LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN A REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL) IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE EASTERN CAPE

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By

MONICA PETRO STRYDOM

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DECLARATION

I, Monica Petro Strydom, hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own idea and where ideas from other writers were used, they were acknowledged in full using references according to the Rhodes University Education Guide to References. I further declare that the work in this thesis has not been submitted at any university for degree purposes.

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Signature Date

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to answer two main research questions: *How is leadership promoted on a Representative Council of Learners (RCL)* and *What leadership roles do learners on the council play in schools?* Recent research suggests that although the democratisation of school governance has given all stakeholders a voice in how schools are being governed, it seems that learner voice is still largely silenced. Literature on this issue paints an uninspiring picture of learner under-involvement and marginalisation. In seeking underlying causes for this, this study is informed by notions of leadership for social justice.
The study investigated the RCL at a public, fee-paying school in the Makana district of the Eastern Cape. By observing the daily functioning of the council, engaging with the learner leaders as well as teachers, parents and other role players, I developed a better understanding of the challenges the RCL faced as well as factors which promoted their role as learner leaders. This aided in answering the first key research question of how the RCL promotes leadership development. To answer the second key question, I needed to consider the perceptions of stakeholders concerned and how they saw the operation of the RCL.

This study is situated in the interpretive research tradition and uses critical realism as its under-labourer. To support this study and to answer some of the aims of this research, Leontiev's second generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory was used. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires an observation and document analysis.

Data analysis took the form of identifying themes which emerged from the data. These formed the basis of my discussion and I was thus able to address the main research questions. Data revealed that learner leaders in schools are mainly managers and not really leaders; that learners are still very much marginalised as leaders and that they subsequently do not have a lot of say when it comes to how their schools are governed.

It further emerged that despite formal legislation and guidelines which are in place to allow for the democratic rights of learners' opinions to be heard in schools, historical and cultural forces account for parents and other role players' reluctance to allow learners to have too much of a say. I trust that the findings from this research will strengthen learner leadership

structures in schools and perhaps provide guidelines on how learner leadership could be developed and managed.

DEDICATION

I am humbled to have been born into a family where leadership was taught from a very early age and so I dedicate this study to my brother, Johannes Roelof Strydom, who is in my opinion one of the cleverest people I know. It is because of him that I am passionate about knowledge and forever trying to improve myself and learn more. It is also dedicated to my mother Sophia Johanna Strydom and my father Johannes Roelof Strydom, who have always encouraged me and instilled in my brother and me the belief that nothing is impossible and that you can achieve anything you set your mind on.

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- To the parents, teachers, chairperson of the governing body, teacher in charge of the RCL and members of the RCL at the case-study school, for the information they provided and their co-operation during my study period. The success of this study is because of you.
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ACRONYMS

CHAT – Cultural Historical Activity Theory

CNE – Christian National Education

RCL – Representative Council of Learners

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGB – School Governing Body

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT OF MY STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the study and outlines the thesis chapters. A description of the context and background of the study is given where after the importance and relevance of this study is explained. The reader will find the research goal in this chapter as well as a brief account of the methodology. An outline of the chapters contained in this thesis then follow, before the conclusion of the chapter is given.

1.2 Context and background

On 27 April 1994 South Africa held its first democratic election, after decades of Apartheid. With it 'democracy' was adopted as the guiding principle for governance in the country. This also meant that schools would have to be governed democratically and so it would be expected that learners, being stakeholders in schools, would also play a role in the leadership of schools and in the way in which schools were governed. As Mncube states: "The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 mandates that secondary school learners, who are members of the Representative Council for Learners, should be part of school governance through participation in school governing bodies" (2008, p. 77).

Learner leadership in South Africa has come a long way. Before democracy in South Africa during the Apartheid's regime, the state excluded the majority of citizens from any real participation and schools were used to influence learners through conformity to authoritarian structures (Harber & Trafford, 1999). What is today known as the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) was referred to as a body of 'prefects' headed by a head boy and/or head girl. This council comprised senior school learners who were not democratically elected and as a result were used by teachers to do managerial tasks, such as line duty and working in the tuck shop. These learners were therefore not representative of the entire body of learners, as they were not elected by the learners and were also not given a platform where school governance issues could be raised. These learners were also not represented on any decision-making bodies, such as the SGB and SMT where school governance was discussed, and so decisions at schools were typically taken by parents and teachers only.

In 1996 a White Paper on organisation and funding of schools was published, the aim being to introduce school governance structures which involved all stakeholders, in order to foster democratic principles (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The South African Schools Act which came into effect from the beginning of 1997 stemmed from this White Paper. It states that "All public state schools in South Africa must have democratically elected school governing bodies composed of teachers, non-teaching staff and learners" (Mncube, 1998, p. 78). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 clearly outlines the role of the SGB of which learners are a part. This idea met with resistance; some argued that learners lacked the skills and experience of educational matters to make decisions in the best interest of their schools. Also, adult members on the SGB felt that learners did not have the capacity to make important decisions in the school (Mncube, 2001, p. 95).

