practice a range of useful life skills. Among the school programmes, the extramural programme provides a myriad leadership opportunities for learners.

The LRC consists of learners from grade 8 and above, who are expected to execute functions on behalf of the entire learners' community. In South Africa, the LRC functions are determined by the Minister responsible for the Education Department and are published by notices in provincial gazettes (Clarke, 2007, p. 55).

However Carr (2005) states that some schools have by-laws while others operate within unwritten rules (Jones et al., 2003 as cited in McGregor, 2006) that teaching and learning would not be discussed. In his study on the implementation of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) in the Western Cape, South Africa, Carr identified 13 important functions of the RCL which he listed from the most to the least important. Top of the list was "to represent learners and to articulate their views" (p. 156). The above function sounds good but one may be interested to know the procedure of dealing with issues by the learner community before the LRC can take them to the SMT. The statement however

presents a potential for further studies on LRC functions. At the bottom of Carr's RCL function list is "the inclusion of learners' activities in the budget" (ibid.). This function scores only 4%. One wonders about the sufficiency of the learner activities budget. The fact that it is the least important function signals the perception of the low value of LRC costing functions, which may be a barrier to their execution of such activities.

In Namibia, there are no national guidelines on the functions of the LRC, therefore schools operate differently from one another. The absence of the LRC guidelines was noted by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) that "apart from the provisional establishment of the LRC in the Education Act 16 of 2003, no other references on a participatory capacity nor an explanation of their roles and functions" (p. 24) was given.

Notwithstanding the policy provision for LRC establishment and extramural programmes which schools may have, the biggest challenge for schools on LRC management is "to make sure that learners have something meaningful to do involving leadership within their groups" (Clarke 2007, p. 56). In contrast, school management pay lip service to this function and leave learners to do the dirty work that teachers do not like doing such as organising anti-litter campaigns (ibid).

In order for the LRC members to acquire knowledge, experiences and skills through their leadership body, they need strong support from all stakeholders in the school. But their leadership success depends largely on the support of the principal and senior staff (Theron & Botha, 1990; Carr, 2005; Clarke, 2007; Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008), and the extent to which they are granted authority to make real decisions about real issues that affect their daily lives at school. Otherwise, the absence of LRC support and decision making authority devalues this learners' leadership body and makes it just a mere part of the school structure. Therefore to support and strengthen the effectiveness of the LRC, Clarke (2007) suggests five tips for the school management, as follows:

- Use the LRC to promote an understanding of the democratic process within the school.
- Provide LRC members with appropriate leadership training.

- Provide the LRC members with clear guidelines about the scope and limits of their authority.
- Allocate a budget to the LRC and give them full authority to spend the money, on condition that it be spent on items which will be of benefit to the school.
- Give the LRC appropriate guidelines on the procedure to follow when dealing with issues which they discuss and wish to express an opinion about, but which are outside their area of authority (pp. 56-57).

I believe that the above suggestions may reflect on my study as either enhancing or inhibiting factors towards the effectiveness of the LRC in particular and will be helpful during data discussion in chapter 4.

Next I look at factors hindering learners' participation.

2.6.4 Factors hindering learners' participation

McGregor's (2006) study of recognizing student leadership schools and networks as sites of opportunity records the following findings:

Overall (of the student sample), only 6% of the student respondents reported holding such formal leadership positions. Almost all schools had sport teams, but only 14% of student respondents had played a leading role in them and 76% said that they never had a leading role in extra-curricular activities (p. 7).

The above findings are drawn from the extramural activities which are believed to create maximum opportunities for learners in leadership positions. Yet the findings are puzzling and prompt assumptions that there are factors hindering learners' participation in leadership in the schools. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), the largest proportion of school leadership effects on students are mediated by school conditions and "a significant challenge for leadership researchers is to identify alternative conditions likely to have direct effects on students, and to inquire about the nature and strength of the

relationship between them and school leadership” (p. 454). Furthermore, structural development is one of the important dimensions that foster participation in schools (ibid.). Leithwood and Jantzi found that students’ leadership depends on the school conditions and structures, but hindrances to learners’ participation may also be numerous. The next topic presents ideologies of childhood as one of them.

2.6.4.1 Ideologies of childhood: Perceptions of learners as leaders

Ideologies of childhood in this study are understood as being the perception of leaders and adults in general towards learners with regard to their ability to take responsibility and leadership roles, make decisions on issues affecting their lives and take up leadership positions. Children are generally portrayed as lacking moral standards, being out of control and lacking experience on which to draw for effective participation. In support of the above idea, Rudduck & Flutter (2000) state that “ there is a legacy of public perceptions of childhood that has made it difficult until recently, for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about things that affect them, both in and out of school” (p. 80).

Childhood ideology’s notion purports that children should not participate in leadership discussions and decision making because of their low level of maturity. During my pilot study exploring the ‘understanding of the concept leadership and who should be involved in leadership’, a traditional authority representative replied that “learners cannot lead; as they cannot lead themselves; they are there to be taught, and this is why they are named learners” (Uushona, 2012). Furthermore, Lambert, 2004, as cited in Seefeldt & Foster (2007) states that students do not possess within themselves the necessary knowledge and experience to take a more active role in constructing knowledge and shaping meaning (p. 5). However, James & Prout as cited in Rudduck and Flutter, (2000) mention six problems concerning the visibility of children which were highlighted in a document presented to the UN world summit on social development by The Save the Children Fund as:

A failure to collect child specific information; lack of recognition of children's productive contributions; no participation of children in decision making; the use of an inappropriate standard model of children; the pursuit of adult interests in ways which render children passive; and lack of attention to gender and generation relationship (p. 80).

The above highlights the notion that childhood should be regarded as part of society and culture and that children should be seen as social actors and not still in the process of becoming social actors and that "pupil participation and perspectives may be more acceptable than it has been in the past" (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 80). Furthermore, the above problems indicate lack of support for childrens' participation in leadership.

2.6.4.2 LRC support

It was mentioned earlier in this document that LRC effectiveness largely depends on senior teachers and the SMT support. Therefore poor support compromises the LRC effectiveness. Power is understood as empowerment and 'giving' the LRC position and power, which they may not know how to use, can sometimes be dangerous. The LRC empowerment may be referred to as the acquisition of knowledge and skills by its members which are necessary to execute their duties, through training.

2.6.4.2.1 Training

Training may be believed to be the main need for LRC support while it remains the best means for organisational empowerment. In Namibia, "there seemed to be no regional or national training programmes in place nor any form of induction to prepare learners for their new responsibilities" (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 56). The absence of regional or

national LRC support programmes may suggest that it is up to the discretion and liberty of individual schools to train their LRCs. According to Shekupakela-Nelulu's (2008) study, one school organised training for the schools LRCs in the cluster at the cluster centre and one school principal remarked:

We never had formal training for our LRC except the small introduction on their portfolios and job description. School C did a very good job; they said we are having our grade 11s - let us take them and be trained. Then they went for training. It was very costly for school C to send their learners because they had to pay for all the fifteen learners (p. 57).

However, Carr's (2005) study identified the top five training areas for LRCs namely, leadership, roles and functions, meeting procedures, conflict management and planning (p. 181). Similar training areas were also identified by Theron and Botha (1990). Furthermore, the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO)'s response to the question on what training they have provided to meet the needs of LRC members resulted in the table below:

Workshops organized by staff	Full-day workshop
Workshops run by service provider	Weekend training camps
Workshops for own school only	Discussion with the LRC
Workshops with neighbouring schools	Guest speaker
Afternoon training session	Motivational speakers

Training strategies used by Teacher Liaison Officers.
Source: Carr, 2005, p. 182

The TLO's strategy is good and its contribution to the LRCs may mean real empowerment. The strategy is also necessary for the empowerment of the LRCs in Namibian schools as there is no evidence of LRC training programmes in place. But the strategy requires financial resources for this undertaking as one respondent in Carr's (2005) study said, "We

did not do training as the school did not have a budget for this” (p. 181). The respondent remarked on sending the RCL members to the training. It is therefore of utmost importance that senior teachers and the SMTs ensure their full support of the LRCs by, among others things, allocating an adequate budget to LRC operations including their empowerment through training for effective and efficient execution of the learners’ leadership body functions.

In conclusion this section gave a historical background of the LRC and learner leadership concept which will be revisited during the discussion of data findings.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter is a review of literature which informs my research study. It presents a discussion of what other scholars have researched and published in the area of learners’ participation in leadership and forms a conceptual framework of my research study. I began with an introduction, followed by democratic education theory, leadership and management, traditional views of leadership, contemporary views of leadership, exploration of learners’ participation with specific focus on potential, the prefects, SRC and LRC. Lastly I looked at factors hindering learners’ participation. The literature review presented me with an awareness of some pitfalls uncovered by other researchers and I return to these matters in chapters four and five. Furthermore both contemporary theories and learner leadership history sections will be revisited during the discussion of data in chapter four. For now, I move on to the methodology chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is a road map that researchers follow to carry out research studies. Kaplan (1973) as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) state “the aim of methodology is to describe approaches to, kinds and paradigms of research” (p. 47). In elaboration, Kaplan suggests that the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the product of the scientific inquiry but the process itself. This chapter, therefore, outlines the research methodology and strategies used to develop an understanding of learners’ participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia. The chapter covers the research paradigm, the research method, sampling, data gathering process, data analysis, validity, ethical protocols in research and finally, the conclusion.

3.2 Research paradigm

In an attempt to develop an understanding of learners’ participation in leadership in the school, this study is located in a qualitative paradigm, and specifically in an interpretive approach. According to the historian of science Thomas Kuhn as cited in Maxwell (2008), a paradigm refers to a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology), assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition. Furthermore, paradigms also typically include specific methodological strategies linked to these assumptions, and identify particular studies that are seen as exemplifying these assumptions and methods (Maxwell, 2008, p. 224). In addition, Bassey (1999) describes a paradigm as “a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and the function of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the pattern of their thinking and underpins their research actions” (p. 42).

There are different types of research paradigms, but a qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting (Cresswell as cited in Peters, 2008, p. 100). Despite the criticism of qualitative research that the closeness of the researcher and participants may cause bias, whereby a researcher can be seen to influence participants, qualitative research has the following strengths:

- It takes context into account.
- It allows for taking into account participants' categories of meaning – it is about people's personal experience – more adapted to needs of people studied.
- It allows in-depth study (Campbell, 2011, p. 2).

Interpretations enable the researcher to “gain new insight about a phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon, and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 136). I explored learners' participation in leadership in the school by probing the SMT's, teachers', learners' and the school board chairperson's understandings, perceptions and experience of the phenomenon in the case study school. In an interpretive paradigm, human beings through experience of the world and other people, construct their own 'realities' and make their own meanings, which include how they respond to the phenomenon and how they feel and therefore I studied them in their natural setting.

3.3 A Case study method

A method is an approach used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 47). To achieve my research goals I carried out a qualitative case study. According to Wellington (2000), a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one potential event (p. 90). My study

examined one single subject, learners' participation in leadership in the school, in Mkwabashu SSS. Learners' participation in leadership and its purported 'learner leadership' is one of the contemporary theories and there is no national policy on learners' leadership practice in Namibia (Shekupakela- Nelulu, 2008). The phenomenon under study, therefore, requires a case study inquiry as defined by Yin (n.d.) that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 180).

A case study has disadvantages, one of which is that case study findings cannot be generalized, but I chose a case study because of depth and manageability. A case study allows you to examine a particular issue in a great deal of depth (Rule & John, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), rather than looking at multiple instances superficially. Furthermore, its status of in-depth analysis enables the researcher to obtain thick and rich descriptive data on the subject, but this requires careful selection of research participants.

3.3.1 The case study school

The sample for this study was one senior secondary school in Ketu Circuit of the Omusati Region. There are only two senior secondary schools in Ketu Circuit where Mkwabashu SSS is located. The school opened its doors for the first time in 1947 under the leadership of Finish Missionaries and was operating from missionary (church) buildings as a female teachers' training institution known as a 'Seminary'. In 1974 the school was relocated from the missionary building to, the then, government buildings and was renamed Ezimo SS, catering for both male and female learners. Before Namibian independence learners from Ezimo SS participated in demonstrations and school boycotts, organised by NANSO members in collaboration with some prefects and SRC, in support of the fight for liberation and independence of Namibia.

The school was once again renamed as Mkwabashu SSS in 2000. Mkwabashu was one of the famous kings of the kingdom in which the school is located. It has a total enrolment of 720 learners, 36 teachers and a functioning school board constituted by parents, teachers and learners. The school was conveniently and purposively selected due to its close proximity to my house and because it has a learner leadership body, the LRC, as my study aimed to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a secondary school in Namibia.

3.4 Sampling procedure

Sampling refers to the process of defining the population on which the research will focus as Mertens (2005) states that "the sampling process is a method used to select a given number of people (sample) from a population" (p.69). Sampling decisions must be taken early in the planning of research as factors such as expense, time, and accessibility frequently prevent the researchers from gaining information from the whole population (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 143). For this study, purposeful sampling was used to identify participants. In the views of Cohen et al. (2011), purposive sampling is often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of a particular characteristic being sought. I chose a sample of 14 participants: the school principal, three heads of department, three teachers, three learners (LRC members), the head boy, the head girl, school board chairperson and the superintendent. Furthermore, I chose my participants because I believed they were in position of understanding the study's phenomenon. Choosing participants alone does not guarantee effective tapping of the contained phenomenal understanding of participants, but careful preparation of data gathering tools does.

3.5 Data gathering tools

Data gathering tools refers to the research instruments to be used to gather the required and rich data. Interviews, document analysis, and observation are regarded as major data

gathering tools to be used in a case study method (Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). For this study, focus group interviews, individual interviews, document analysis and observation were used as data gathering tools. I used four different data gathering tools to ensure adequate coverage and address of, the research questions and research goal. With the permission of participants I used an audio recorder for data capture and transcription. Next I elaborate on the four data gathering tools used and start with observation.

3.5.1 Observation

I used observation as my first data gathering tool. I understand observation as a data gathering method based on close monitoring of facts and practices of the target groups without attempting to change them. Cohen et al. (2011) qualify observation as more than just looking. They state “it is looking (often systematically) and noting systematically (always) people, events, behaviours, settings, artefacts, routines and so on” (p. 456). I conducted observation during the entire period of my visit to the school (July – August) using unstructured observation (Appendix 7) and noted every observable cue relating to my study phenomenon. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) state that “observations in a qualitative study are intentionally unstructured and free-flowing: The researcher shifts from one thing to another as new and potentially significant objects and events present themselves” (p. 147). I used field notes which are defined by O’Hanlon (2003) as the researcher’s record of what has been observed and will include descriptions of the context, locality, participants, what has taken place and what has been said (p. 76). I collected and edited notes taken during observation immediately, before I forgot important details. My observation was also directed by participants’ claims about the phenomenon. Apart from unstructured observation alluded to above, I planned to observe the practical participation of learners in leadership by attending SB and LRC meetings but no meeting was convened during my entire observation period due to situations beyond the school management’s and learners’ control.

I acknowledge the disadvantages of observation that, it requires time for the researcher to observe and record observations; the researcher is prohibited from asking questions (Durrance & Fisher, 2005) and learning the language might be necessary to properly grasp the meaning of interactions between individuals. However, I chose observation based on its advantages which I consider more important than the disadvantages, being: Observation provides indicators of the impact or progress that might be more reliable than data gained by asking people; it allows us to pick up on discrepancies between words and actions and it does not require many resources (ibid.). Furthermore, observation helped me in the constructing of individual and focus group interviews' questions.

3.5.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are another data gathering tool I used. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), a focus group is a type of group interview in which the moderator leads a discussion with a small group of individuals (e.g. students, teachers) to examine in detail how the group members think and feel about the topic (p. 185). Campbell (2011) further defines focus groups:

A focus group can be defined as an in depth qualitative interview or organised discussion held with a small number of carefully selected individuals brought together to discuss a particular topic, so a researcher can gain information about their views and experiences of a topic (p. 10).

Focus group interviews are known to have a distinguishing feature which is “the use of group interactions to discuss data, produce data and provide insights that would not be available in a single interview situation” (O’Hanlon, 2003, p. 78). I conducted three focus group interviews (with three teachers, three learners, and two HoDs). In support of using more than one focus group interview, Johnson and Christensen (2004) state that “the conduct of two to four focus groups as part of a single research study is quite common because it is unwise to rely too heavily on the information provided by a single focus group” (p. 185).