On the other hand however, there were those who argued that learners should play a part in decision-making when it comes to matters affecting their education, as they had played an active role in the struggle for liberation in South Africa (Sithole, 1995, p. 95). It is a historical fact that before democracy in South Africa, students were involved in boycotts and demonstrations which turned violent, perhaps with the Hector Peterson saga as the most prominent. Learners involved in that incident were opposing the Apartheid regime and the fact that all education was received in Afrikaans, amongst other issues. During these demonstrations and boycotts even the prefects were divided, with some prefects taking part in the boycotts, while others tried to keep discipline at the schools.

After democracy in South Africa, the RCL replaced the prefect system. The South African Schools Act stipulates the election process and so for the first time in South African history learners could participate in choosing their own leaders as well as participate in the governance of schools (Nongubo, 2004, p. 2). However, as Karlsson (2005) points out, rather than eliminating inequalities from the past, the SGB (where learners should be able to voice their concerns) often intensifies inequalities such as power relations by excluding learners from matters which influence their education. Again history is repeating itself, with demonstrations and boycotts taking place at schools, this time on matters such as lack of resources, shortage of teachers, class size and unprofessional behaviour of teachers.

Clashes also occur around what some describe as 'cultural' differences, such as the recent incident where a learner at a high school in Pretoria stood up against the hair regulations at

her school which she felt marginalised and discriminated against her and fellow black learners. The action she took has caused an outcry at many schools across the country. Why was there no platform at which matters such as these could be discussed before they reach boiling point? The RCL may well be the official body in schools but the truth is that they are often marginalised and still do not have much of a voice when it comes to school governance.

The fact that students have been protesting in the recent fees must fall campaign shows that even at tertiary level, students are being marginalised and feel that the people in the top management structures are not reacting to their pleas – the result being that lectures have been disrupted at universities, with the students now also demanding free food and destroying dining rooms at campuses across the country. This is a direct result of students feeling that their hands are tied and that they have no way of communicating on an equal level with those within the top leadership structures at universities.

As a solution to this problem, Rudduck and Flutter (2000, p. 75) suggest that we need to look at schools from the learners' perspective as a way to improve schools. This includes taking into account their experiences and views, in order to create an experience where learners can be active participants in the education experience. For this to happen, all stake holders need to realise that there is much to be learned *from learners themselves* about how to improve education as a whole in this country. It is for this reason that this study focuses on the perspectives of different stakeholders, including those of the learners on a RCL, in an attempt to promote learner voice at schools.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The motivation behind my choice of subject for this study is firstly my personal interest in developing young learner leaders in schools. It is my belief that learners should be given more of a voice and platform to communicate with the rest of the school when elected onto the RCL. I write from the perspective of a teacher who teaches senior learners (Grades 10-12) and who hears input from learners on an almost daily basis on how to improve the school – yet they do not feel they have the platform to raise these issues. I was particularly interested in what the data said about the learner voice in schools. Moreover, my personal involvement in the study school, (I have worked at the study school for four years) as well as other schools points to the fact that although learners are elected onto councils such as the SGB, they in fact have very little say in how the school is governed.

Secondly, I was interested in the outcome of this research with the possibility of formulating an action plan or practical advice on how to improve the involvement of learner leaders in the way in which schools are led and managed. This meant that I could make use of my findings as a point of reference and as supporting documentation when encouraging role players in schools to allow for learner leaders to step to the foreground. It is my hope that this study will encourage learner participation in the decisions which are being made in schools across this country. From the outcomes of this study, some suggestions for further research can be identified which may aid in any future studies.

Thirdly, the notion of learner voice and learner leadership is quite popular in South Africa and internationally at the moment. South African studies show how problematic learner leadership is in the country at the moment and emphasises the need for further research (Mncube, 2008; Harber & Trafford, 1999; Sithole, 1995; Karlsson, 2002; Mabovula, 2009; and Majeke 1994). However, I do feel that it is a field in which more research is required since the issues involved are extremely complex, with roots in history, culture and politics. We need more research to enrich the concept of learner leadership and to grow the body of knowledge as a country to better our education system and the way in which schools are managed. It is my hope that this study may also contribute to the field of leadership and management, particularly at the education faculties of universities.

It is with the above reasons in mind that I decided to conduct research on the notion of learner leadership in the case-study school with special emphasis being placed on the different role players' perceptions of learner leadership in this school.

1.4 Research goal and questions

The chief goal of the study is to bring to light the complex factors influencing learner leadership development in a RCL in a public school in the Eastern Cape. Since the study will focus on organisational factors, it aims to identify how schools promote or inhibit learner leadership, and to explore the underlying reasons for these phenomena.

To address this goal, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How is the notion of learner leadership viewed and understood by the RCL and the school?
- What skills and competencies are learner leaders required to acquire?
- What is the role that learners on the RCL play in schools? How does the RCL function?
- How does the school view the RCL's role and function?
- What are the enabling and constraining factors in leadership development on the RCL?
- What are the underlying causes of attitudes towards learner leadership surfaced by the study?

1.5 Methodology

The research takes the form of a case study. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) case studies "provide unique examples of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly" (p. 289). This study explores the notion of learner leadership in real life situations, for example, during a meeting held by the RCL, in one school in the Eastern Cape. This study is situated in the interpretive research paradigm, focussing on the development of learner leaders in one school in the Eastern Cape. Henning, van Rensburg and Smith (2004) say that the interpretive paradigm, "focuses on the understanding of individual participants' experience and perceptions of their professional roles as experienced in their day-to-day working environment, from the standpoint of their unique contexts and backgrounds" (p. 21). When considering the focus of the research, this links well, as the purpose of the research is to explore the notion of learner leadership, bearing in mind the different role players' opinions on leadership and the functioning of the RCL in a school in the Eastern Cape.

However, the study also draws on critical realism as an under-labourer, because one who looks at the world through a critical realist perspective makes sense of social practices through the theories that he or she chooses to embrace and the causal mechanisms which influence the situation. Critical realism will provide the necessary scaffolding by which questions such as "what is knowledge and truth?" can be investigated. For the aim of this study, questions such as "What is the leadership role of the RCL in schools?" can be investigated through the application of critical realism.

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Merriam (2002) says about qualitative research that, "[it] would be interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words and meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 38). In addition to this, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) as cited in Nangolo (2015) state that the interpretive paradigm "gives the researcher the opportunity to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actions" (p. 6). I hoped that through observations at the school, my findings in the questionnaires and interviews would be strengthened and that I would be able to get some understanding of the notion of learner leadership in the case-study school. I also needed to account for these perspectives and experiences by uncovering causal mechanisms through the use of second generation CHAT theory. This framework proved useful in viewing the phenomenon as an activity, and analysing its functions in terms of the elements of activity theory. This approach has the potential to uncover tensions and contradiction which suggest the way forward.

Data collection took the form of structured interviews, questionnaires, observations, document analysis and discussions with different role players. Interviews were done with three of the ten learners on the RCL, the principal, three teachers, three parents and the chairperson of the governing body. In addition, questionnaires were administered to all members of the RCL as well as teachers at the school and an observation of a RCL meeting was done.

As a researcher, I considered the ethical considerations of this research project and tried not to influence the respondent's perceptions or opinions. I tried to remain objective throughout this research process and to not be biased. My supervisor verified all questions included in the interview schedule before they were administered. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to make sure none of the data could be misinterpreted. The transcribed interviews were then arranged into themes. I also opted for a number of data collection methods, to ensure that triangulation was possible and that data would support and strengthen my findings. I discuss these and other methodological issues in Chapter Three of my thesis.

During the data collection process, themes emerged which I analysed. I used these themes to aid me in discussing the research question.

1.6 Thesis outline

This study is presented in six chapters. In Chapter One I give the reader a general overview of the research which was conducted. Here I include the research questions, background of the research, the research context, methodologies used and the research goal. I also include the motivation behind me wanting to do this research.

Chapter Two constitutes the literature chapter and includes the viewpoints of different researchers whose work I found relevant to my topic of study. I also include the framing of the concept of leadership in general and specifically traditional and contemporary forms of leadership and argue for social justice and distributed leadership as leadership theories which will be used in this research. I also discuss CHAT as a framework for this study.

In Chapter Three I examine the methodology which I used to conduct the research. I discuss in detail the approach and procedures used for data collection. It provides an outline of the data gathering tools which were used during the collection of data, namely questionnaires, interviews and observation. This chapter also discusses the research participants and case-study school selected. It concludes with the ethical implications that this study addresses.

Chapter Four offers the raw data presented through structured interviews, questionnaires and observation. I provide a brief overview of the research site and the participants in the study.

In Chapter Five, data are presented in categories as they emerged from the data analysis. These are discussed using the CHAT framework and the contradictions which surfaced from the study are discussed under sub-sections. It is in this chapter that I argue for a move towards social justice. Chapter Five is also a summary of the main findings in light of the research goal and questions.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a discussion of the limitations and the validity of this study. It suggests some recommendations for the development of learner voice and learner leadership within the case-study school. I also give some suggestions for potential areas of study so that the concept may be further researched.

I now move on to Chapter Two to discuss and review literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As I was navigating my way through the vast amount of research that has been done on learner leadership, special emphasis was placed on South African studies, as this study is situated within a South African context, – Mncube (2008), Mabovula (2009), Phaswana (2010), Mitra (2006), Smyth (2006), Mitra and Gross (2009), to name a few – it became clear to me, in the way in which traditional leadership theories are applied, that these theories are inadequate to provide a framework for understanding the complexities of learner leadership. Furthermore, as Whitehead (2009 p.847) points out, most leadership studies focus on adult leadership development with very few studies focussing on the development of learners as leaders. Chan (2000) and Schneider, B., Paul, M.C. & Holcombe. K. M. (1999) agree that not enough focus in leadership development is placed on the type of qualities needed in adolescent leaders. It therefore became evident to me that there is a need to draw on theories which acknowledge the complex nature of schools as organisations, with the focus being on the complex nature of relationships within schools.

2.2 Conceptual assumptions

What makes schools complex – and unique as organisations – is that they have no 'product' as such. They do not produce anything – not even learners – but rather provide the environment in which learning can happen and young people can grow and develop. Furthermore, schools are unique in that they are entirely person (people) orientated, so any theory that stresses productivity or production is of limited value. Finally, being so people orientated, leadership in schools is about relationships, and hence leadership needs to be viewed as a social phenomenon, not an organisational one.