I was aware of what I consider as the main disadvantages of conducting a focus group interview being that one respondent may dominate the interview; the circumstances where the researcher has to aim a series of follow-up questions at one specific member of the group (Cohen, et al., 2011) and the problem of coding up the responses of group interviews (Lewis, 1992 as cited in Cohen, et al., 2011). However, I chose focus group interviews based on its usefulness listed below:

- When time is limited.
- People feel more comfortable talking in a group than alone.
- Interaction among participants may be more informative than individually conducted interviews.
- The researcher would like other people's assistance in interpreting something he or she has observed (Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 1994, as cited in Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Campbell (2011) also provides some advantages of focus group interviews which convinced me of my choice of this tool, that:

- It provides a wide range of information on short time.
- It can be used as a starting point to construct an interview schedule.
- It can provide an initial exposure to the behaviours the researcher is about to observe.
- It does not require complex sample.
- It may benefit participants as it can be the opportunity to be involved in decision making process (p. 10).

Focus group interviews conducted were guided by standardized open-ended questions (see the Interview Guide, Appendix 6). Standardized open-ended questions are types of interview questions whereby the exact wording and the sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order (Cohen, et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The questions below guided the focus group interviews.

1. In your own view, what is leadership?
2. How do you understand the concept 'learner leadership'?

3. Where and how do learners participate in leadership (lead) in the school?
4. In your opinion what should be done to enhance learners' participation in leadership in the school?
5. What can you do to encourage more learners' participation in leadership in the school?
6. What do you consider as hindrances to learners' participation in leadership in the school?

Despite little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances and standardized wording of questions that may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers, I chose standardized open-ended questions because:

- Respondents answer the same questions, thus increasing compatibility of responses.
- Data are complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview.
- They facilitate organisation and analysis of the data (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 413).

The standardized open-ended questions' strength that respondents answer the same questions, of course, does not imply that I did not probe respondents' answers for individual understanding. Furthermore, focus group interviews can be used as "a stand point" for considering probing questions in individual interviews (Campbell, 2011, p. 10).

3.5.3 Individual interviews

To complement data from observation and focus group interviews I used individual interviews as the third data gathering tool. Individual interviews are types of interviews whereby the researcher engages selected participants individually on a one-on-one basis. I conducted individual interviews with the school principal, a head of department, the superintendent, the school board chairperson, the head boy and head girl. Johnson and Christensen (2004) state that qualitative interviews are used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivation and feelings about the topic (p. 183). Therefore the interview "is the main road to multiple realities" (Stake,

1995, p. 64). As in the focus group interviews, the same open-ended questions were used to guide the conducted individual interviews.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 148) individual interviews are believed to have the ability to yield a great deal of useful information because the researcher can ask questions related to some concerns, among others:

Facts; peoples' beliefs and perceptions about facts; feelings; present and past behaviours; standards for behaviours (i.e., what people think should be done in certain situations); and conscious reasons for actions or feelings (e.g., why people think that engaging in a particular behaviour is desirable or undesirable).

Despite the interview's perceived weaknesses, some being the requirements of staff time, a quiet area to conduct them and special equipment to record and transcribe them, Durrance and Fisher (2005) mention three of the interview's strengths as being:

- Personal contact with participants might elicit richer and more detailed responses.
- Individual interviews provide an excellent opportunity to probe and explore questions.
- Participants do not need to be able to read or write to respond (p. 1).

I chose individual interviews as one of my data gathering tools because of their ability and their strengths, as alluded to above, which I believe are more important than their weaknesses. But data from interviews also need support and confirmation from document analysis in order to capture a clear understanding of the phenomenon.

3.5.4 Document analysis

Document analysis was the fourth data gathering tool used in my study. It played a role in confirmation of data gathered from other tools. I started by analysing documents, focusing on official documents (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), namely (school) policies, school

board (SB)'s meeting minutes and the LRC constitution (Appendix 8). Denscombe as cited in Campbell (2011, p. 9) urges researchers to choose documents well. I chose the above-mentioned documents based on their relevance to the phenomenon under study as "documents need to be evaluated in terms of authenticity, representativeness, meaning and credibility" (ibid.). Document analysis helped me to understand the existing potential for learners' participation and to verify the phenomenon through records. It also helped me to formulate probing questions for interviews. Furthermore, documents are reliable sources of data that do not change. The four data gathering tools enabled me to collect enough convincing data which were analysed to present an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in the case study school.

3.6 Data analysis

I consider data analysis as a step in research methodology for preparing collected data for presentation and discussion. Cohen et al. (2011) state:

Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (p. 537).

Data collected was analysed thematically. After reading the focus groups and individual interview transcripts, I arranged data into meaningful analytical units (segmentation); marked segments of data with descriptive words or category names (coding); then developed category systems (themes). Data from document analysis and observation were also segmented, coded and categorized to form part of the themes. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) indicate the identification of patterns as a process when data and their interpretations are scrutinized for underlying themes and other patterns that characterize the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal (p. 138). By triangulating the four data sources I would be able to present a rich picture of data about the phenomenon for validity.

3.7 Validity

Validity is defined by Hansen (n.d.) as the degree to which data provide relevant information about the research situation being explored. To ensure validity, I piloted the data gathering's guiding tool, namely, the standardised open-ended questions to my supervisor who approved my questioning and the instrument. Furthermore, my supervisor checked other data gathering tools like observation and document analysis schedules and was satisfied. In conducting the focus groups and individual interviews, I used an audio recorder with the permission of participants. This was done to ensure the transcripts' accuracy. Participants were given their transcripts to read "to confirm whether they accurately reflected their responses" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 244). To present a rich picture of the phenomenon, I used four data sources for triangulation. Triangulation is defined by Golafshani (2003) as a "strategy for improving validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings" (p. 603). While considering the collecting of relevant data for validity, I also considered ethical issues in educational research.

3.8 Ethical protocol

Ethical protocol can be referred to as the parameters of ethics within which researchers bind themselves when conducting research. I sought permission to carry out my research study, in writing, from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education (Appendices 1 and 2) and I was granted permission to conduct the study by the Permanent Secretary (Appendix 3) and a permission to enter into the school by the regional director of education (Appendix 4). I then prepared consent letters (Appendix 5) for participants I interviewed. In the consent letters, participants' confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, as were their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. I explained those ethical issues to everybody at the beginning of every interview and reiterated the point of confidentiality and anonymity at the end of every interview. During my first day at school I explained to the school principal the educational purpose and the potential value of the study particularly to the case study school. I viewed this as what Carr as cited in O'Hanlon (2003) asserts as an ethical awareness of research practice in

education. In his words, “the educational character of any practice can only be made intelligible by reference to an ethical disposition to proceed according to some more or less tacit understanding of what it is to act educationally” (p. 88). This is how I would want my study to be perceived.

3.9 Conclusion

As a novice researcher, this chapter from the research design to data gathering process gave me the courage and confidence required to conduct the research. During the data gathering process I was exposed to the dynamics of research which researchers experience in the field through interaction with their participants. Data gathering tools used were interactive in terms of construction and complemented each other to provide sufficient and desired data regarding the phenomenon for validity. Furthermore, data gathering was conducted within the parameters of ethical awareness of research practice in education. The next chapter presents the gathered data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present data gathered to give readers the authentic views of participants regarding the development of an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in the senior secondary school in Namibia. Data were gathered through individual interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis and observation and are presented through the following identified themes: What is leadership? The Organization (LRC), Teachers' Support and Time Constraints.

Next I present participants' profiles and codes, then move to data presentation around the themes identified, starting with 'What is leadership'?

4.2 Coding and profiles of research participants

Coding and participant profiles help readers to understand the data sources and enable them to appreciate and criticize the sample based on data presented. Furthermore, participant profiles validate the purposefulness of purposive sampling. The participants held different views of the phenomenon. Their differences in views might be influenced by their previous and present exposure of learners' participation in leadership in the schools. Pseudonyms are used for the participants' and all schools' names for ethical reasons and participants are coded as follows:

4.2.1 Mr Okamati: School Board Chairperson (SBC)

Mr Okamati started his teaching career at Gwashe Combined School in 1982. He was in charge of sport at the school and served as the circuit sport chairperson for many years. He also served as a school board member at their school. During his student life time, he once served in the student leadership body as a prefect in the then Iimenka SS currently known as Mkwabashu SSS. Mr Okamati was transferred to Lyetu Primary School in 2007 where he is teaching to date. He is a Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD - Upper Primary) holder with Mathematics and Physical Science as his major subjects. Currently, Mr Okamati is the school board chairperson at Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School in Ketu Circuit of Omusati Region.

4.2.2 Mr Katate: Principal (P)

Mr Katate began his teaching career in 2000 at a school in the Oshikoto region. In 2004 he was then promoted as principal at Wayululu combined school in the Ohangwena region. He was appointed as a principal of Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School in 2006. Mr Katate is a Bachelor of Education degree holder obtained from the University of Namibia (UNAM) and is also a cluster center principal of the Mkwabashu cluster. At cluster level, he serves as a coordinator of the cluster activities and oversees resources and expertise sharing and the general teaching and learning improvement in cluster member schools.

4.2.3 Mr Takali: Head of Department 1 (HoD1)

Mr Takali started his teaching career at Omungome SS in Omusati region in 2004. He was promoted to the HoD position for languages at Mkwabashu SSS in 2010. He is a Bachelor of Education holder from the University of Namibia. Mr Takali is young, cultured and a hard worker.

4.2.4 Mrs Odada: Head of Department 2 (HoD2)

Mrs Odada started her teaching career in 1993 at Iimenka SS currently known as Mkwabashu SSS where she is teaching to date. When she started teaching, the learner leadership body existing was the Student Representative Council (SRC).

She holds an Honors Degree that she obtained from University of South Africa (UNISA) in the field of Economics. Mrs Odada teaches Economics and Business Studies in the school.

4.2.5 Mrs Kapite: Head of Department 3 (HoD3)

Mrs Kapite was the longest serving staff member interviewed who started teaching at the then Iimenka SS currently known as Mkwabashu SSS in 1991. She taught in that school while the Prefects and the SRC were learners' leadership bodies. She holds a Master of Education (Biology) obtained from Cuba and currently teaches Biology and Life Science. She is also a school board member at the school.

4.4.6 Mr Nawa: Superintendent (Su)

Mr Nawa is a junior teacher who started his teaching career at Mkwabashu SSS in 2009. He holds a Bachelor of Education degree from UNAM, specializing in Physical Science, the subject he is teaching at school. Mr Nawa is also a superintendent at the school.

4.2.7 Mr Noab: Teacher 1 (T1)

Mr Noab started his teaching career at Mkwabashu SSS in 2001. He, once upon a time, served as a superintendent and also as Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) in charge of the affairs of the learners' leadership body the LRC in the school. He is a Bachelor of Education degree holder from UNAM and specialized in Mathematics, the subject he teaches at the school. Mr Noab is also a school board member at the school.

4.2.8 Mr Ngele: Teacher 2 (T2)

Mr Ngele started his teaching career in 2002 at a school in the Erongo region. He was transferred to Mkwabashu SSS in 2009. He is a Bachelor of Education degree holder from UNAM and currently teaches Biology and Geography. Although he never served as a TLO, Mr Ngele works closely with the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in a self-appointed advisory capacity as he believes in sharing information and helping others. Mr Ngele is also a school board member at the school.

4.2.9 Mrs Nyegwa: Teacher 3 (T3)

Mrs Nyegwa is the head of the Namibia College of Open Learning (NACOL) center at the school who started teaching at Mkwabashu SSS in 2005 as an Agriculture teacher. She is a Bachelor of Education degree holder from UNAM.

4.2.10 Mr Kufa: Head Boy (HB)

Mr Kufa is the school head boy, the top position in the LRC. He came to Mkwabashu SSS in 2011 in grade 11 and currently he is in grade 12 in the field of science.

4.2.11 Miss Cecil: Head Girl (HG)

She is an LRC member, as a school head girl, who has been a learner at Mkwabashu SSS since 2008. Miss Cecil started her grade 8 at this school and she is currently in grade 12 in the science field.

4.2.12 Miss Ahowe: Learner 1 (L1)

Miss Ahowe joined Mkwabashu SSS in 2009 as a grade 8 learner. She is currently in grade 11 and science is her field of study. Miss Ahowe is an LRC member holding an information portfolio.

4.2.13 Mr Damian: Learner 2 (L2)

Mr Damian came to Mkwabashu SSS in 2011 as a grade 11 learner. He is in grade 12 in the field of science and holds the LRC's entertainment portfolio.

4.2.14 Miss Alikan: Learner 3 (L3)

Miss Alikan became a learner at Mkwabashu SSS in 2008. Her first grade at school was 8 and she is currently in grade 12 in the field of science. Miss Alikan is an LRC member for discipline.

Data gathering tools have been identified as follows:

- Individual Interviews
- Focus Group Interviews
- Document one: Education Act – D1
- Document two: The LRC Constitution – D2
- Document three: School Rules and Regulations – D3
- Document four: School Board Meeting Minutes – D4
- Document five: The LRC Agendas – D5
- Document six: Cleanliness and Hygiene Survey – D6
- Document seven: Regulations made under Education Act – D7
- Observation – Notes recorded during my stay at the school – OB

4.3 What is leadership?

The question tried to get the participants' views regarding their understanding and perceptions of the concept leadership. Data presented showed that participants held different views regarding the concept leadership. Leadership is understood as a practice, a representation, as structural and hierarchical, as exemplary and as a group activity. Furthermore, leadership is also understood as management.

According to SBC, T2, P and HoD1 leadership is a practice that entails certain abilities. SBC said leadership "is a way to guide a person to do something", and T2 from the focus group said that it "is a way someone who can lead others gives examples and is able to give solutions to problems that arise in a certain organization". P insisted that "leadership entails the ability to lead, to direct, to inspire, to influence as well as to get the attention of the followers". Similarly, HoD1 stated "leadership entails the ability to influence a group of people to follow your kind of philosophy the way you want them to in a certain direction". However, HG and HoD2 felt that the practice is either person or task oriented. "Actually, leadership is concerned about how to deal with people" (HG). She elaborated:

You engage them on how to deal with their lives or their school work. For example, if you are a president you have to be able to encourage your people on how to cope with situations, like poverty, that they might be facing and even how to become leaders themselves. Also how they can control others and tell them not to engage in prohibited acts.

On the other hand HoD2 from the focus group said "leadership is when you are there and you have a group of people and you have a task to carry out. You are now the leader that has to lead others so that this task can be done. The purpose is for the task to be completed".

Another set of views was that leadership is a representation. From the focus group, L3, L2 and L1 held these views as L3 said “leadership is when you are there to represent others or the whole group because as a large group you cannot lead, you choose a person to represent you”. L2 added “you are leading others, be there for others simply to ... like, once they need something they will come to you, just being there for others”. L1 agreed “yes it is to be there for others, to correct them and when they have a problem you tell them what is wrong and what is right and you are always kind to them”.

SBC, HoD2, Su, and HoD3 expressed views that leadership is structural and hierarchical. Commenting on the school board SBC said “they have a school board and there on top is the chairperson”. HoD2 from the focus group commented, based on levels of school leadership that “we have the principal who is leading the whole school, but there are heads of department under him. The HoDs are also helped. We have subject heads who are reporting to us, and then other teachers are also in charge in the classrooms”. On the same note Su confirmed that “for the school, leadership levels can be divided. We have the principal who is at the same time the manager, we have HoDs who are also part of the leadership” and HoD3 from the focus group added that “in leadership you should have a title to show what you are leading - is it a department or is it an organization”?

In addition to views that leadership is a practice, a representation and has levels, P, T1, Su, HoD1, HB, L3, and L2 held views that leaders should lead by example. As a means to inspire others P stated “whatever I want others to do, whatever is prescribed to be done I should at least do it first, so that others will be inspired to follow my example. At least I have to lead by example”. T1 from the focus group added that “a leader should be a good example to inspire others and motivate them”. He further clarified “for instance, if we say we should start lessons or schooling at 07h00, a leader has to be the one to be punctual first; what he tells others he has to do first and be an example to others and by doing good things others will start to imitate what he is doing”(ibid.). Furthermore, leaders should not use force to gain followers as “you can influence people by being exemplary to them... This is done like this and you do it with your utmost commitment so that they can intrinsically follow you without being forced” (HoD1).

In the classroom environment Su felt that a leader has “to set a very good example to others” and HB supported him and said “as a leader you should be the first one to be quiet and take your books so that others follow”. On the academic performance perspective L2 from the focus group admitted that as a leader “you have to perform well and be a good example”. HB also commented that “I have to make sure that academically I should be the first to show them the way to study. I should not wait, but take my books and go to study so that others follow”. While on behaviour, L3 from the focus group said:

If you behave badly others will also behave badly, but if you are a good leader who behaves nicely they will also do the same; hence there is a saying that says ‘a leader should not be a follower, lead but do not follow’, so you lead by example so that others can do what you do.