Traditional leadership theories typically stress influence, strategic leadership, productivity, getting people to do what you want, leadership, and followership – but hardly ever is the emphasis on relationships. What makes relationships important is that they are about power. In a classroom situation for example, the teacher will have more power over the learners than

vice versa. Most leadership theories ignore this power which exists in all relationships. One such example is Whitehead (2009) who does emphasise the importance of power, but his understanding of power is questionable. He states that "leaders are found at all levels of society and are important figures that initiate values, facilitate change, as well as broker, distribute and share power" (p. 848).

Whitehead (2009), Miller-Johnson, Constonzo, Coie, Rose, Browne & Johnson (2003) and Rodkin and Farmer (2000) further distinguish leaders as pro-social and anti-social. These writers describe a pro-social leader as being someone who enjoys verification and is inclusive. The anti-social leader is someone who is exclusive and relies on power. This view of power, namely that power is a commodity which can be shared, as Whitehead (2009, p. 847) believes, is limited and, I believe, flawed. It is worth mentioning here, if only to dismiss it. I feel that Foucault's view of power as a relationship is more appropriate for interpreting social reality and would thus be more suited to my study. I will now discuss Foucault's view of power briefly and explain why it is relevant to my study.

One of the key concepts of Foucault's work is the link between power and knowledge. According to Foucault, as cited in Gillies (2013, p. 24), knowledge is both created by power and creates it. For example the 'truths' a society decides to accept or reject produces a 'power' which is able to support the 'truth' which it holds. In education and with particular relevance to educational leadership and management, this discourse is about how power is exercised in educational situations. In educational leadership and management the aim is to use power efficiently and effectively to achieve the desired educational outcomes. Gillies perhaps best describes this relationship of power when he writes, "The educational leader, therefore, depends on knowledge for their position of power, while also being subject to that knowledge for their continued status, for their promotion, demotion, or dismissal" (2013, p. 24).

Foucault places the focus on discourse rather than on 'truth'. It is about what people perceive to be true in terms of discourse and not about the objective reality or truth. So in terms of Foucault's work then, it is important to explore power relations in an educational setting (Gillies, 2009, p. 25). In my study I thus looked at who holds power, for example, during a meeting of the RCL – who leads the meeting, who makes decisions, and on what basis or 'truth' is this decision being made. For Foucault power is always present, in every situation

and relationship. It is a quality of a relationship. It can neither be given or taken, but is always subject to negotiation, shaped by historical forces and perceptions.

Niesche states that power is a discourse dependent on the knowledge which it has constructed; yet that very knowledge that it has constructed, is dependent on power relations (2011, p. 27). So therefore, in every school there will be different power relations, depending on that which the members in the school see as true. This in turn is informed by cultural norms and traditions. I thus paid particular attention to the power relations within my school of study, as by doing so, I learned about the knowledge that is accepted as truth by the stakeholders.

I start my literature review by looking at ways in which leadership and management are explained and defined in the field, followed by a discussion of traditional and contemporary views of leadership. I then argue for social justice as a possible leadership theory which could best support the complex situation researchers come across when looking at school structures. I further argue why I feel that CHAT is a suitable framework to be used in this study, linking to social justice. The reader will find a conclusion at the end of this chapter.

2.3 Leadership and management

A single definition of what leadership is would be impossible as leadership has over the past decades been a highly contested concept. Rost (1991), as cited in Beyer, 2012) states that there are over 200 definitions of leadership. Most researchers, academics and scholars however include some assumption of leadership involving a social influencing process (Uushona, 2012, p. 11). Bush (2007, p. 392) for example, perceives leadership to be about the development of people. Spillane (2006) also recognises that leadership is about motivating and encouraging people and not simply about delegation. Yukl echoes this when he says that "leadership involves development and change" (2000, p. 3). From these definitions, many educational writers have volunteered a definition which is more suited to the educational context.

More specifically within the educational context, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo, (2008, p. 6) say that leadership is the understanding of emerging trends in education. It should ensure that the school achieves a vision based on values which are shared by all

stakeholders by guiding the school through the various challenges it may face. For the aim of this study I will adopt the view of leadership as proposed by Dobosz and Beaty (1999) who see leadership as the ability to guide others in reaching a common goal.

Coleman (2005) states that the terms 'leadership' and 'management' are often used interchangeably in everyday speech, a phenomenon which she does not find strange as it is often the person who is leading who is also managing. However, Gronn (2000) as cited in Coleman (2005), offers some distinction as he sees leadership as a quality that does not necessarily come with status, while management does since it encompasses the skills of running an organisation, such as planning and coordinating in order to reach the objectives and goals of the organisation. It was important to me to have some distinction between leadership and management, and to understand what is meant by these terms as I investigated the learner leaders' perceptions in the school. Armed with these explanations I could try to comprehend if the learners on the RCL fully understood their role and function in the school. And more importantly perhaps, were they leading, or were they merely managing some disciplinary functions bestowed on them upon receiving the title of member of the RCL? This enquiry links up with local studies **(**Mncube, 2008; Naidu, Westraad, & Bradfield 2010) which argue that RCLs are managers and not leaders as the prefects used to be.

Within the school and various other organisations, we see that although the two concepts of leaders and managers are different, they are in operation inseparable and interrelated. For example, it is the leader's responsibility to formulate policy, but without a manager who implements these policies, it means nothing for the future of the organisation. Again, if the leader does not formulate policies, the manager would not have anything to implement. In a school it would often happen that the same person is both leader and manager; for example, the teacher is managing her classroom, but would also be performing certain other leadership roles in the school, like leading the RCL. Likewise, the principal is both the leader of the school, but also manages the school – the processes, structures, overseeing maintenance and staff appointments. These are routine management tasks without which the school would collapse. In this study, I was thus interested in how the learners on the RCL go about completing their day-to-day activities and who takes up the role of leader – is it the learners on the council themselves, or is it the principal or teacher overseeing the RCL or perhaps even other stakeholders who are in fact leading and managing the council? By paying attention to this, I might come closer to answering the research questions and learn more

about the perceptions of stakeholders and the members of the RCL, particularly about how learner leadership is perceived in the school of study.

2.4 Traditional views of leadership

There is such a vast field of leadership theories or discourses; a full discussion falls outside the scope of this research project. Perhaps I could simply mention a few leadership 'adjectives' here, as found in O'Brien, Murphy & Draper (2003, p. 19), Niesche (2011, p. 46) and Johannsen (2012) as cited in Gillies (2013, p. 49): authoritarian, charismatic, instructional, invitational, sustainable, distributive, coaching, democratic, cross-cultural, emergent, exchange, laissez-faire, strategic, team, facilitative and primal. I hope this list illustrates how broad the field actually is!

Niesche (2011, p. 46) separates this list into two broad categories, namely, those leadership discourses which reside in the individual and are a characteristic or trait of an individual, and those that pay attention to the style and context of leadership, when an initial problem arises. Gillies (2013, p. 49) perhaps says it best when he points out the tension that exists: "On the one hand leadership is possessed, and is an internal quality or characteristic; on the other hand, it is exercised and is presented by behaviours and style".

In an attempt to resolve this tension, I turn to Gorton, Aston and Snowden (2007, as cited in Tng, 2009, p. 12). They distinguish between trait, behavioural and contingency theories as relevant to educational leadership and management. The trait theories assume that certain traits and qualities are inherited which ensures that some people are better suited to leadership. However, as studies continued, there was no universal traits found that would ensure effective leadership (Uushona, 2012, p. 12) and so behavioural theories of leadership were introduced. Here, the focus was on the actions of the leader and not on the qualities which he or she possessed (van Wagner, (2012), as cited in Uushona, 2012, p. 13). Lastly, contingency theories came about after it was recognised that no set of universal qualities could ensure a successful leader. Contingency theories see the dependence of effective leadership on the organisational situation (Uushona, 2012, p. 14). Hence every school would have a different organisational situation and different leadership styles and structures.

In my study context I found contingency to be most applicable, as the success of the RCL would essentially rely on the situation within the school where the members of the RCL would be expected to take up a leadership role. However, even contingency theories ignore aspects such as cultural and historical characteristics of individual learner leaders. In these theories, contingency refers to contextual and situational differences. Important as these may be, if leadership is to be understood as a social phenomenon, as this study proposes, it is social and cultural differences that are important. Hence, I will show later in this chapter how critical realism needs to be an under-labourer for this study and how CHAT serves as a conceptual framework.

When searching for a leadership theory for my study, it was important for me to investigate some contemporary views on leadership, in the hope to find a form of leadership theory where the learners are considered and where the learner voice is heard. I now take a look at contemporary views of leadership.

2.5 Contemporary views of leadership

With the ample amount of contemporary leadership theories out there, it was necessary for me to look at and focus on those theories which would be informative to this study and make it a richer research project. After careful consideration I have identified distributed leadership and social justice as the two theories which would best aid this study. I will now discuss these theories below.

There seems to be a need for an alternative form of leadership worldwide. The use of the term 'alternative' implies a type of leadership which differs significantly from traditional forms of leadership. This alternative model is explored through distributed leadership. Leadership used to be understood as a leader who leads "solo" (Gronn, 2000). When a distributed view of leadership is applied, it acknowledges that more than one person is required to lead a school. Furthermore, it sees leadership not simply as delegating tasks to people, but also as motivating and encouraging them to take on leadership responsibilities (Spillane, 2006, p. 3). Even more important I think, is that there needs to be a climate for leadership – a space needs to be created wherein leadership can grow and flourish. I think this definition of leadership would possibly give me a starting point when looking at how decisions are made in my school of study and who is in control of, for example, the meetings where these decisions are

made. So, even though the SASA clearly promotes a distributed leadership model, it would be interesting for this study to see how it is applied in practice.

Distributed leadership can be applied in schools by involving the learner voice in formal and informal activities, such as the activities with which the learners on the RCL in my study would daily find themselves in. To be able to distribute leadership, the learner leaders' leadership capabilities need to be built and developed. A possible way to do this is to encourage authentic leadership. Whitehead (2009, p. 856) says that authentic leadership "produces positive outcome[s]" and adds that it "should be a fundamental development concept in helping young people in the early stages of their leadership growth continuum". The distinguishable difference between authentic leadership theories and other leadership theories is that it is characterised by a positive social outcome (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). For example Bhindi and Duignan (1997, p. 119) state that human, ethical and spiritual dimensions to organisational relationships can be restored through authentic leadership. In their view, authentic leadership develops an understanding between leader and follower. What makes authentic leadership theories different from other leadership theories is its ethical and moral dimension. The argument here is that the only worthwhile leadership is that which makes a difference in people's lives – action which addresses inequity. This viewpoint links up with Foucault's notion of social justice. Social justice as a possible answer to the phenomenon which is investigated is discussed in much detail in the following section.