Most of the respondents understood leadership as a group activity that is shared among members of the organization in smaller teams. Su maintained that “leadership has to do with doing things with your colleagues”. To the question whether a leader can lead alone, P, HoD1, HB, L2, and L3 had the following to say. P said:

I don’t lead alone. I lead with a group of others. I lead with a team. That is where I share my leadership principles and that is when I share my vision of leadership ... I lead with others so that at the end we own whatever we were doing as a group, as a team.

In leadership “you need a group of individuals around you that share a common interest and understanding like you” (HoD1). HB stated further that “you need to be two or more so that you can come up with something productive to present to all the other people ... it needs to be agreed to by everybody” and L2 from the focus group supported that by saying “you should have assistants” then L1 from the focus group agreed that as a leader “you need people to assist you”. Furthermore, T2 from the focus group stated that a leader should “involve others in decision making so that everyone can say it is our decision”. On mutual decisions and agreements SBC explained:

If the principal needs something in the house (school) he comes to the school board chairperson and if he has to call a parents' meeting ... The principal alone cannot decide what to ask parents, they make agreements. That is why I emphasize that leaders cannot do the work alone they need the support of other members.

In addition, a leader cannot lead the whole institution as an intact group, but there should be sub-groups under other individuals' leadership. HoD2 from the focus group explained:

If you are in that group there should be at least two, three people to assist you because you cannot lead everybody at the same time. So you need others so that you can be in charge of this group, others are in charge of other groups. Each of them is in charge of a few people under them.

At some point T3, HB and HoD2 expressed views about leadership as management. T3 from the focus group defined leadership as having "to do with pooling of resources to produce something or manage a certain organization". HB added that "leadership has something to do with the way you guide , showing them what to do", and HoD2 from the focus group said "you are working with people, you show them- let us do this, so here you are busy directing and showing them where to go".

In conclusion, participants held different views about leadership, thus it was difficult to compose a single definition of the concept leadership. However their views were not that different from the views of those who have attempted to define the concept. Next I present 'The Organization: (LRC)'.

4.4 The Organization: LRC.

The LRC was established through Article 60 (1) of the Education Act 16 of 2001 that reads: "Every state secondary school must establish a body of learners to be known as the Learners' Representative Council in accordance with the prescribed guidelines which must determine their composition and duties and functions of such a council" (D1). Basically,

the aim of the LRC is to promote the best interest and welfare of the school and its learners (D7). In addition, D2 stated that the LRC's aim is to represent individual learners and the learners' body at large in order to protect and advance their interests. The organization (LRC) is presented based on the definition of learner leadership, LRC members' expectations, LRC operational zones and roles, liaison with management and lastly, LRC empowerment. Next I present the definition of learner leadership.

4.4.1 Learner leadership defined

The participants held different views of learner leadership. Learner leadership in Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School is understood as peer leadership that is positional and represented by learners who display certain qualities, abilities and potential. However, newcomers and the lower grade learners have no chance to become part of the learner leadership body, the LRC.

Peer leadership in this context refers to the leadership of people of the same class group namely learners. HoD1 and Su understand learner leadership as peer leadership. In their own words, "learners cannot entirely be led by teachers. They have to lead themselves. They have to be headed by a particular group of learners (the LRC) that can somehow influence others positively, and this is learner leadership" (HoD1). Learners have to be given chances to lead others therefore teachers have "to involve learners to tell others what is wrong and what should be done" (Su).

Learner leadership was perceived as positional as SBC and HoD3 viewed a learner leader as "a person who is a head at a certain school e.g. the head boy or the head girl" (SBS). HoD3 from the focus group stated that "learners are given portfolios. They are given roles for academics, sport, dining hall, cleanliness of the school, discipline, entertainment, maintenance and there is a head boy and a head girl". The LRC portfolios are contained in the LRC constitution as "the Head Boy and the Head Girl; the Deputy Head Boy and the Deputy Head Girl; the secretary; the information; the Academic affairs; Sport, Art and

Culture; the Dining hall; the school board; the discipline; the entertainment; and the hostel portfolio” (D2).

According to L3, L2, and L1 all from the focus group viewed learner leadership as a representation. L3 said “learner leadership is when certain learners are selected to represent all the learners in the school”. L2 stated that “ in the school you define learner leadership like the LRC where a learner is leading other learners and is there for them” and in the simplest term “learner leadership is simply to represent others” (L1).

However, to become an LRC member one has to display certain qualities that convince the learner population, and staff alike, that you can lead others. HoD1, Su, HG, L3 and L2 alluded to these qualities. To nominate and vote learners for the LRC positions “you look at the maturity of learners, their sensitivity and the academic ability as a leader should have ‘a soft heart but strong mind’”(HoD1). Su said you look for “learners who can be delegated certain responsibilities that cannot be delegated to other learners”. He further expressed that “the school has to look at the personality of that learner and behaviour - whether that learner is really in the position to lead others and direct other learners in what they should do and so on” (ibid). In addition, HG said “teachers and learners look at your characteristics – if you are able to lead others then you are nominated to be an LRC”. From the focus group, L3 and L2 said “they also look at the way you perform in school; the way you present yourself in front of strangers and the way that you are willing and motivated to represent others” (L3). Furthermore, they “look at the way you appreciate others and if you are confident enough to be there for them” (L2).

Learner leadership was also understood according to the perspective of ability and potential. P said “when we talk about learner leadership we are talking about the ability and potential that a learner shows, the ability that a learner demonstrates which has to do with leadership”. He added that “learner leadership is the ability to direct others and a learner leader is a learner who is able to control others, to share with others, who is inspirational to others, who is always a role model, somebody who is always doing good things that others always want to follow” (ibid).

In the school every learner has a chance to become an LRC member. This is guaranteed in section E (5) in the school rules that reads: “Learners have the right to be part of the representative council (LRC) and to present legitimate matters of educational importance to the principal” (D3). But the national policy, the regulations made under the Education Act 2001, state that “only a learner who will be in one of the two highest grades at school in the following year may be nominated” for the LRC (D7). Hod2 from the focus group said “they start from their classrooms to make a group from which the LRC will be selected”. Su testified that “we invite learners who want to be part of the LRC”. HB added that “in each and every class there are four learners to be chosen and from there the whole school is going to choose. Everyone elects whoever they think is a good leader, and whoever gets more votes is one of them”.

On the other hand, Su and T1 indicated that the newcomers and the lower grade learners in the school had no chance to become LRC members due to their newness and short time at the school. Su said that their aim was to have every grade represented, but “from grades 11 and 8 - these are the learners we receive. Mostly grade 8s we do not take, but from grade 11 some of those learners graduated from our school and have stayed in the school for a long time”. T1 from the focus group added that “before learners become LRCs they have been in the school for three to five years”.

4.4.2 LRC Members’ expectations

The LRC members as legitimate representatives of learners have high expectations of recognition and respect from every other fellow learner and teachers. However, in reality they experience non-recognition and disrespect and sometimes they overlook what fellow learners and teachers expect from them.

According to P, HB, L1 and HG, the LRC members' recognition and respect in the school is upheld. On the question why the LRC "sung a regional inspirational anthem at the morning devotion" (OB), P had this to say:

We do regard them as leaders of others and others are just followers. The reason, probably, why they were given the task of leading with an inspirational song was because it was the first day of the academic term. I assumed that they were charged with this in the absence of any class to conduct the morning devotion. We normally charge it to the LRC as leaders of others.

In addition to LRC recognition HB said "since the LRC are also doing something in the school they should also be given something at the end so that it can encourage us". He continued "the other thing that MoE should do is to make sure that the LRC have their own staffroom" (ibid.). On the LRC's having separate places from other learners, both L1 from the focus group and HG stated that "the LRC have their own table in the dining hall".

According to L3, L1 and HB the LRC members were expected to lead by example in everything they do in the school. L3 from the focus group stated that "you have to behave well, perform well in school and at your level best" and "always be self-confident" (L1). HB said that "you have to perform well and be a good example". He added that "they get to know that you are someone else and they will do things the way you do it e.g. if you always tuck-in your uniform, they will follow you" (ibid.). This expectation from the LRC is guaranteed in section B (7) that reads "the LRC should lead by example" (D3). Although the LRC are, by school policy, bound to lead by example, L1 from the focus group felt that they can also make mistakes. In her own words she said "For example, if you are in the class, teachers do not expect you to fail a test. They think you should always be good in everything. They think you should not make mistakes". She further argued that some criticisms based on teachers' expectations from the LRC are bad and hurtful. She said "when you fail a test you feel hurt because the teacher will be like, you are the LRC but you are not being a good example. It is also bad" (ibid.).

Furthermore, P, HoD1, HB, L3 and L1 held views that the LRC members were not recognized by fellow learners and teachers as leaders. P said “some learners are too stubborn, they are not ready to listen to others and they do not want to accept that, yes, learner A is my leader”. HoD1 felt that teachers do not recognize the LRC and said “maybe we do not recognize these guys, we do not give them due recognition”. HB commented on learners’ non-recognition in terms of control: “They believe that we are just learners like them, we do not have the responsibility to control them. They believe that they are under the teachers’ control and not under other fellow learners’ control”. From the focus group L3 and L1 said sometimes “You see a certain learner misbehaving and you tell that person off, then the person tells you ‘I did not vote for the LRC’” (L3). In addition “some learners are just provocative to test the LRC by doing things on purpose with the question in mind ‘if I do this what will she do?’” (L1).

The LRC members expect respect from fellow learners as guaranteed in section B (7) that reads : “LRC members must be respected by all learners” (D3). From the focus group L2 and L1 commented on the LRCs’ lack of respect and said “they do not consider you as someone important to be there for others. They do not behave well towards the LRC” (L2). L1 assumed the reason for such learners’ behavior “is because they think you are also a learner like them”.

HB further alluded to learners’ disrespect for the LRC and said “sometimes you do something in the school and they shout at you and say bad things about you, giving you names like LR-Food because we do not eat at the same tables with them”. Such disrespectful behaviour, if not discouraged might result in the LRC being bullied by other learners as T1 from the focus group said “most of the LRC are not respected. Learners do not respect what they are doing. They are always bullying them”. Similarly, T2 also from the focus group said “they feel less respected and on that ground they do not really know what is expected from them ... Because they are threatened by others they feel so unprotected and this demoralizes them”.

4.4.3 LRC Operational zones and roles

The LRC operations are directed by “portfolios” given to members (D2). However participants felt there were some zones in the school where the LRC roles were more evident namely, hostel, dining hall and classrooms. They also acknowledged that the LRC were in charge of leading in the entire school ground. Furthermore, the LRC were charged to ensure that fellow learners conducted themselves well wherever they are; therefore the LRCs practise their leadership roles even outside the school. The LRC operation is presented based on identified zones - hostel, dining hall, classrooms and school ground and roles on each zone are outlined. Next I present the hostel zone.

4.4.3.1 Hostel zone

In this context a hostel refers to dormitories and according to section C (1) of the school rules only “boarding learners are allowed to stay and sleep in the hostel” (D3). In the hostel the LRC play roles in policy implementation, night devotion, reporting, cleaning and problem solving.

According to SBC, HoD1, T1, T2, L2 and L1 the LRC were there to ensure that the school policies, and hostel rules in particular, were implemented. SBC said “by night they as leaders have to emphasize the rules -like not to make a noise so as not to disturb those who are sleeping” and HoD1 supported that “they make sure that others are not making a noise”. On confirmation on existing policies which are to be implemented, T1 from the focus group stated that “even at the hostel there are hostel rules, the leaders are the ones to reinforce them and make sure that others follow the rules”. Similarly, L2 from the focus group said “as LRC you have to make sure that they obey the rules of the hostel like no noise, no fighting”. But T2 from the focus group echoed SBC that “at night they have the responsibility to tell others not to make a noise and to switch off the lights”. In support of T2, L1 from the focus group said “in the hostel tonight after study you may find that it is sleeping time but you find some of them singing while others are sleeping or studying so you tell them to keep quiet ... It is a school rule”. The policy referred to by respondents is

the school rules and regulation section C (7, 8, and 9) that reads “all learners must be in their sleeping rooms by 22h00. Lights must be switched off at 22h00. Learners are not allowed to be wondering around or making a noise” (D3).

Before learners sleep they are compelled to conduct evening devotions in the hostel under the auspices of the LRCs “Actually, in each block there are two LRC assigned to control ... They make night devotions in the hostel” (HG). I confirmed that learners conduct evening devotions under the supervision of the LRCs when:

I was in one of the girls’ hostel blocks, in my cousin’s sitting room when I heard learners singing a hymn. When I asked why they sing and sing loud, my cousin replied ‘we are Christians; they conduct evening devotions every night after study’. When I asked who supervises them, she replied ‘themselves under the leadership of the LRCs’.

From a different perspective, T1 and SBC noted that the LRCs also serve as reporters. From the focus group T1 said “they report problems other learners find in the hostel”. Similarly, “they see who did not eat or who is ill in the hostel and report him or her to the matrons” (SBC). Furthermore, HB, HG and L1 noted that the LRCs play a role in the cleanliness of the hostel. HB confirmed the role and said “it is up to you to make inspection on how others are cleaning their blocks”. The LRC is also responsible to “clean the block and lead in block cleaning” (HG). In elaborating their hostel cleaning role L1 from the focus group said:

Let me give an example, like during weekends it is us learners who wash the blocks. We are no more them (labourers). So as LRC we are not washing, but we just tell other learners how to do it, giving them materials like soaps and brooms to do the job. So we go around their rooms telling them to clean their rooms.

Block cleaning supervision was confirmed in a cleaning hygiene survey form where the LRCs commented on poorly cleaned blocks and wrote “Amutenya Shindjala (block name)

please you need to work hard to make sure that your block is clean. Your performances [*sic*] is very low vakweee!” (D6).

Apart from cleaning, L1, T1 and HB noted that another LRC role in the hostel was problem solving or conflict resolution. L1 from the focus group explained that “sometimes you can just find persons quarrelling, like, it is not my turn to clean the room, so you tell them ‘you clean the room today and the other one will clean next’”. HB said “if any conflict arises in the hostel it is up to you to attend to it”, but on problem solving T1 from the focus group also added that the LRCs can “initiate new ideas towards problem solving and report and share them with the hostel manager”.

4.4.3.2 Dining hall zone

In the dining hall, like in the hostel, the LRCs ensure policy implementation and hygiene. In addition, they distribute and control food. According to T1, HoD1, P and L1, the LRCs play a role to ensure that dining hall rules are adhered to by all learners. T1 from the focus group confirmed the existence of dining hall rules and the required LRC role that “since every place in the school there are rules, learner leaders have to reinforce rules of the dining hall”. In general the LRC’s role is to “maintain order in the dining hall” (HoD1), but P specifically pin-pointed the LRCs’ role regarding the dressing code and said “they are there to make sure that others enter the dining hall in proper dressing code”. In addition, with regard to the dressing code L1 from the focus group said “we are there at the gate, I mean entrance, telling them that no-one comes into the dining hall without tucking in or without full school uniform from head to toe”. Order in the dining hall is enshrined in the dining hall section of the school rules that reads “during meals learners should enter the dining hall in an orderly manner” (D3). Furthermore, from observation, on 5 September 2012 I observed that:

When learners were entering the dining hall there were two LRC members at each entrance (one on the boys’ entrance and the other on the girls’ entrance) and I saw an LRC member on the boys’ entrance telling one boy to tuck-in his shirt before entering the dining hall. He tucked his shirt in without delay.

On hygiene HG said “they are able to control others to clean their tables and make sure that tables are well arranged” therefore “they maintain hygiene” (HoD1).

Food distribution was another LRC role in the dining hall reflected by L1 and HoD2 from the focus group. Sometimes the LRC distribute food to other learners “if workers in the dining hall are not there or there are not enough, then we assist them in serving food”(L1). HoD2 also confirmed that “LRC serve the food sometimes” and from observation, on 10 September 2012 I also confirmed this role when I observed some LRC members serving food.

Furthermore, P, HoD2, HoD3, T1 and HB felt that food control was another of the LRC’s roles in the dining hall. P said “we charge them to make sure that others eat reasonably quality food as well as quantity”. HoD2 from the focus group added that “they make sure that learners receive food accordingly and everyone is having a share of the food”. In an attempt to explain the role further HoD3 from the focus group said:

The LRCs make sure that food is enough and the menu is followed accordingly because the one working with the kitchen and the dining hall has to have an understanding of how the menu works. And each time there is a shortage he has to find out why? The number of learners is known, the food is ordered according to the number so why is there a shortage?