As I believe that the RCL ought to be a body that produces positive outcomes – and it is generally assumed that authentic leadership produces positive outcomes – it makes sense that I chose authentic leadership to play an important part in my study, as a development concept in learner leadership. For the aim of this study then, I see authentic leadership as leadership that is self-aware, that would want to improve its leader and has a leader who is always looking out for others. Trustworthiness and high moral values should be important in authentic leadership; it is leadership that is committed to the success of the organisation within the parameters of social and moral values. Authentic leadership is thus about so much more than simply getting things done.

Lumby (2013) however, strongly critiques distributed leadership as she points out that it is naïve to think that leadership can be distributed, because power is a central tenet of leadership and power cannot be distributed, as I have argued. For example, even if a teacher tells a

learner in the class that he/she is in control of the class, as soon as something happens, i.e. a learner falls and bumps his or her head, the teacher immediately takes back the power in the relationship and must act. In all relationships, whether we want to acknowledge it or not, there will always be one person who has more access to power. This is because of power's link with authority. Authority is usually given to someone – the principal's authority, for example, comes from the state. Power can thus not be shared or handed out like a gift. Even though Lumby (2013) severely critiques distributed leadership and offers no solution, it was still necessary for me to discuss the notion of distributed leadership as it has become popular in research. However, as mentioned above I will only look at notions of distributed leadership as a starting point, and will not draw on distributed leadership as a possible answer for my study.

The solution however might come from Gillies (2003) who brings Foucault into the argument. In his book, Gillies (2013) makes a strong case for Foucault who he believes has come closest to putting his finger on the nature of power as a changing dynamic ingredient of relationships, rather than as a commodity which can be handed out or shared. This makes for interesting discussion on my research topic, as members of the RCL are chosen democratically by their peers. This might suggest that as soon as a learner becomes a member of the RCL, he or she naturally gets handed some form of power – for example, to be able to lead and make decisions in the school. But this is not the case. Power resides in the situation, the context of the RCL, which is made possible through state legislation, on the one hand, and the school's owning of that legislation.

As mentioned before, Foucault believes that power is negotiated. As Gillies points out, "Foucault's particular understanding of power is that it is exercised, rather than possessed" (2013, p. 37). Hence in this study, members of the RCL did not possess power: they occupied a social space where access to power resided. Keeping this definition in mind, we need to ask – how did members of the RCL exercise their power? What did they do, and how did they influence the school? More importantly, did they serve humanity – did they have a positive outcome? Did they see a bigger picture than just getting things done? Also, how was power negotiated in my school of study? How was the role of the RCL perceived by other role players in the school? For example, how did the teachers who teach at the school perceive the RCL? And especially, how did they respond to the notion that the RCL has power?

Foucault states that, “Power circulates networks of relations, and individuals are permanently involved in these power relations, either exercising power or experiencing the exercise of power by others” (Gillies, 2013, p. 37). It would be worthwhile for my study to investigate the role that power relations play in the school and to look at how members of the RCL accept or reject notions of power, as this study is concerned with the perceptions of learner leadership in the greater school community.

2.6 Social justice as a possible answer

The notion of “leadership for social justice” (Shields, 2004, p. 109) provides an appropriate conceptual framework for this study. The term social justice in this study is used to describe a space in which the “conditions” is set in which learners can lead because the situation or space was created for them in which they can lead. The driving force behind the South African Schools Act was – and continues to be – to transform the education system. This is why the Act provides for multi-stakeholder participation in management and governance which includes teachers, parents and learners in the hope that schools can become centres of change. O’Malley and Capper (2015, p. 291) argue that schools “remain contested sites for social struggle” and that more needs to be done to benefit all learners. They further contend that one of the biggest problems with leadership theories that aim to bring social justice into leadership at school level, is the fact that social justice is only recognised by the margins that are set, instead of looking at the problem within its context. This research looks at leadership development within the context of an RCL and indeed the school, as social justice as a leadership theory suggests one should do.

Shields (2004) argues that transformative leadership could provide opportunities for learners to learn and lead in a school environment which is socially just and democratic. For Shields (2004), the key ingredients of transformative leadership are dialogue and relationships. Adopting a transformative leadership orientation would help to create a space in which the RCL can be more democratically involved in decision-making in the school which would in turn help to create a school which is more socially just. In this respect, transformative leadership has much in common with other contemporary approaches, such as distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), which similarly emphasises the importance of leadership as a process – rather than a phenomenon – where relationships among leaders, followers and the context are crucial. This research project engaged in dialogue with the research participants, and in doing so, hopes to have strengthened their voice. For this reason it was important to

me that the research participants were both aware and supportive of the aim of this research and what it could mean for the particular school in which the research was conducted and its learners.

Shields' (2004) position on transformative leadership provides an important challenge to contemporary shifts in leadership thinking – mostly the notion of distributed leadership. In this regard Lumby (2013) raises the important question of *power* in organisations, arguing that leadership thinking typically ignores the fact that power is present in every relationship (Gillies, 2013) and that it is not a 'thing' that can be distributed, rather a relationship that needs to be negotiated. Looking at learner leadership in a South African context would be fairly meaningless if the power dimension were overlooked. These power dimensions within schools can cause a 'contradiction' which is where CHAT can be a useful analytical tool. I now move on to discuss CHAT and the reason I chose to use CHAT as a theory for my study.

2.7 CHAT as a framework for this study

Earlier in this section I explained how I would be applying distributed leadership as a theoretical framework for my study. Distributed leadership draws largely on Engeström's activity and cognitive theory (Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R. & Diamond, 2004 as cited in Vaeta, 2015). Hatcher (2005) describes an activity system as a "collective labour process" with six intermediate components that interact with each other (See Figure 1 on page 19). They are objects, subjects, instruments, community, division of labour and rules (2005, p. 256). The strength of Engeström's model is that it has the ability to analyse leadership practices by examining it as a complex situation, as well as acknowledging that leadership does not exist in isolation (Vaeta, 2015, p. 18).

Due to the fact that the RCL comprises learners from such diverse backgrounds and that the RCL itself is such a complex learning environment, I am of the opinion that second generation CHAT can be useful in analysing my data. As the RCL is, in its essence, a system which consists of many individuals that then make up the council and its daily activities, second generation CHAT (see p.19) with its emphasis on individual action and collective activity could be valuable in data analysis. The top level of the collective activity is driven by an object related motive, while the bottom level is driven by conditions and tools (Leontiev, 1974). In this research, it was thus interesting to see what the driving conditions were for the

learners in the council to behave in a certain way (see data discussion in Chapter Five). It is important to note here that there is often tension (contradiction) between the different elements in the activity. This is indicated in the second generation triangle.

Concepts like artefacts/tools, objects and subjects come from Vygotsky's first generation CHAT theory. There is interaction between the subject (members on the RCL) and the activities that they do (Cole & Engeström, 1993). These activities include leading the school, as well as serving other managerial roles. There is also interaction between the subject and the tool/artefact; this could be physical objects (such as newsletters and notice boards) in my study. These physical objects are part of the activity's setting and play a part in the subject's activity. By having a framework for my study which emphasises the relationships and tensions between the different concepts in any system, it would be possible for me to closely examine the RCL and have a basis on which I could interpret this research.

The mediated artefacts or tools could be seen as something that does not have a concrete, physical existence in the environment. They include the interactions with others, as well as an individual's prior knowledge, or the joint knowledge of all members who make out the object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). There is also an interaction with the object, the reason why the individual or group chooses to be a part of an activity and this is what holds the activity together (Kaptelinin, 2005; Hyysalo, 2005 as cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The RCL is in essence about the relationship with one's peers and other stakeholders. By putting these relationships in the place of the artefact on the second generation CHAT framework, I would be able to investigate more closely the relationship and tensions which arose in the system from my research.

In second generation CHAT theory, rules refer to the way in which actions are structured. These are often historical and are seen as the relationship between the subject and object and the subject and the community, i.e. the fact that teachers are against learners having a say in school governance, because historically, school governance was left to teachers and the headmaster. This example highlights the importance of also looking at the historical background within the system and CHAT would provide the framework by which that could be done.

Division of labour in second generation CHAT theory is the way in which tasks are divided within the group, for example – learners on the RCL (relationship amongst RCL members.) The community in my study would refer to the setting in which the action takes place, i.e. the school, as well as the RCL members who all have the same object (the action being undertaken by the group) in mind. In my study the community will be the principal, members of the SGB, teachers, parents, learners and members of the RCL.

These concepts are presented in a triangle as there are tensions in activity systems – systemic contradictions which subjects experience while part of an activity and these pressures would play a part in the subject's ability to reach its object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Right from the start of this research it was obvious to me that there would be tension amongst the different participants and stakeholders and other factors which influence the daily operations of the RCL. It was thus important to me that I chose for my research a framework which would include these tensions, so that it would be possible for me to interpret my research findings. The CHAT framework is often illustrated as follows:

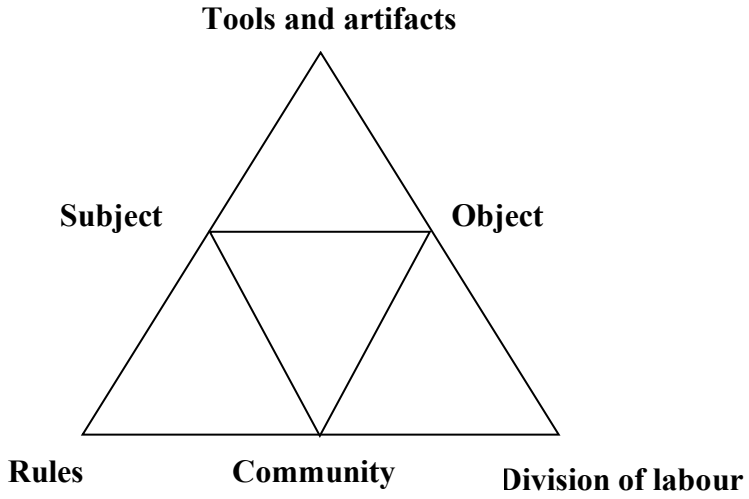

Figure 1: Engeström's second generation Activity Theory (as cited in Engeström & Sannino, 2011).