T1 who echoed similar views said that “learner leaders have to make sure that all learners get enough food as expected and also make sure that if learners did not get food they have to follow up and find out why?” In addition the LRCs should be conversant with the menu to be able to control food theft. HB explained that “the LRCs are given the responsibility to do, check and measure the amount of food to be eaten on Wednesdays, Mondays etc., and the type of food eaten that day. Also, the kitchen workers are just human beings; they can take some food for themselves, so the LRCs have to check on them”.

4.4.3.3 Classroom zone

Most of the classroom roles were believed to be performed by the “class captains” (P), but the LRCs also had some roles to play namely, policy implementation, academic support, study supervision and leading by example, as presented next.

Policy implementation was considered by HoD3, HoD1 and Su as one of the LRC’s roles in the classroom. HoD3 from the focus group said that “all teachers put up notes or codes of conduct so that the LRC can adhere to those codes of conduct to make sure that learning and teaching take place in a good environment”. HoD1 emphasized that on dressing, the LRC has to see to it that the learners are “dressed in the uniform in a proper way”. In support of the above view learner leaders are there to ensure that learners in the classroom are “wearing the school uniforms properly, of course, for instance tucking-in the uniform and so on” (Su). The rule regarding school uniform reads “wearing school uniform during school hours is compulsory (i.e. 06h30 – 16h00). School uniform must be neat, clean and properly worn” (D3).

According to T3, HB, L3 and L1, the LRC contribute academically to either individual learners or the school in general. The LRC’s academic contribution to the general school as viewed by T3 from the focus group is that:

They also contribute to the performance of the school academically. Sometimes when they see that there is a problem in the school performance and they really want the school to perform, they come up with initiatives. Let us say there was a time they came up with something like to write a test on every Friday. So, they sit, they discuss it and they come up with a solution how to improve the performance of the school. Then from there they informed the principal then the principal brought it to the teachers. So, academically they also help.

In support of T3’s view, section E (5) reads “the LRC has the right to present legitimate matters of educational importance to the principal. The principal may present such matters to the school management committee or to the school board for consultation” (D3). In addition, there was careful consideration in allocation of the LRC portfolio for academics.

HB explained that “we are given portfolios like the academic affairs and those who are on academic affairs are those who perform well in class so that they can lead by example”. On individual learners’ guidance L3 from the focus group stated that “if you know that there is a person who is not performing well you can talk to her that she should improve and if she is a noise maker ... So you tell her ‘please try to improve on this and that and where you do not understand try to get help from classmates and if they do not help go to the teachers’”. Furthermore, seeking assistance from teachers is guaranteed in section E (2) that reads “learners have the right to ask their teachers in a respectful way, questions relevant to the subject matter on hand and teachers are expected to answer in an equally respectful manner” (D3). L1 from the focus group also added that “in the school at classes we do lead when we tell them ... You must take your books and read”.

According to T1 from the focus group and HoD1 “the LRC members also supervise study”. But some days the study time used to be noisy. From observation, on 12 September 2012, I observed the evening study where I noted that the first 30 minutes of the study learners were quiet, but the last ten minutes of the study time I saw learners in many classes starting to talk, then later walking around tables in their classes and some were seen outside classes. Furthermore, Su and T3 held the following views of the LRC’s exemplary leadership regarding teaching and learning in the classrooms. They said that “the LRCs must set very good examples of how to approach a teacher if there is something wrong in the teaching and learning” (Su). In addition T3 from the focus group stated that “sometimes we have novice teachers and learners normally take advantage of novice teachers. This one (LRC) is the one to help the novice teacher to keep the classroom in order”.

4.4.3.4 School ground zone

The school ground refers to the entire school premises. However, this topic presents the LRC’s roles on the irregular issues and activities which take place in the school. It is believed that there are a lot of issues taking place in the school, but participants’ views were based on the most common, though not regular, ones.

To the question where do learners lead in the school, P, HoD1, HB and L1 affirmed that the LRCs are charged to lead in the entire school ground. They individually replied as follows: P said “at the school ground that is where we mostly require the leadership of the LRCs as we expect them to guide others, to intervene and mediate” and “whenever something happens in the school it is up to them to lead others to organize” (HoD1). Briefly, HB said the LRCs lead in “the whole school at large”. Likewise, L1 from the focus group said they “actually, just lead in every corner of the school”.

However, HoD1, HG, Su, T2 and L3 found sport as one of the irregular activities where the LRCs execute their leadership. In their own words HoD1 said that they also lead in “other extra-curricular activities like sport”. In confirmation of the official assignment of the LRC portfolios HG said “actually we are given duties ... There are two LRCs for sport”. In an attempt to explain the actual LRC role in sport Su said “if there is a problem for instance in sport and learners want to raise this issue they have to go to the LRC for sport. He is the person to report to, and present their complaints to the principal and to the LRC committee”. In addition T2 from the focus group said “in the sports field they are there to make sure that others do not indulge in unbecoming behaviour, like fighting, because learners used to be crazy”. In support of T2’s view, L3 from the focus group explained that “when we are organizing sport in our school all the LRCs should be involved to make sure that learners are not picking fights with the outsiders, drinking alcohol, misbehaving, treating outsiders badly and so on. You must put in all your effort and keep controlling the whole situation”. By controlling fights at the sport field the LRCs ensure learners’ adherence to section B (2) that reads “fighting is strictly outlawed” (D3).

T2 and P viewed the LRC leadership from the morning devotion conduct perspective. In answer to the question, where do learners lead in the school, T2 from the focus group replied “it can be at the morning devotion, that is a leadership role”. P explained why the LRCs were singing a regional inspiration anthem at the morning devotion: “I assume they were charged with the task in the absence of any class to conduct the morning devotion. We normally charge it to the LRCs as leaders of others”. From observation, on the 5

September 2012, I observed the LRCs parading in front of the others at the morning devotion in their different uniform singing a regional inspirational anthem.

Apart from the LRC leadership at sport fields and morning devotion, they were also charged, specifically, with peer control. Peer control in this context refers to checking and spying on other learners, by the LRC, regarding misbehaviours, even if they are outside the school. According to T3, HB and L1 peer control was one of the LRCs' roles in the school ground. T3 from the focus group explained "sometimes we have a meeting that involves all teachers, like we used to have teachers' conference with the director. All the teachers have to go to the dining hall and then the LRCs are controlling the others in the classes". Peer control outside the school is explained by HB that "even outside, when we are given a chance to go buy our items you have to check on other fellow learners, you have to spy to find whether they are drinking or something, so you are given that responsibility". L1 from the focus group testified as to the LRC's role outside the school as she said "even outside, like, there is a group that goes to confirmation classes every Friday and Saturday ... You will be told that as the LRC you should not let them go to the bars, you should tell them that it is time to go back to school". Peer control outside the school was believed to have been necessitated by the implementation of section B (4) that reads "drunkenness is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated" and section C (20) reads "no drunkard learner shall be allowed to enter both school and hostel premises" (D3). Furthermore, from observation, on 3 August 2012 I observed the head boy and another LRC member going into bars checking whether there were learners drinking alcohol. When they were approaching Kolweni Bar (pseudonym) I saw four boys walking out of the bar.

4.4.4 Liaison with management

The LRC as legitimate representatives of learners are expected to "liaise between learners and the school management" (D7). According to D2 two of the LRC members are school board members. Therefore, liaison with management is presented with regards to the

LRC's participation and exclusion in school board meetings and reasons thereof and their involvement in other decision making in the school.

The LRC membership is guaranteed in the Education Act 16 of 2001 (D3). The role of the LRC in the school board is "to represent the interest of the learners in this board, by ensuring that the decisions taken do not negatively affect individual learners or the general school community" (D2). The principal admitted that two LRC members, by law, are members of the school board. He said "yes by the Act two learners especially the head boy and the head girl are automatically school board members" (P). On the LRC participation in school board meetings HoD3, HoD1 and T1 responded as follows. The HoD3 from the focus group explained:

When you enter a certain body you are almost become part of that body ... They are from many wings, represent different groups, there are learners, teachers and parents. There they have a common goal 'to see to the running of the school in terms of teaching and learning and infrastructures. It (school board) is governed by an act so it is a law'.

The HoD1 said "I want to believe that whatever they are part of ... by law they have to be there". T1 from the focus group explained the school practice regarding the LRC's participation in decision making that "whenever we are deciding something in the school we have to call them so that they can be part and parcel of the decision. If we initiate a new idea it cannot just come from the school management team without including them, we have to listen to them".

In contrast, SBC felt that the LRC members can only attend the school board meeting "if they have a point in the agenda". He explained the procedure that "when a learner comes, we have the agenda points of the meeting, when we reach his or her point we give him or her a chance" (ibid.). However, to the question whether the LRCs attended all school board meeting agenda points, the SBC replied "No, no, no, no, in other agenda points a learner should not say anything and it might be that there are agendas that cannot be listened to by learners therefore, we have to call them first, they are given a chance, we listen, they go

out, then we stick to our agendas”. Echoing similar views regarding the LRC’s participation in school board meetings P said “unfortunately we do not do it that way. Especially this year we did not include them in the school board affairs. I do not remember any school board meeting agenda they were involved in”. The school board meeting minutes dated 08.02.2012 confirmed the LRC’s absence from the school board meeting. Its attendance shows that there were only the principal, three teachers and three parents (D4) present. Another school board meeting held on 11.04.2012 was also not attended by the LRC.

Despite the provision of the LRC membership in the school board in D1 and D2, SBC, P, HoD3 and HB recommended that the LRC members should sometimes be excluded from the school board meetings. They cited the sensitivity of some issues being discussed in school board meetings as reasons for the LRCs exclusion. To the question, which school board meeting agendas the LRCs cannot attend, SBC replied:

There are cases let me say for example, a case of a teacher impregnating a school girl. We see that it is impossible for the learners to attend to this case. It may cause a problem in his or her mental circulation or he or she can take it as a joke and go back and practice it among others, which is unnecessary.

The principal replied “issues like those having to do with the recommendation of teachers, issues that deal with the discipline of staff members, ya, particularly those are the issues that we consider sensitive” (P). The HoD3 from the focus group supported P that “there are some agendas which are sensitive to kids, let us say that it is a teacher being disciplined, a principal being dealt with ... If it is so sensitive a learner can be excused”. HB also agreed that “there are some points that can only be discussed by teachers and not the LRC. When it comes to the point of allocating funds, sometimes it is not necessary to include learners in this decision”. Some agendas were not sensitive and they were learner oriented like the agendas of the school board meeting dated 08.02.2012, where holiday classes (English) and exemption from the school development fund by applied learners (D4) was discussed, but the LRCs did not attend that meeting.

However P insisted that he usually involves the LRCs in some decision making. He explained “I used to involve them in leadership. It is just to make sure that I value their participation especially in the area of decision making”. He further elaborated and pointed out the areas where the LRC can be involved in decision making saying:

The school has different stakeholders and learners are one of them. Mainly 90% of the decisions we are taking they are for learners, they affect learners. That is why we feel it is a priority to include learners in decision making ... It even includes the raising of the school development fund, changing of the school uniform, time changing, scheduling the study time, even as far as setting of tests and examinations.

Although the LRCs were involved in decision making in the above-mentioned areas, the mere fact that they do not attend the school board meetings which is the highest decision making body in the school fails the main purpose of their establishment. The LRC’s purpose is to represent the interest of the learners at this board, by ensuring that the decisions taken do not negatively affect individual learners, or the general school community.

4.4.5 The LRC empowerment

LRC empowerment refers to the possible opportunities available which may equip the LRCs with the knowledge and skills necessary to take up their leadership roles and functions in the school more effectively. The LRC empowerment is, therefore, presented based on the following: training, exposure, reading materials and publicity. P agreed that the LRCs need to be empowered to participate in the leadership in the school and said “the hindrance to their participation in leadership in the school is when they are not empowered enough”.

Training was regarded as one of the best means of empowerment, therefore HoD1, T2, P, T1, Su, HB and HG stressed training as the best means to empower the LRCs. In a nutshell, HoD1 said “they say training is more important to these children”. T2 from the focus group

emphasized the need for the LRC training that “the Ministry of Education (MoE) should embark upon in-service training. This is the key number one”. P and T1 confirmed the existence of the LRC training program in the MoE, though it was not satisfactory enough, and that their learners attended such trainings. P said “I think what the MoE should do and what it has started doing to a lesser extent is to expose learners to leadership training”. Similarly T1 from the focus group said “I think the ministry has partially started with this initiative (LRC training) but they only take a few learners which is not enough”. On confirmation of their learners’ and the LRC’s participation in leadership training P said “we sent a group of 13 grade 9 learners, these were just learners, and besides that we also had three LRC members who usually attended leadership training in Rehoboth”. T1 added that “I remember in 2010 a few learners were taken from our school to Okahandja but they were only a few”. He continued that “I think the MoE should conduct such trainings regularly but take more learners from schools or if possible the MoE can introduce the subject leadership and management in schools” (ibid.).

Su, HB and HG emphasized the need for the LRC training based on interpersonal relationships. In their own words, “the government should prepare a budget provision specifically to organize workshops to give or share information with learners especially learners in leadership positions on how they can be good leaders to others and that is the main thing that the government tends not to have done” (Su). To the question on what leadership aspects the LRC needs to be trained in, HB replied: “I think they just need to be trained on how to lead others. Just how to work with others, we are just learners, we should be patient with others and you should be polite to others as a leader”. And HG suggested that “the MoE should just establish a programme where learners are selected from schools in order to attend workshops on leadership-how they are able to lead others”.

Furthermore T2 from the focus group elaborated on the need for the LRC to have in-service leadership training as “some learners are good in leadership, but the problem is that they do not have the experience and the little experience they have is not built on. They should give training to learners in leadership positions”. In opposition of training to be given to only those in leadership positions, HG said that “they should make sure that they

include other learners in workshops not only those whom they think have characteristics of how to lead others, but everybody to make it fair”. But P held the view that the lack of finances limited the LRC trainings because “if the ministry could avail funding at training levels we will be able to expose our learners to different leadership training from different trainers. So if it is only a matter of funding, probably, our learners would be good in the area of leadership”.

Exposure was another means of LRC empowerment, identified by most of the participants, for them to execute their roles and functions effectively. While some respondents called for the LRC’s exposure, others felt that what was being done was enough. HoD1 emphasized that “they need to be exposed”. He explained that “some of our children are from rural schools and they are not exposed, they do not know how to exhibit and execute their potential so we need to take them to the leadership retreat courses out there and let them mix with others”. But P affirmed that the LRCs were exposed at the leadership trainings they attended, and said “the purpose was just to expose learners to the concepts of leadership. The LRCs were trained on general leadership concepts namely, leading by example, capacity building, self-realization, self-concepts and moral values”.

However, HoD1 noted that the lack of exposure derails the LRC to carry out their roles because “they lack motives to drive their agendas through, regardless, as they have not seen anybody doing it”. He therefore suggested that influential youth leaders should talk to the LRCs to motivate them. “You know, the likes of the youth activists, things are far from these little ones. You know, the likes of Ms W, Mr V and Mr X, they have gone far. If these guys could influence our LRCs then they will know that one day I will be the youngest parliamentarian, so I have to start now”(ibid.). In support of HoD1’s suggestion, Su said “first of all there can be someone invited. The government should find someone to share leadership styles with learners”. In addition HG proposed that “the ministry should come up with a programme where a group of people go around schools that can tell the characteristics of leaders and explain leadership”. Likewise, L3 from the focus group supported the suggestion reflected on the previous conference with the minister. She said:

Like last year, if it was not learner leadership it was a leadership conference that was held by the minister of education in Windhoek. They should continually involve more learner leaders in order to know what it is the minister is looking for from them and what they are looking for from the minister.

On the other hand P and HoD1 held views that the LRC needed to be exposed through tours and exchange programmes. P said that “the MoE should empower schools to initiate leadership tours where learners engage in tours to visit schools to see how others are doing things at leadership level”. HoD1 echoed a similar view when he said that “exposure can be forged through exchange programmes with other schools to see how others do things, like this is the LRC of the school and this is how they do their work. This can be done during weekends, but we do not have that”. T2 from the focus group confirmed that their learners do not go on tour and said “we do not put money aside for the LRC. Our learners are not even taken out for tours. They are just here”.

Contrary to the suggestions to further expose the LRCs to different environments and people, HoD2 and HoD3 felt that what was being done was enough and the status quo must be kept in this regard. HoD2 from the focus group said:

I think the ministry is already doing something where the learners are involved like that LRC provision. I cannot see to what other extent a learner can be involved in leadership. What has been done already I think it is enough at this level. At this time they are the future leaders, but we should also look at their age and their level. We should not expose them to too many things. Their minds will be spoiled.

HoD3 supported that “at this level I think they should continue like that, but they should take into consideration their level and calibre of their studies”.

According to SBC, Su and HG, reading materials were the other means of LRC empowerment to enable them to effectively participate in leadership in the school. SBC said that the LRC “needs the ideas perhaps from books and workshop materials”. He continued that “I strongly feel that there is a need for information on how leadership should be. If there are books with rules and regulations of how learners lead others in their school

or hostel, I think these books should be provided” (ibid.). Similarly, Su said “the other thing the government can use as a channel of sharing information with learners is to prepare booklets for the learners to read on how to lead others” and HG said “the ministry should also come up with booklets where learners and other people can enjoy reading about leadership and learner leaders; and also to include information about learner leadership in newspapers”.

Publicity and particularly TV programmes are other means which SBC, HoD1 and Su thought to be a useful tool to empower the LRC to enable them to effectively take up their roles as learner leaders in the school. As part of the LRC’s empowerment HoD1 felt that the MoE should “create a platform where individuals leading will be exposed to other learners so that others will see it and see that it is worthwhile to be a head boy”. In addition SBC suggested that we can empower our LRC by using “TV programmes as we are living in a developing society”. In support of SBC, Su said “the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation can have journalists who walk around schools, they can allow learners to act in a drama on leadership or something like a talk-show where they can give their own opinions on how a learner should present himself to the rest of the school”.

4.5 Teachers’ support

Teachers’ support in this context refers to the support that teachers in Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School give to the LRC in order to effectively execute their leadership roles and functions with regard to leadership in the school. Teachers’ support is, therefore, presented based on the existing support, the non-support, teachers’ ignorance and intolerance and teacher-learner conflicts.

The best thing that teachers can do is to support the LRC. HoD1 said “as teachers the only thing we can do is to offer support, constant support, encouragement and persistent support and coaching”. He further elaborated “we need to constantly give directions where we feel they are or may be becoming a bit complacent or they are overreaching their rights and

mandates. We need to keep them in check” (ibid.). In addition L2 from the focus group said “I think teachers should also put more effort into helping us with our work”. On the question whether teachers support the LRC, P replied “yes, to some extent they support them”. He explained:

They make sure, especially from the start, that learners (LRC) is structured according to portfolios, they have meetings, they define to them the channels of communication and have gone as far as to get them identified by others (by that I mean our LRC have different uniform from that of others). All this is from the support from the teachers in charge.

SBC replied “Ah, no, only some”. He explained why teachers do not support the LRC, as he feels that teachers consider positions and positional functions. “For example they can say ‘if we have the vice principal why should I have to comment on learners’ fighting in the hostel? No, my position is to teach and not to do those things’” (ibid.).

Some views suggest that teachers should talk about leadership and management to learners. T1 from the focus group said “I think teachers should also take part in this to talk about leadership and management, because most teachers are qualified teachers and they were taught the subject leadership and management, but the point is that they do not talk to learners on leadership positions”. On the strategy of how they can do it, he proposed that “maybe whenever they start lessons in class they start talking about good leadership and management expected from learners” (ibid.). However, P insisted that teachers’ support existed but “sometimes you can also find teachers’ support paralyzed due to other engagements the teacher has”. But HoD1 regretted the lack of teachers’ support when he conceded that “in some instances we are back-benchers and we let these kids alone ... I think we overrate them. You may find that every first or second thing is left with the LRC to deal with”. Furthermore, motivation is one of the leadership aspects where the LRC requires support from teachers but T1 from the focus group said “they receive less motivation”. He added that “Since they received orientation at the beginning ... I think teachers are not motivating them” (ibid.).

While the LRC expects support from teachers sometimes teachers ignore their existence and this hinders their participation in leadership in the school. Su noted that “the main hindrance to learners’ participation in leadership in the school is the teachers turning a blind eye towards delegating leadership activities to learners. So teachers tend to take on more of the leadership role on their own rather than giving chances to learners”.

Apart from their ignorance teachers are also intolerant towards the LRC, as HB stated that “sometimes you do something in the school and even some teachers are just against you. Sometimes according to the way you behave, teachers can insult you. Like me for instance they named Mr Katate (the principal), because they say I am a bit rude ...”. HG added that “some teachers may end up shouting at the LRCs”. She gave an example “like last year one of the LRC was shouted at by the teacher. Teachers were having a meeting with the principal. We do not know what happened and when they came back some teachers started shouting at the LRCs” (ibid.). Furthermore, teachers do not tolerate the LRC’s academic failures. L1 from the focus group complained that “teachers talk too much about the LRC”. She continued that “they do not like you to be failing a test. So when you fail a test you feel hurt because the teacher will be like, you are an LRC but you are not being a good example. It is also bad” (ibid.).

According to HB and P teachers’ intolerance sometimes end up in teacher – LRC conflicts. When an LRC member reports a teacher to the principal the teacher – LRC relationship turns sour. HB stated:

I remember this can also create hatred between the LRC and teachers. Because sometimes teachers just know that they are not behaving well towards learners. A learner can come to me saying I have a problem with teacher A and as an LRC I have to report it to the principal after I have confirmed the problem. The teacher can come into the class and say ‘you are the LRC in this school, you are just here for leadership but you are forgetting about your other reason for coming to school’. Sometimes we have bad relationships with teachers, we do not talk.

The principal agreed to the sometimes soured teacher – LRC relationship and conflicts, but was quick to point out that it happens “only if the trend continues without interventions” from the school management (P).

4.6 Time constraints

Time constraints in this context refers to time available for teachers to support learners in leadership positions and learner leaders’ time to lead and concentrate on their school work at the same time.

T2 from the focus group said “learner leaders need to know the ‘time on task’ approach”. They should lead others by showing them that “time is not wasted anymore in the school, meaning that whenever they are in the school, of course, they participate fully” (ibid.). Time constraints also affect teachers’ support of the LRC “especially this time when we are moving towards national examinations, you find teachers less engaged in the LRC activities” (P).

According to HoD2, Su, L3 and HB time constraints are viewed in the lens of the LRC’s leadership roles versus their school performance. HoD2 from the focus group cautioned us to “remember that they (LRCs) are working against time”. Kids have to be there for a certain period of time, come back for study or come back for classes”. Su noted that most of the learners “never wanted to be involved in these activities because they think that their time will be wasted. They tend to think that they will be too involved in leadership activities rather than their academic participation”. In addition L3 from the focus group stated that “being a learner leader is not an easy thing. We tend to perform poorly in our education while putting more effort into the learners than we put into our books”. HoD2 insisted that “their time is not enough”. She continued that “they are learners and leaders at the same time; they have their books and they need to pass. Can you see? Some will surrender because they say I do not have enough time to study”. In HoD2’s support, L3 suggested that “learner leaders should not be given too many tasks”. She said “I have no time to concentrate on learners ... I am in grade 12” (ibid.). Furthermore, HB stated that

“to other LRCs, they believe that because they do not really perform that well, they believe there is no use ... They want to surrender the LRC roles and focus on their studies”.

Time constraints also affected the LRC meetings. L3 from the focus group explained that “last term we were busy with exams so we did not get time to come together and have meetings”. The last LRC meeting was held on “07 February 2012 to discuss Miss and Mr Valentine” (D5). According to the LRC constitution, the LRC should meet “twice a month” (D2), while the regulation made under Education Act 16 of 2001 stated that “a learners’ representative council must hold at least two meetings during each school term” (D7).

Furthermore time constraints, viewed from the LRC’s expected roles versus academic performance, made L3 from the focus group suggest that “the LRCs in grade 12 must be deputized by the LRCs in grade 11”. She explained further that “as for me I am responsible for discipline and I am in grade 12. I may be having a vice that is in grade 11, and when I have no time to concentrate on learners my vice can represent me”. Another view was that the LRC must not be guided by a teacher because when that teacher failed to attend the scheduled meeting their excuse would be that “I forgot I was having this, this, and this to do” (L3). “She might be elected by others to take that role but she is not interested at all” (ibid.). In addition, L1 from the focus group said “sometimes teachers guide us or tell us what they think should be done”. Therefore L3 suggested that:

There should be an official who is responsible for the LRC in all schools in the region. He will be, like, travelling all over the region looking at what they are doing and giving them certain papers to fill in, like, this year we tackled entertainment in our school, this and that was done. So, at the end of the year this official meets with school principals to tell them this and that was done, the LRCs have done their part and these were the results, we are thankful for your support or this is the poor result so this and that should be done.

Time constraints from both perspectives (time for teachers to support the LRC and the LRCs’ roles versus their academic performance) is a challenge for the general LRC’s participation and performance in leadership in Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School.

4.7 Conclusion

The data presented were gathered from individual interviews, focus group interviews, document analysis and observation. Individual participants presented the phenomenon from a multi-faceted dimension, in other words in most of the topics participants aired their views from different perspectives. For example a person who felt that the LRCs be exposed by interacting with influential youth activists also felt that it should be done through school tours.

Interestingly, participants' views did not agree with each other on similar topics, therefore there is tension among their views on specific topics. Document analysis and observation played significant roles in confirming and verifying participants' claims but they also, at some point, disagree with participants' views. I believe the above nature of the data presented the strengths of an interpretive approach and particularly the case study method applied. Finally, I believe that data presented the picture of learners' participation in leadership in Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School in Namibia.

In the next chapter I try to make sense of the data through discussion.

CHAPTER 5

DATA DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four I presented the raw data gathered through interviews, focus groups, document analysis and observation. Data were allowed to speak to each other as I triangulated the information from different data gathering tools. This chapter therefore, attempts to give readers a sense of the presented data in terms of the literature used and the research goal. This study aimed to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia. In an attempt to realize the above aim I used data gathering tools namely interviews, focus groups, document analysis and observation to answer the following questions.

1. How is leadership understood by members of the organization?
2. How is learner leadership understood?
3. How are learners involved in leadership in the school?
4. What potential exists for increased learners' participation?
5. What factors inhibit learners' participation in leadership in the school?

The need to answer the following questions necessitated the identification of themes for the discussion of the presented data. These questions and the themes are:

1. In terms of school places where do learner leaders lead and what is it that they are doing? Theme: Learners' leadership in the school.
2. What encourages the learner leaders to take up their leadership roles to meet the stakeholders' expectations? Theme: Potential exists for learner leadership.
3. What are inhibiting factors that prevent learner leaders from performing their leadership duties to the stakeholders' expectation? Theme: Challenges of learner leadership.
4. Why do learner leaders perform their leadership roles in circumstances as discussed in the above themes? Does the school members' understanding of the concepts

“learner leadership” and “leadership” influence their leadership affairs in the school? Theme: The understanding of the concepts “learner leadership” and “leadership” by members of the school.

Next I discuss the data based on the first theme, learners’ leadership in the school.

5.2 Learners’ leadership in the school

The Learners’ Representative Council (LRC) is a legitimate learners’ representative body in the school. The LRC members lead according to their portfolios which they acquired through elections (HB, chapter four, p. 59) with the aim to represent the interest of other learners as pointed out in chapter four (D2 & D7, p. 56). Some of the LRC portfolios were the same as those of the former learner leadership bodies namely, the prefects and the SRC (Theron & Botha, 1990, chapter two, p. 27). Data presented revealed that the LRC members lead in the following zones: hostel (SBS, HoD1, T1, T2, L2 & L1, chapter four, p. 62); dining hall (chapter four, p. 64); classrooms (chapter four, p. 65) and the entire school ground (P, Hod1, HB, & L1, chapter four, p. 67).

The data revealed that learner leaders were there to oversee the adherence to the policies in at least all zones by the learners’ community as pointed out by T1 (chapter four, p. 62) and to lead by example (HB, & L2, chapter four, p. 55). This implies that the LRC members were charged to control others in various school structure activities. According to MacBeath’s (2005) study, exploring what distributed leadership looked like in practice and how it was seen by head teachers and teachers in the 11 schools in three English Local Authorities, in the UK, one head teacher stated that “the controlled structure of school activities does not help pupils to acquire the skills to succeed in the world that is flexible, adjustable, free thinking and high level of communicative skills” (p. 352). Controlling learners militated against the principles of distributed leadership; therefore those roles resonated with traditional thinking (Tng, 2009) where learners were expected to strictly follow the set rules. Furthermore the data did not reveal any evidence of the LRC’s

“participation” in policy formulation which is a characteristic of contemporary leadership (Coleman, 2005; Sheunu, n.d.). The involvement of learners in policy formulation was important for policy implementation because learners could take ownership of the policy. According to the involvement theory of Astin (1985) as cited in Reed (2001), “the educational effectiveness of any policy or practice is related to its capacity to induce involvement” (p. 39).

The LRC members were also charged with dealing with problem-solving and conflict resolutions in the hostel (L1, T1 & HB, chapter four, p. 63) and in the entire school ground (T2 & L3, chapter four, p. 68). But the LRC members hardly dealt with learners’ conflicts because not all of them were trained and the few who received training did not receive training in conflict resolution as indicated by the principal (P, chapter, four p. 74). Although the LRC members could “initiate problem solving ways” as pointed out by T1 (chapter four, p. 64), their strategies were not effective because they lacked the necessary knowledge to deal with conflicts and problems. However, literature confirms that conflict resolution is among the skills needed by the LRC members (Carr, 2005; Theron & Botha, 1990).

Furthermore they supervised hostel blocks’ cleaning as L1 pointed out: “we do not clean, but just supervise hostel cleaning”. Supervision is one of the traditional managerial roles (Van Wagner, n.d., p. 2) where leadership is formal and the aim is for efficient achievement of goals (Coleman, 2005, p. 15) and when you succeed you get rewards and when you fail you are punished or reprimanded as indicated on the cleanliness and hygiene survey (D6, p. 63). In addition, rewards and punishment are the elements of transactional leadership which is a contract between the leader and the led. It is characterized by “a simple relationship which implies that the leader will look at the interests of the led as long as they carry out their contractual duties” (Coleman, 2005, p. 16).

In the dining hall zone the LRC members played a vital role in the controlling of food by ensuring that “the menus were followed accordingly” (HB, & HoD3, chapter four, p. 65). The data did not reveal whether the LRC members took part in designing the menu or whether someone else decided on the menu and their role was just to control. The former option suggests democratic (Walters, n.d.) and participatory (Coleman, 2005) views which advocate that learners take part in decision making, while the latter portrays trait thinking (Tng 2009) which assumes that leadership is for people with specific traits. The principal claimed to have involved the LRC members in decision making (P, chapter four, p. 68), but this could not be substantiated by data and it was not known whether designing menus was among the decisions which the principal involved the LRC members in.

In the classroom the LRC members contributed academically by initiating ways of improving school performance “when they see that there is a problem” and wanted it to be improved (T3, chapter four, p. 66). The LRC members’ contribution above suggests situational leadership “when leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational variables” (Van Wagner, n.d., p. 1) and also a contingency theory where “leadership effectiveness depends on the organizational situation” (Tng, 2009, p. 2). There was no evidence to suggest LRC members’ involvement in a consistent school performance improvement programme although, by law they had “the right to initiate legitimate matters of educational importance to the principal” (D3, chapter four, p. 66). The fact that they had “the right to play positive roles in the school” (Walters, n.d., p. 1) is democratic and the reservation of the principal’s right to “retain” or take learners’ decision to the staff, SMTs and the School Board is participative (Coleman, 2005). According to Hatcher (2005) leadership is evident when ideas are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them (p. 256). This implies that if the principal retained the LRC’s initiatives then other members could not see the evidence of the LRC leadership in the school. Furthermore, “in student leadership, academic involvement is one of the most potent forms of involvement additional to involvement with the faculty and peers” (Astin, 1996 as cited in Reed, 2001, p. 29). The issue of the LRC members’ contribution to the

school's academic improvement would be a good topic for further investigation in Namibia.

Furthermore, the LRC members were charged to control fellow learners to ensure positive behaviour. They spied on others wherever they were, "even outside" the school premises (HB, chapter four, p. 69). This role is akin to policing and is associated with traditional leadership thoughts where individuals are bound to adhere strictly to the set rules and punishment is the cost of any trespassed rule. It was observed that "learners walk out of the bar" in fear of being found in the bar by the LRC members (OB, chapter four, p. 69). Such a state of affairs does not promote the contemporary ideals of collegiality among learners where people in the same organization work together and in harmony for the common good of the organization (Bush, 2011). In conclusion learners' leadership roles in Mkwabashu Senior Secondary School suggest a narrow and impoverished leadership role, more reminiscent of traditional rather than contemporary leadership views. When the LRC members force fellow learners to strictly adhere to school policies, which are believed to be made by positional leaders, and inflict fear of punishment for rule infringements, they create enmity instead of collegiality, between them and the general learner community.

5.3 Potential exists for learner leadership

The potential for learners' participation in leadership has been guaranteed in policy provisions. At an international level the "rights of young people" was advocated in the United Nations (UN) convention of 1989 (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 76). But learner leadership potential in Namibia can be viewed through the provision of the LRC in the Education Act 16 of 2001 (D1, chapter four, p. 56). This provision can also be understood through the implementation of the UN convention of 1989 by the UN member countries. And at school level, the LRC has a clearly articulated constitution that provides for positions and positional roles of the council members (D2, chapter four, p. 57).

Apart from policy provisions, other evidence of learner leaders' potential noted was the existence of the Ministry of Education (MoE) training programmes. The (MoE) had training programmes for the learner leaders as stated by P and T1, (chapter four, p.72) and the school sent three LRC members every year to attend such training. They were trained in various leadership aspects (P, chapter four, p. 74) but the respondents complained that the intake of three LRC members per year was very small. The training attended by the LRC members did not include some important leadership aspects, namely meeting procedures and conflict resolution as mentioned above (Theron & Botha, 1990; Carr, 2005). The LRC's meetings' agendas (D5) analyzed were not procedural and the total absence of the LRC meeting minutes suggested poor knowledge of meeting procedures. Learner leaders' training has the potential to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills useful to their execution of their leadership roles and later for their entire lives. Thus, it was noted that "students engaged in leadership training and development programs in the college campuses demonstrate leadership and civic skills" (Bandura, Millard, Peluso, & Ortman, 2000; Binard & Brungardt, 1997; Zimmermen-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999 as cited in Reed, 2001, p. 132).

Furthermore, data revealed that the school sent a group of 13 grade nine learners for leadership training. They were trained in leading by example, capacity building, self-concept and moral values. According to Kouzes and Posner (2008b) as cited in Marshall (2009) "the fundamental purpose of the students' leadership challenge is to assist students whether in a formal or unofficial leadership position or not, in furthering their abilities to lead others to get extraordinary things done" (p. 1). It seems that the school grooms young learners in preparation to take up the LRC positions when they reach grades 11 and 12. If the school continues that practice, it will have a skillful council that can effectively deal with the challenging learner leadership. However, the benefit of the acquired skills to individual learners and the school community will depend largely on how leadership in the school is distributed.

The LRC's recognition in the school could be viewed as a means of encouragement for potential learner leaders. The principal pointed that they recognize the LRC members as

leaders of others (P, chapter four, p. 60). Furthermore, the LRC members were observed standing in front of other learners at the morning devotion singing a regional inspirational anthem on the first day of the school term (OB, chapter four, p. 59). The regional inspirational anthem (Appendix 9) was from the Bible, Mat: 5: 13 – 16 and reads:

13. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned. It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on the hill cannot be hidden. 15. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16. Let your light to shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven (Maxwell, 2007, p. 1183).

The LRC's singing could be viewed in terms of motivating other learners to conduct themselves according to the anthem verses. This was also noted by Carr's (2005) study that "sing-along at the assemblies was one of the RCL's contributions towards the building up of the school morale" (p. 173).

In addition, the availability of individual teachers' knowledge and skills could also be regarded as an added value to the LRC members' leadership potential. The school was constituted by qualified teachers who were taught the subject leadership and management. According to T1 these teachers could share their knowledge with learner leaders by advising and directing them, but "they do not talk to these learners" (chapter four, p. 77). The qualified teachers in the school could model the best leadership practice to the LRC. According to Coleman (2005) role modeling is an idealized influence whereby "transformational leaders' conducts influence followers" to emulate them (p. 16). In addition, a transformational leader considers the needs of others rather than his or her personal needs. Unfortunately, teachers' non-support in terms of sharing their leadership and management skills and knowledge could be regarded as a challenge and a missed opportunity for learner leadership.

Furthermore, data identified television (TV) programmes as a means to empower learner leaders in the school. According to Su, HG and SGC, a TV programme on learner leadership should be designed on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) TV whereby journalists go around schools and record interviews and leadership dramas for broadcasting. However, the NBC TV has a programme called ‘the school ground’ where school leaders share their development, academic and social programmes and how they approach challenges face them. The data did not indicate whether these school members were aware of the NBC TV programme.

5.4 Challenges of learner leadership

Data presented revealed several learner leadership challenges which I have categorized into sub-themes namely: the need for capacity building, lack of teachers’ support, lack of liaison with management and time constraints. These are discussed in turn.

5.4.1 The need for capacity building

Capacity building in this context is synonymous with empowerment and refers to the status and extent to which the LRC members are equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enable them to deal responsively and reactively with challenges that face them in their leadership. The principal noted that the lack of learner leaders’ empowerment becomes a serious challenge (P, chapter four, p. 72).

Training was one of the capacity building challenges noted in the school and HoD1 pointed out that “training is more important to these learners” (chapter four, p. 72). But in Mkwabashu SSS training was largely absent or inadequate. The participants emphasized the need for the LRC’s training in different aspects. Furthermore it was imperative that all

the LRC members went through leadership training, and not only a few as reported by P and T1 (chapter four, p. 72), like “the principal of school C who sent all 15 LRC members for leadership training” (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, chapter two, p. 34).

Another LRC leadership challenge was the absence of knowledge and skills of how to lead others. Hence participants emphasized the need for the LRC’s training in interpersonal relationships (Su, HB, & HG, chapter four, p. 73). Their plea was directed to the Ministry of Education (MoE) to come up with LRC training programmes. As suggested in other studies individual or cluster schools can conduct their own training for their LRC members (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008; Carr, 2005), but the principal indicated that lack of financial support from the MoE prevented the school from doing this.

Apart from general leadership knowledge and skills, the LRC members require knowledge and skills specifically relevant to their assigned portfolios to enable them to deal effectively with portfolio related challenges in the school. Theron & Botha (1990, chapter two, p. 27) and Carr (2005) suggest general training leadership aspects required by the prefects and the LRC, respectively, but Reed’s (2001) study found that “what is more important is that leaders in the training programs were trained in significantly different ways with different leadership theories, approaches and models” (p. 135). In addition to training, learner leaders can also acquire the required leadership knowledge and skills through exposure. Learner leaders’ exposure is discussed on the basis of the availability of opportunities for their engagement in leadership practices outside the school, listening to leadership and learner leadership experts and observation of how others in different institutions (schools) execute their leadership roles.

Leadership skills are not commonly taught in schools. According to McGregor (2006) learner leaders gain necessary leadership skills and knowledge by engaging in organizational projects outside the school. While HoD3 mentioned that she could not think

of their LRC's engagement in out-of-school projects it seemed that some schools' LRC members were members of the junior councils in their local towns and cities like City of Windhoek (COW) (Zimunya, 2010, p. 1), while others were members of the National Children's Parliament (Namibia. Namibia Parliament, 2008, chapter two, p. 24). Therefore, the LRC's engagement in external projects can boost their experience (T2, chapter four, p. 73), morale and "motives" which were claimed by HoD1 (chapter four, p. 74) as lacking in Mkwabashu SSS' LRC members.

Another means of the LRC's exposure noted was experts' knowledge. HoD1 noted that influential individuals were far away and could not talk to their LRC members (ibid.) and individuals with leadership and learner leadership knowledge should go around schools to talk with LRC members on how to lead others (HG, chapter four, p. 74). Warwick University, in the UK, had some students who "visit a local member of parliament (MP) at the House of Commons" as part of their initiative to create a student learning parliament (McGregor, 2006, p. 12). Furthermore, Carr's (2005) study reports that the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) organized workshops and afternoon sessions whereby guests and motivational speakers addressed the LRC (chapter two, p. 34). It is therefore up to the school to plan how to expose its LRC members to the experts' knowledge, because it is believed that "there is so much knowledge available, but is hard to come by, and the experts are the people with a lot of it" (Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001, p. 800).

The LRC members could also be exposed to leadership through tours during "weekends" (HoD1, chapter four, p. 75). In tours learners could learn from other learner leaders, from various schools and institutions, how they deal with a range of the institutional leadership affairs. Thus, Kouzes & Posner, (2008) as cited in Marshall (2009) state that "leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices" (p. 245). However, the problem with exposure in Mkwabashu SSS lies with the school's budgeting strategy that "the school does not budget for the LRC members" activities including going on tours, hence the learners were just in the school (T2, chapter four, p. 75). This suggests that the school is not prioritizing learner

leadership – in terms of distributed leadership which advocates organizational members to share leadership skills interactively and collaboratively within and among organization leadership levels. In addition the school neglects leadership skills and knowledge that is accessible from interactions with other organizations which would be helpful to the learner leadership in the school. Thus, one may believe the school is not supporting the council to meet its stakeholders' demands.

Furthermore learner leadership skills, like other knowledge and skills, could also be acquired from books and other reading materials. Data indicated that there was a need for leadership related “reading materials” (SGC, Su, & HG, chapter four, p. 75). In Namibia there is no policy regarding the LRC's operations apart from the establishment provision in the Education Act 16 of 2001 (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008). In addition, Carr (2005) contends that in South Africa some schools' LRCs operate from by-laws while others operate from unwritten rules. Participants suggested that the MoE should provide a national LRC code of conduct or booklets for the LRC members to run their affairs uniformly in all schools. The school's LRC constitution (D2) only provides legislative issues and has nothing to offer in terms of how the LRC members should execute their portfolio related duties and, most importantly, how to deal with leadership challenges that face them. This confirms the notion that the school does not take learner leadership seriously.

On the other hand, data revealed that while some participants were concerned about the LRC's capacity building, others felt that the status quo of the LRC leadership in the school must be retained. The LRC was established for learners to take part in leadership in the school and their contributions can influence change if they have the capacity required to lead. But some participants opposed the ideas of LRC training reasoning that the LRC members' minds would be “spoiled” if they were exposed too much (HoD2, & HoD3, chapter four, p. 7). However, Harris and Lambert (2003) state that “if we want things to change they cannot remain the same” (p. xiv). Therefore, the needs of the LRC's empowerment might be considerably important than the above opposing reason.

5.4.2 Lack of teachers' support

I indicated in the previous section that teachers are knowledgeable and skillful in leadership and management. However, their reluctance to share these skills with learner leaders turns into a challenge for LRC leadership. The data revealed that teachers did not support the LRC members as expected. Participants' responses like, "Ah no, only some" (SBC, chapter four, p. 77) and "to some extent they support" (P, chapter four, p. 76) may suggest that there was poor teacher – LRC support in the school. Such support may be regarded as an unguided learning approach, in constructivism, which may result in what Mayer (2009) as cited in *Constructivist Learning Theory* (n.d.), refers to as incomplete and disorganized knowledge.

Learners had high expectations of teachers' support in their leadership but, instead they were met with ignorance, intolerance and non-support (Su, HB, & L1 chapter four, pp. 77-78). Teachers tended to ignore the LRC members' existence, keeping some leadership activities from learners instead of sharing them. Thus a valuable opportunity was lost for under their close supervision and guidance learners should acquire a more "complete and organized knowledge through involvement, practice and mentoring" *Constructivist Learning Theory* (n.d. p. 11).

Furthermore, teachers did not tolerate the LRC's mistakes, particularly, "failing a test" and poor general academic performance (L1, chapter four, p. 78). They expected them to be perfect in everything they were doing and this is clearly unfair even if one of the LRC's guiding principles is "academic excellence" (D7). And according to exemplary leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2011b) leaders have to model the way by "just being clear about the guiding principles and demonstrating their deep commitment to their beliefs" (p.1). Therefore the LRC members' tests failure could imply that they were not committed

to their guiding principles, but it could also be argued that ‘excellence’ refers to doing one’s best, not necessarily achieving the highest marks.

In addition, teachers called LRC members’ names (HB, chapter four, p. 78) and their relationship with the LRC members became sour if their conflict was prolonged without “interventions”, to the extent that they could not talk to each other (P, chapter four, p. 75). But teachers are expected to act as learners’ role models who display “interpersonal skills, positive outlook, a commitment to excellence and growth and leadership qualities” (Wright & Carrese, 2002, p. 639). The above relationship might be viewed as unhealthy in the leadership of an institution that operates under democratic principles.

Teachers’ ignorance and intolerance of the LRC members and teacher-LRC conflict leading from that could be understood in terms of Walter’s (n.d.) important procedural values required for participation in leadership (chapter two, p. 19). Furthermore it derailed the LRC’s attention from using, nurturing and containing the values in reference. According to Carr’s (2005) study the LRC members rated the item “the support received by LRCs from educators” as 23% poor; 34% room for improvement; 38% generally good and 5% excellent and this rating can be interpreted as generally poor rather than excellent. In conclusion data revealed that there is, generally, poor LRC support from teachers in the school which underlies the danger of the LRC members acquisition of incomplete and disorganized knowledge through unguided learning practices.

5.4.3 Lack of liaison with management

One of the LRC’s roles in the school was to provide a link between learners and the management (D2). But data revealed that the LRC members did not attend the school’s

highest decision making platform, the school board (SB) meetings, and this was a challenge to their liaison role and the general representation of learners in the school.

It is worth mentioning here that the Namibian education system operates under democratic principles whereby leadership is favourably distributed. However, the fact that the principal could not remember an instance of the LRC's attendance of any school board meeting this year implies that leadership in the school was not democratically distributed. According to Grant (2009) democratically distributed leadership questions the status quo of the school as it raises questions of who is included and who is excluded in relationship to leadership (p. 53). LRC attendance of important management meetings is an essential ingredient in a democratically managed system. Carr's (2005) study on "The implementation of representative councils of learners, in the Western Cape" shows that the LRC attendance of School Governing Body (SGB) meetings was excellent and 76.3% agreed that the LRC received notice of SGB meetings in good time.

The data established that the "sensitivity" of some issues of discussion in the SB meetings was the reason for the LRC's exclusion from the SB meetings (SBC, P, HoD3 & HB, chapter four, p. 71). But HoD1 and HoD3 insisted that the LRC members should attend the SB meetings because "it is a law" (chapter four, p. 70). It is also unlikely that all SB meetings discussed sensitive issues. This was revealed by the SB meeting minutes that discussed matters such as holiday classes (English) and learners' exemption from the school development fund (D4). There seemed no reason why learners could not have been present at these meetings.

In terms of the ideals of participative leadership this exclusion results in a lack of information sharing. According to Sheunu (n.d.) "some school leaders might not be inclined to inform everyone about sensitive information as they are afraid of the possible information leak which may result in conflicts among implicated members and decision

makers” (p. 6). In contrast, participative leadership advocates vital information should be shared regardless of its sensitivity (ibid.). Learners can also keep secrets. Carr’s (2005) study indicates that the confidentiality of learner members of the SGB was rated at 90% by the SGB chairpersons, which obviously paints “a much rosier painted picture” [sic] (p. 186).

Another reason for the LRC’s exclusion from SB meetings was their understanding of sensitive issues. The school board chairperson pointed out that the LRC members could take sensitive issues as “jokes”. The above reason seems based on the notion rooted in fundamental pedagogics which purports that children are children and should not participate in leadership discussions and decision making because of their level of maturity. According to Lambert (2002) as cited in Seefeldt and Foster (2007), traditionalism claims that “students have no necessary knowledge and experience” to take a more active role in discussions and decision making (p. 5). The LRC’s exclusion in SB meetings indicates that the “student councils are nothing more than a ‘sham’ and have very little decision making power” (Mintz, 2003 as cited in Apple & Beane, 2008, p. 130). But Rudduck and Flutter, (2000) advised that “pupils’ participation and perspectives” should be considered now unlike in the past (p. 80).

In conclusion, the non-participation of the LRC members in the school board meetings did not only weaken the LRC’s liaison with management but also devalues the purpose of the learner leadership body’s establishment. The LRC was established to protect and promote the interests of learners in leadership in the school, but they did not attend the highest decision making platforms in the school. The principal indicated that 90% of decisions they made affected learners (P, chapter four, p. 71). The participative leadership theory assumes that many heads are better than one, therefore, “it focuses on the sharing of decision-making” (Coleman, 2005, p. 18). And from a distributed leadership perspective Grant (2009) argues that “to lead in the school is to become a participant in the practice of leadership, initially as a novice and then, over time as a full participant in the practice” (p.

52). Furthermore, a democratic school will encourage the participation of pupils in the running of the school (*Democratic Leadership*, 2012, online, p. 1). The situation depicted in this school is very different from the ideals promoted in theory. I discuss possible reasons for this in the next chapter.

5.4.4 Time constraints

Time constraints, as defined on page 80, influenced the LRC leadership operations and their academic performance. As HOD2 noted the LRC members work “against time” (chapter four, p. 79) and it became a challenge for them to satisfactorily lead and learn at the same time. However, Lambert (2003) states that learning and leading are understood as intertwined as these conceptions arise from our understanding of what it is to be human. A study done on industrial society organizations, in the UK, revealed that “employees complained about being overloaded with work and have relied on overtime to complete their work” (Jones, 2005, p. 62), but the LRC members had no extra time to rely on to effectively deal with both learner leadership and their academic learning.

Data also revealed that time constraints impeded the LRC’s meetings as they did not meet for the whole second term (L3, chapter four, p. 79). Furthermore, teachers’ failure to attend the LRC meetings was based on “time” versus other commitments (ibid.). This resonates with Carr’s (2005) study that a teacher liaison officer’s task is regarded as an add-on and not enough time is allocated to do this task properly (p. 165), but his study also shows that 50% of teacher liaison officers noted that they met with the LRC once a month. Time constraints are often mentioned as disadvantages of participative leadership practice which can hinder organizational members’ meeting attendance. Sheunu (n.d.) argues that “time constraints or immediate deadlines may not be feasible to accommodate deliberation process ... For the group members to verse themselves with procedures and guidelines it may be time consuming, thus they may not meet the set deadlines” (p. 6). Before the meetings, participants require time to prepare their valuable contributions and may take

time to clarify their ideas to other participants during the meeting; and this implies that participation takes time.

For the LRC members to have executed their responsibilities in the school well, they needed to have good time management skills. This implies that the LRC members needed to prioritize their tasks and to “concentrate on just one task at a time” (Jones, 2005, p. 62). When this becomes difficult then L3’s suggestion of the grade 12 LRC members being deputized by the grade 11 LRC members (chapter four, p. 80) requires positive consideration. This would enable the deputies to attend to LRC leadership when the grade 12 LRC members could not attend and are busy with their academic work.

Furthermore, data indicated that time constraints made some of the LRC members surrender and cease their membership (HoD2, HB, chapter four, p. 79). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) students’ engagement with the school has an affective component. This component advocates that “students feel a strong sense of belonging and identification with the school if their performances in the engaged activities are successful. But the LRC’s activities in this regard are leading and learning (Hod2, chapter four, p. 79; Lambert, 2003). Therefore this data supports the inverse of the affective component which suggests that those unsuccessful students are likely to hate the activities and may not like to be associated with the school. In line with this Su noted that most of the learners may not be willing to be involved in the LRC activities, because their time will be wasted (chapter four, p. 79). Learners’ association with the school does not only depend on time to yield successful performances, but also depends on the sense of ownership of school policies and activities and this is achieved through participation in decision making in the school.

In conclusion, the LRC members would be able to do well in both learners’ leadership and their academic performance and become proud of the council duties and the school if they could manage their time well. Furthermore, both the LRC’s and the liaison teacher’s

workload should be considered against time available for their duties effective execution. It is also worth mentioning that time management is only one element that affects learner leaders' leadership and learning. But if learner leaders were given opportunities to lead in a school that embraced democratic, distributed and participative leadership then they could do well in both leading others and excelling in their academic learning. Hence the problem is more complex than lack of time: rather, it relates to whether leadership becomes a natural part of the organization's life and accessible to all. When that happens time ceases to be an issue.

5.5 The understanding of 'learner leadership' and 'leadership'

Members of Mkwabashu SSS understood that the LRC members were the legitimate leaders of other learners (D1) in the school, unlike their predecessors the prefects and the SRCs who were not democratically elected. The LRC members were charged to promote and protect the interests and the welfare of the learners (D7, chapter four, p. 56). That is why school members understood learner leadership as peer leadership which is leadership of people of the same class group. However, some learners did not accept that the LRC members were their leaders (P, chapter four, p. 60), because they believed that they were "under the control of teachers and not that of fellow learners" (HB, chapter four, p. 61). Data revealed that when some learners found by the LRC members to be misbehaving, denied that they have legitimate power and said "I did not vote for the LRC members" (L3, chapter four, p. 61). Such behaviour was born out of disrespect of the LRC members by fellow learners and was cautioned against in D3 that the LRC members must be respected by all learners (chapter four, p. 61).

However, leaders' respect cannot be demanded from followers as it results from one's credibility. From a political leadership perspective, John Gardner as cited in Kouzes and Posner (2011a) said:

A loyal constituency is won when the people consciously or unconsciously judge the leader to be capable of solving their problems and meeting their needs, when the leader is seen as symbolizing their norms, and when their image of their leader (whether or not it correspond to reality) is congruent with their inner environment of myths and legend (p. 3).

The quote implies that respect is a reward for a leader from followers' satisfaction. Therefore, learner leaders should display the four leadership prerequisites namely to be: "honest, forward looking, inspiring and competent" to win fellow learners' respect (ibid., p. 12).

Learner leadership was also understood as persons in positions because there are portfolios (D2, chapter four, p. 57) whereby individual members are assigned to head departments in the school. This understanding may imply that leadership is distributed by allocating tasks. But according to Timperley (2007) "distributed leadership is not the same as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organizational roles, but rather it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers" (p. 396). My findings provide no evidence of "dynamic interactions". Instead data showed that there are tensions between the LRC members and the general learner community. While the LRC members expected fellow learners to regard them as "important" people who occupy positions in the school (L2, chapter four, p. 61), learners regarded them as simple fellow learners hence "they are always bullying them" (T2, chapter four, p. 61). Distributed leadership requires participation, cooperation and teamwork. Based on the above tensions a constructive dynamic interaction among learner leaders and fellow learners may be difficult to achieve and this makes one wonder whether leadership in the school is democratically distributed. Leithwood et al. (2006) as cited in Hartley (2007) state that school leadership has a great influence on school and students when it is widely distributed. Therefore, what is important is not only whether leadership is distributed but also how it is distributed so that both individual learners and the school can be influenced by leadership practice.

Furthermore, it was understood that learner leadership was for individual learners who possessed certain abilities and the potential to lead others (P, chapter four, p. 58). Such understanding reflects trait thinking which assumes that “people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership” (Van Wagner, n.d., p. 1). The understanding neglects behavioural and more contemporary thinking which assumes that people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation (ibid.). And according to Marshall (2009) leadership is not something mystical and ethereal that cannot be understood by ordinary people (p. 245); therefore, everyone can lead (Lambert, 2003).

Data presented also showed contradictions regarding the learners’ membership access to the council. The process of learners joining the LRC was understood to be democratic, because every learner in the school had the right, and was usually invited, to become a LRC member (Su, chapter four, p. 59). But every class submitted only four LRC nominees (HB, p. 59). This is contrary to D7, a national document, which stipulates that “only learners who will be at the school’s last two highest grades the next year can be nominated for the LRC”. It was also confirmed by participants’ profiles (chapter four, pp. 51-52) that all five LRC members who participated in this study were in grade 11 and 12 which are the two highest grades at the school. Furthermore, participant profiles revealed that two of the participants joined the school in 2011 and had therefore not been at the school for three to five years.

In conclusion, the picture that emerges is that learner leadership in the school is not understood as democratic, participative or distributive leadership whereby learners have the right to make decisions and interact cooperatively for the individuals and the school’s interests. This is evident from most of the discussion arguments. Furthermore contradicting documents on the learners’ rights to become LRC members, participants’ claims and tensions on the actual learner leadership practice in the school also added to the evidence.

Learner leadership is part of the general school leadership. One may assume that the school members' understanding of the concept learner leadership is largely influenced by the way they understand the concept leadership, hence the need for a discussion on the members' understanding of the concept leadership.

Data presented indicated that, based on the school's academic structure (Hod2, chapter four, p. 52), leadership is understood as structural and hierarchical. The school structure is vertical, managerial in nature and bureaucratic (Bush, 2011) which may direct school members' understanding of leadership as traditional and authoritarian. The traditional views of leadership centered upon "the behaviours and actions of the principal, a principal-led conception of leadership" (MacNeill et al., 2003, p. 15). In traditional leadership sharing leadership is seen as risky by head teachers, and from a management perspective Wallace (2001) as cited in Hatcher (2005) points out that:

Head teachers are confronted by a heightened dilemma: their greater dependence on colleagues dispose them towards sharing leadership. In a context of unprecedented accountability, however, they may be inhibited from sharing because it could backfire should empowered colleagues act in ways that generate poor standards of pupil achievement, alienate parents and governors, attract negative media attention on incur inspectors' criticism (p. 260).

While principals are formally required to lead the schools, leadership is not the sole province of the principalship (MacNeill et al., 2003, p. 14) therefore, HoD2 argued that every leader in the school is in charge of a group of a few people under him or her (chapter four, p. 56), but this argument could not be substantiated by the findings.

Leadership was also understood as task and people oriented (HoD2, & HG, chapter four, p. 53). This understanding is reflected in Drake and Roe's (2003) leadership definition that it is a deliberate process that results in working collaboratively towards an ever expanding

vision of excellence in the achievement of “organizational and personal” goals and objectives (p. 140). Furthermore, data revealed that a leader should lead by example in order to inspire and influence the followers (Su, & HB, chapter four, p. 55). Kouzes and Posner’s (2011b) study on exemplary leadership has uncovered five practices common to personal best leadership experiences namely: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart (p. 1). Among the above practices, learner leadership falls under the practice ‘enable others to act’ where the school management should “foster collaboration and build trust and strengthen everyone’s capacity to deliver the promises they make” (ibid.). Similarly, Bennis (2007) believes that all exemplary leaders have six competencies whereby they, create a sense of vision, motivate others to join them on the mission, create an adaptive social architecture for their followers, generate trust and optimism, develop other leaders and get results.

On the other hand, school members understood leadership as a group activity (P. HoD1, HB, T2, L1 & L2, chapter four, p. 55), whereby leadership is shared and distributed among members of the organization. This data echoed democratic and participative leadership (Coleman, 2005; Walters, n.d.) required in contemporary leadership and particularly in democratically principled schools. However there was little evidence to suggest the influence of this understanding in learner leadership practice.

Lastly, the Mkwabashu SSS members understood leadership synonymously with management as noted by T3, HB, and HoD2 (chapter four, p. 56). Data indicated that participants used terminologies namely, directing, controlling and supervision in their definitions of leadership which are some of the core components of management. Such understanding might be caused by the fact that in the school both leaders’ and managers’ activities tend towards effective teaching and learning, high learners’ performance and student learning as school goals (Muijs & Harris, 2003). In addition the school principal is a school leader and “manager” (Su, chapter four, p. 54).

The interchangeable usage and understanding of leadership as management by school members should be acceptable. Rost (1998) also indicates that some scholars including him have had serious conceptual problems with using leadership and management as synonymous terms. Firm distinctions between leadership and management are difficult to make because “they have intimate connection and a great deal of overlap, particularly in respect of motivating people and giving a sense of purpose of the organization” (Bush, 2003, p. 8). Furthermore, leadership and management are interrelated and their interrelatedness is based on leaders’ and managers’ roles. For example, it is the role of leaders to formulate the organizational policies and the managers are mandated to implement policies. Likewise, if there are no policies then managers have nothing to implement and if there are no policy implementers then policy formulation becomes purposeless. According to Yukl (2000, p. 3) “leadership involves developing and change”, while “management involves dealing with systems, structures and culture of the school” for the implementation of the planned development and change (Naidu et al., 2008, p. 2).

In conclusion, the LRC members at Mkwabashu SSS lead in accordance with potential that exists for their leadership against the inhibiting challenges that face them. In addition the whole LRC state of affairs might likely be influenced by how the concepts learner leadership and leadership were understood. Data showed that there are more traditional views, mostly of trait thinking, on the understanding of both learner leadership and leadership than contemporary views of participative and democratic leadership. Furthermore, the findings indicated many challenges of learner leadership and this raises a concern for the realization of the LRC’s establishment purpose pertaining to learners’ benefits and protection of their affairs and the schools’ general leadership and performance improvement.

In the next chapter I conclude this research study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in a senior secondary school in Namibia. This chapter provides an overview of the study where important issues that arose from the study are discussed.

The study led to numerous conclusions. It revealed that learners' participation in leadership in the school was understood more from traditional views of leadership than from contemporary democratic, participative and distributed leadership theories. While the LRC establishment is provided for in the Education Act 16 of 2001, article 60(1) and the Ministry of Education (MoE)'s training programme as the basis of its potential, there were numerous challenges which impeded learners' full participation in leadership in the school and blocked the way to achieving the LRC's establishment purposes. This chapter presents a summary of research findings, suggests possible reasons for the current situation in the school, discusses the significance of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations for practice, suggestions for future research and provides a brief conclusion to conclude the chapter.

6.2 Summary of research findings

The findings indicated that learners' participation in leadership in the school – through the LRC - is functioning: there is a properly constituted body, its members have roles and responsibilities and they are acknowledged by the school. But, they do not represent the interests of learners as they are not part of important decision making platforms; they are not empowered and accepted as leaders able to act responsibly and maturely, and the school does not seem to encourage and embrace distributed leadership, hence leadership does not seem to exist as part of its culture and structure. The situation depicted from the

school is very different from the ideals promoted by contemporary leadership theories. Learner leadership is understood in terms of the legitimate learners' representative body, the LRC which is charged with the promotion and protection of individual learners and the school community interests in the school.

The findings revealed that leadership was understood in terms of traditional views as a practice that requires certain abilities to guide, direct, inspire, influence, provide good examples and also as a top-down structure. The notion of leadership as a group activity where organizational members have the guaranteed right to lead, to participate in decision making and to share leadership skills across structures of the organization also emerged. Unfortunately the findings could not convincingly justify the practice of this understanding of leadership.

On learner leadership it emerged that participants understood the concept in terms of the LRC as peer leadership that is positional and representational by learners who possess certain qualities, abilities and potential. This view is based on notions of seniority and leadership traits essentially excluding newcomers and the lower grades from the field. Thus, learner leadership was understood in terms of outdated, traditional leadership views.

In terms of learner leadership in the school, the findings noted that learners lead in the hostel, dining hall, classrooms and the entire school ground where they were mostly overseeing policy implementation and adherence by fellow learners. However it was not evident whether they were part of policy formulation. While the findings noted claims of involving learners in policy formulation, this could not be substantiated by data.

It emerged from the findings that provision for the LRC existed in the Education Act 16 of 2001, article 60(1). There was no national policy to regulate the LRC operations. Furthermore, it was noted that the MoE provided training to the LRCs limited to three learners per year. However, the findings revealed that the school sent a group of 13 grade 9 learners to leadership training. It seems the school grooms young learners and prepares them to take up LRC positions when they reach grades 11 and 12.

It emerged from the study that the LRC was faced with numerous challenges that might inhibit its leadership practice in the school. The building up of the LRC's capacity was one of the challenges which participants suggested should be addressed through adequate training, exposure to experts' knowledge, tours and visits to other schools, reading materials and television programmes. The above means of capacity building did not exist in the school and participants expected these to be enabled by the MoE through financial support.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that, this year, the LRC did not attend the school board (SB) meetings where important management and governance decisions were made. The reason for the LRCs' exclusion from the SB meetings was the sensitivity of issues being discussed at such meetings. In addition it also came to light that teachers did not support the LRC. Instead of being role models for them on leadership practices, they ignored and even disrespected them. It was also indicated that sometimes teachers were in conflict with the LRCs to the extent that they did not talk to each other. This conflictual situation is not likely to give rise to feelings of belonging and a sense of ownership.

Time constraints were also found to be a challenge to the learner leadership in the school and were understood as a reason for the LRC members' failure to lead others and concentrate on their studies, convene their meetings and also resulted in the resignation of some of its members. In addition time constraints deterred other learners from becoming LRC members. However, complaining about a lack of time is often an excuse for a more serious problem. If leadership were distributed throughout the structures of the school and supported by a positive culture it would not appear to need "time".

In conclusion the findings revealed that the concepts 'learner leadership' and 'leadership' were understood in terms of traditional rather than contemporary views. Learner leaders practiced their leadership in a traditional managerial way rather than in democratic, participative and distributed ways. Thus learner leadership in the school was, to some extent, practically restricted.

6.3 Possible reasons for this situation in the school

The findings revealed that learners' participation in leadership in the school was far from ideal. Namibia has a history of colonialism which was characterized by apartheid and other colonial indicators where leadership, including educational leadership, was autocratic and bureaucratic, and was confined to the colonial masters. This implies that during those eras the oppressed were given little, if any opportunity to develop and grow.

The situation depicted in the school might result from the lack of development and growth opportunities given to learner leaders in the execution of their leadership roles. If so, it seems that the colonial leadership legacy to some extent still persists in our schools supported by conservative views on power. According to Delip (1988) the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of "the rules of those who have power" (p. 282). This may imply that the school management and the principal in particular, as people with school leadership power, may lead the way they were led. But those rules may not be effective in today's organizational climate and may lead to resistance and conflict and these can be the indicators that change in the leadership is required. Thus the mindset of colonial leadership may negatively influence learner leaders' growth and development.

Furthermore, schools as social institutions operate from and are located within communities. Mkwabashu SSS is located in a community that is believed to have a strong traditional culture with respect of adults, parents and leaders (including school leaders) as one of its cultural strengths. A narrow insistence on the respect adults feel are due to them by children can impede learners' rights to access leadership opportunities. In addition within the boundaries of cultural constraints learners conform to the set rules blindly without reflective questions or actions and this may allow school leaders to do whatever they think is right for learners without consulting them. Consequently, this may result in deep-rooted leadership stagnation with negative effects on children's growth and development.

The current situation of learners' participation in leadership in the school can also be viewed through the lens of fundamental pedagogics. According to Yonge (2008) fundamental pedagogical thinking implies "a phenomenon of spontaneously accompanying a child to adulthood where the participants are engaged in an educational situation and where their philosophy of life or ideology permeates their activities" (p. 410). In addition fundamental pedagogics regards children's needs as social construction based on the assumption of "a child as deficit" (Naicker, 2000, p. 8). This suggests that children have no capacity to decide and contribute to their own growth and development and instead, parents, adults and leaders decide for them.

Fundamental pedagogics can affect educational leadership transformation and change. Le Grange (2008) noted that "fundamental pedagogics also provided limited possibilities for transforming education in South Africa" (p. 403). Similarly, Eslin (1990) as cited in Le Grange (2008) wrote: "It provides little illumination of the present social and educational order, of possible alternatives to that order or how teachers might contribute to transformation ... Fundamental pedagogics offers neither a language of critique nor a language of possibility" (p. 403). Namibia and South Africa share similar educational leadership histories and it is likely that the legacy of fundamental pedagogics still prevents real critical engagement and the development of learners as leaders.

In conclusion the colonial leadership legacy, cultural norms such as respect of adults and leaders and the remnants of fundamental pedagogics may well be some of the reasons why learners' participation in leadership is far from ideal. The department of National Education (1997) as cited in Naicker (2000) suggested that in order for the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in South Africa to materialize there had to be "a move from one paradigm to another, from one way of looking at something to a new way. A move to a new mind set, a new attitude, a new way of thinking" (p. 5). This quote could apply equally to learners' leadership and it remains imperative for schools management to unpack the implications of the previous systems in order to make changes in leadership thinking and practice.

6.4 Significance of the study

Learners' participation in leadership in the school is not widely researched and there have been calls from previous researchers to intensify research in this area. This study adds to the limited body of literature on the topic particularly in the Namibian context. The study findings depict a discouraging picture of learners' participation in leadership in the school. Learner leadership seems narrow and largely ineffective. In highlighting this position the findings can help school members and other readers to plan for its improvement through the recommendations for practice and other means.

Furthermore, the study findings may trigger the interest of other potential researchers to take the study further and investigate related phenomena in an effort to establish the status of national policy implementations in the schools.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The nature (scope) of the master's degree programme (half thesis) restricted this study to one senior secondary school. The findings of this study cannot be generalized. A more comprehensive picture of learners' participation in leadership in the schools could be developed through larger studies. However I believe that my findings are valid and can be generalized through other forms of generalization than the positivist-based statistical generalization. Healy and Perry (2000) as cited in Golafshani (2003) assert that "the quality of a study in each paradigm should be judged by its own paradigm terms" (p. 601). And in a qualitative paradigm the terms "credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency of dependability, and application or transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). I believe my study conforms to those criteria.

Qualitative case studies do not search for statistical generalization. As Merriam (2001) points out:

The search is not for abstract universals arrived at by statistical generalization from a sample to a population, but for concrete universals arrived at by studying a specific case in great detail. In attending to a particular [case] concrete universals will be discovered ... This is, in fact, how most people cope with everyday life (p. 210).

This implies that the strength of the interpretive case study lies in its focus on the particular case.

Furthermore, case study findings can be generalized through reader and naturalistic generalizations. According to Stake (2000) readers assimilate certain descriptions and assertions into memory. Stake further states “when the researcher’s narrative provides opportunity for vicarious experience readers extend their memories of happenings. Naturalistic, ethnographic case materials, to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental process of awareness and understanding” (ibid., p. 442). This is what Stake and Trumbull (1982) as cited in Stake (2000) called naturalistic generalization.

6.6 Recommendations for practice

The picture revealed by the study findings on learners’ participation in leadership in the school is not encouraging. In terms of where learner leadership is falling short I recommend that:

- The school embraces democratic, distributed and participative leadership practices and give learners the opportunity to develop and grow. They need to acknowledge the leadership potential of young people by creating a culture of distributed leadership.
- All the LRC members should be given leadership training which focuses on their portfolio-related leadership aspects.
- The MoE should change the LRC training intake from three members from the school to include all members of the council.
- The LRC members of the school board should attend all school board meetings. When this happens they can advocate the promotion and protection of individual learners’ and the school community’s interests.
- The school must have a budget for the LRC activities.

- The MoE should provide the national LRC codes of conduct and other reading materials on leadership and learner leadership to the schools.
- The school, from time to time, should convene meetings with all learners to emphasize the roles of the LRC members and what is expected from learners to help the councils to function well.
- All teachers should support the LRC members in executing their duties and exemplify and model leadership to learner leaders.
- The LRC members in grade 12 should be deputized by members in grade 11.
- A regional LRC coordinator should be appointed to facilitate the LRCs' affairs in the region.

In terms of what seems to be working well and what other schools could learn from the case study school I recommend that:

- The LRC members should be given opportunities to address and motivate learners at the morning devotions on the first day of every school term. In so doing the LRCs contribute to the building up of the schools' morale.
- Schools should send grade eight and nine learners to basic leadership training courses. This prepares the young learners to take up school leadership positions when they reach grade 11 and 12.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Learner leadership has a long history in leadership in schools, but it remains one of the most under-researched areas in Namibia. I therefore encourage interested researchers to comprehensively explore this area in Namibia. I further suggest to potential researchers that the following questions have exploratory value to understand learner leadership in the schools.

- How does the LRC contribute to the school's academic performance? School leadership is believed to be one of the school's academic performance determining factors. As such, the LRC being part of the school leadership, their contributions to the school's academic performance requires an investigation.
- How do outdated philosophies such as fundamental pedagogics influence learner leadership in the schools?
- To what extent is school leadership still viewed through traditional lenses?
- What are the underlying reasons for the prevalence of fundamental pedagogics in our schools? Why have teachers not broken with this outdated philosophy?

Furthermore, this study was conducted at one senior secondary school in one region. In order to gain much understanding of the phenomenon I suggest the replication of this study in other secondary schools within the region and in other regions of Namibia and beyond.

6.8 Conclusion

This study attempted to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in Mkwabashu SSS in Namibia. The study was prompted by other researchers' calls for the intensification of research on learner leadership. Apart from other researchers' calls and other studies' findings, one traditional leader reflected on the adults' ideology of childhood that "learners cannot lead, as they cannot lead themselves, they are there to be taught, and that is why they are called learners". The respondent responded to the question whether learners can lead and the question was asked during my pilot study exploring the understanding of the concept leadership and who should be involved in leadership.

The study indicated that leadership and learner leadership were understood in terms of traditional more than contemporary views and there were numerous challenges with the potential to hinder learners' participation in leadership in the school. The study therefore concluded that learners' participation in leadership in the school is largely ineffective. However, I noted possible reasons for the current situation and provided some recommendations for practice with the hope that these may help the school and its stakeholders to address and redress the negative legacies that seem to prevail in the school.

On a more positive note the study found that the LRC does exist and seemed functional on a managerial level. This is at least a start, and with a changed mindset and appropriate strategies it would be possible to build on this foundation and develop learner leadership to its full potential.

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Appendix 1: Letter from supervisor



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown 6140 • South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P O Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8383/4
Fax: +27 (0)46 622 8028
Email: education@ru.ac.za

19 June 2012
Mr Alfred Ilukena
The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Windhoek
NAMIBIA

Dear Mr Ilukena

Permission to conduct research in Namibia

I am writing to obtain your permission for Mr Andreas Bishi Uushona (student number 12U5916) to conduct research in schools in Namibia. He is a registered Masters student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa in the field of Educational Leadership and Management under our supervision. He has reached the point where he is ready to conduct his research. He wants to investigate learner leadership.

Mr Uushona will need access to documents, to observe the school in action to get a sense of its climate and culture, and to interview selected teachers and the principal. He deserves all the assistance he can get for this project. Learner leadership is a contentious and important issue in education in Namibia and the rest of Southern Africa but as yet under-researched. Mr Uushona has done well so far in his coursework and we have every confidence that he will produce a good study.

Thank you in anticipation for your permission and support. If you have any queries please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht and Dr Callie Grant (Supervisors)

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
RHODES UNIVERSITY
P.O. BOX 94
GRAHAMSTOWN
6140

Appendix 2: Permission Letter to the Permanent Secretary

Enq: A. B. Uushona
Cell: +264812497366/ 0027788673713
Email: bishjackalgreen@yahoo.com

11 Hills View
Grahamstown
South Africa
19 June 2012

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Windhoek
Namibia

Dear Sir

Request for permission to conduct a research study in **in the Okahao**
Circuit in Omusati Region.

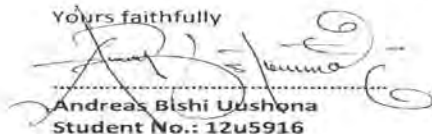
I am a full time student in the field of Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. As part of my course I have to complete a research study. My research topic is: **Learners' participation in leadership: A case study in a senior secondary school in Namibia.** I wish, through my study, to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in the case study school. The research study is being done with permission of the Higher Degrees Committee of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa and I plan to conduct data collection from 10 July to 24 August 2012.

I wish to make it known that participation in this research study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their participation at any time without negative or undesirable consequence to themselves.

It is against this background that I am requesting your permission to conduct the research study in the above-mentioned school. Attached please find a copy of a permission request from my supervisors, Prof. Hennie van der Mescht and Dr. Callie Grant who can be contacted as follows: Hennie: Tel +27466038384, Email: h.vandermescht@ru.ac.za; and Callie: Tel +27466037508, Email: c.grant@ru.ac.za

Thank you in advance as I count on your usual generosity and support.

Yours faithfully



Andreas Bishi Uushona
Student No.: 12u5916

Appendix 3: Permission from the Permanent Secretary



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tel: 264 61 2933200 /
Fax: 264 61 2933922
E-mail: mshimho@mec.gov.na
Enquiries: MN Shimpopeni

Private Bag 13186
Windhoek
NAMIBIA
29 June 2012

File: 11/1/1

Uushona Andreas
11 Hills View
Grahamstown
SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Mr Uushona Andreas

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OMUSATI REGION**

Your correspondence dated 19 June 2012, seeking permission to conduct a research study at the secondary schools concerned, has reference.

Kindly be informed that the Ministry does not have any objection to your request to conduct a research study at the school mentioned above.

You are, however, kindly advised to contact the Regional Council Office, Directorate of Education, for authorization to go into the school.

Also take note that the research activities should not interfere with the normal school programmes. Participation should be on a voluntary basis.

By copy of this letter the Regional Director is made aware of your request.

Yours sincerely

A. Ilukena
A. Ilukena

PERMANENT SECRETARY

cc: Director: Omusati Education Directorate



Appendix 4: Permission from the Director



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Team Work and Dedication for Quality Education

Tel: +264 65 251700

Fax: +264 65 251722

Private Bag 529

OUTAPI

05 July 2012

Enq: Ms. Apollonia Hango

To: The Inspector of Education
School Principal
Omusati Region

Subject: Permission to conduct a research study at
Secondary School in Omusati Region

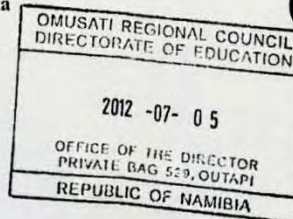
This letter serves to notify your good office that Omusati Education Directorate has granted Mr. Ushona Andreas a permission to conduct the above said study at your school. However, the research to be undertaken should by no means whatsoever disrupt teaching and learning at school.

Counting on your usual cooperation.

Yours faithfully

E. A. Nghipondoka 05/07/12

Mrs. Ester Anna Nghipondoka
Director of Education



Teamwork and dedication for
quality education

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Regional Director.

Appendix 5: Consent letters

Enq: A. B. Uushona
Cell: +264 812497366
Email: bishjackalgreen@yahoo.com

11 Hills View
Grahamstown
South Africa
2nd July 2012

Dear Mr/Ms.....

Invitation to take part in a research study

I am sending this invitation to you as a teacher who might be interested in participating in my research study. I am a full time Masters of Education student in the field of Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. As part of my course I have to complete a research study. My research topic is: **Learners' participation in leadership: A case study in a senior secondary school in Namibia**. I wish, through my study, to develop an understanding of learners' participation in leadership in the case study school. I would, very much, like to work closely with you in order to extend the boundaries of our knowledge on this phenomenon.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of your performance or competence. I undertake to uphold your autonomy and, as such, you will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to yourself. In this regard, you will be asked to complete a consent form.

It is against this background that I am humbly inviting you to participate in my research study at your school. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully

.....

Andreas Bishi Uushona (Researcher)
Student Number: 12u5916

Declaration

I (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this research study. I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

.....

Signature: Principal/HoD/Teacher

.....

Date

Enq: A. B. Uushona
Cell: +264 812497366
Email: bishjackalgreen@yahoo.com

11 Hills View
Grahamstown
South Africa

Dear Mr/Ms.....

Request for permission to allow your child to take part in the research study

My name is Andreas Bishi Uushona, a full time Masters of Education student in the field of Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa. I am sending this invitation and request for permission to allow to participate in a research study to be undertaken at SSS.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of your child's performance or competence. I undertake to uphold his/her autonomy and he/she will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to himself/herself. In this regard, you are asked to complete a declaration form attached.

It is against this background that I am humbly inviting and requesting you to allow your child to participate in the research study during break times or after school. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully,

.....

Andreas Bishi Uushona (Researcher)
Student number 12u5916

Declaration

I (full names of the parent) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this research study and that I have permitted (learner's name) to participate. I understand that I reserve the right to withdraw my child from this study at any time.

.....

.....

Signature: Parent

Date

Appendix 6: Interview guide

1. In your own view what is leadership?
2. How do you understand the concept 'learner leadership'?
3. Where and how do learners participate in leadership (lead) in the school?
4. In your opinion what should be done to enhance learners' participation in leadership in the school?
5. What can you do to encourage more learners' participation in leadership in the school?
6. What do you consider as hindrance or frustrations to learners' participation in leadership in the school?

Appendix 7: Observation Schedule

Learners’ participation in leadership

Unstructured Observation schedule (As directed by Focus Groups and Individual interviews)

Zone/Site	Activities	Indicator Yes/No	Comments

General Comment:

.....

Appendix 8: Document Analysis Schedule

Learners’ participation in leadership

No. :	Document to be analyzed	Comments
	SB Meeting Minutes
	LRC Meetings’ Agenda
	LRC meeting Minutes
	LRC Constitution/ Bye-Law
	SMT Meeting Minute (<i>with learner leadership discussion</i>)
	School rules and regulations
	Other relevant documents

Appendix 9: Inspirational Anthem

OMUSATI INSPIRATIONAL ANTHEM

Ngame Omuwa ondu umbila omulilo
Kombanda yeve ndi, kombanda yeve ndi
Ngame Omuwa ondu umbila omulilo
Kombabda yeve ndi

Nda haala wa hwama
Nda haala wa hwama
Wa hwamenena

Ngame Omuwa ondu umbila omulilo
Komband yeve ndi, X2

One uyelele wuuyuni mbu
One omongwa gwevi
Oshilando sha tungilwa kondundu
Kashi wapa okuholama X2

Olamba, Olamba!
Onyeka yOmuwa tema ngoye ino holeka
Minikila uusiku wuuyuni mbu
Minikila sigo otaku shi X2