In this study, the RCL – the committee itself – is the activity system. The learners on this committee are the subjects who hope to reach certain outcomes that they might set for

themselves, or which will be predetermined through policy or other stakeholders. These outcomes are indicated as the object on this model.

The tools or artefacts which are indicated on the model will, in this study, refer to all the documents that pertain to the work the RCL has to do, for example, the minutes of previous meetings, but may also include the action plans put in place to reach certain goals which have been set. It can also refer to the training which is provided to the members of the RCL. As Spillane et al. (2004) point out, the tools or artefacts are usually a reflection of other peoples' experiences who have had to solve similar problems, and so these tools or artefacts would shape the way in which the RCL interacts with reality (p. 28). The tools also help generate an understanding of knowledge, which will then in turn help to enhance and better the understanding of leadership practices on the council. These tools are created, transformed and developed during the activity itself and carry with it a specific culture – "the historical remnants from the previous human action" (Spillane, 2004 as cited in Vaeta, 2015, p. 20). Therefore, the learners on the RCL would rely on these tools to aid them in decision-making, and in ultimately reaching the goals which they have set for themselves and the council as a whole.

According to Smyth (2006), there is a need for a radically different kind of culture and educational leadership in schools which promote reliable forms of learner voice. To achieve this, schools need to include the experiences, backgrounds and cultures of its learners when making decisions. As I would need to investigate the cultural and historical background of learner leaders in the school, I decided to use CHAT as a theoretical framework for this study. I also decided to use critical realism as an under-labourer as it aims to provide a philosophical basis for social and scientific enquiry (Bhaskar, 1986). Due to the nature of my research, it was necessary to have an ontological lens through which I could view the RCL members' behaviour. I now discuss critical realism as an under-labourer for this study.

2.8 Critical realism as an under-labourer

When I developed a theoretical framework for this study, it was important to me that the framework I chose reflected my interest in the development of youth leadership on the RCL. This study is an interpretive study, drawing on critical realism as an under-labourer. In developing the interpretive aspect, I examined reality through the research participants'

experiences and perspectives, as well as my own observations and interpretations. I also needed to surface cultural/historical contextual factors using second generation CHAT and account for these by adopting a critical realist lens (for an in-depth discussion of CHAT refer back to section 2.6 of this chapter).

Bhaskar (1986) sees critical realism as an under-labourer because it can provide a philosophical basis for social and scientific enquiry. In terms of Bhaskar's (1986) domains, the transitive domain would be the observable characteristics of the RCL, including policy documents that put these councils in place, and the day to day operations of the RCL. These elements are in a constant state of change, one reason being – and there are many other reasons – that the learners on the RCL change annually. In this study, the intransitive domain includes those forces which are less fluid and not open to empirical investigation, but which can nevertheless, be accessed through the transitive. These would include, for example, cultural historical prejudices against the notion of children as leaders.

In terms of Bhaskar's ontological strata, the **empirical** looks at "sensed perceptions" of knowing subjects and their experiences (1986, p. 98). In my study, I looked at what it is that the legislation expects of the RCL and what it is that the RCL do on a day to day basis, as well as various stakeholders' perspectives on learner leadership.

At the **actual level** the study looked at the school as the context of the phenomenon, as well as at the phenomenon itself, in this case learner leadership. The study further also identified enabling and constraining forces inherent in the school as an organisation. These constraining factors can be seen as contradictions, indicated on Engeström's second generation CHAT framework as discussed in the previous section.

Finally the **real level** became fleshed out as the study uncovered factors which were impacted by cultural, historical, political and other forces which have shaped the reality experienced by the RCL and its context (Bhaskar, 1986).

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter started with an introduction in which contemporary views of learner leadership was discussed with special emphasis being placed on South African studies done, as this

study is situated within a South African context. I next went on to discuss the notions of leadership and management and gave the reader a sense of how I see leadership. A further discussion of traditional views of leadership was then followed by a discussion of more contemporary views of leadership. Social justice was discussed as a possible lens to make sense of leadership identified in this study.

As this study will use CHAT and critical realism as a theoretical framework, it was therefore necessary for me to explain these frameworks and how they will be applied in the study. The methodology used will now be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of methodology is that it describes the research design adopted to answer the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 47). This chapter can therefore be seen as a roadmap in which I describe the path that I followed to develop an understanding of the perspectives on learner leadership in an RCL council in a school in the Makana Municipality. In this chapter I discuss the research paradigm and the research method that I used. I also explain how the school was selected and how data were gathered and analysed. The ethical protocols that were followed during this research process are discussed after which a conclusion follows.

3.2 Research paradigm

Thomas Kuhn (as cited in Maxwell, 2008, p. 224) explains a paradigm as a set of general assumptions about the world and how we understand it. Often these assumptions are shared by researchers who work in a particular field. Also included in these assumptions are the methodological strategies which we link to these assumptions. A paradigm can be seen as a network of intertwined ideas about the world and the role researchers play in it. The paradigm will include the researchers' actions they choose to take (Bassey, 1999, p. 42). As discussed in Chapter 2.7, it was important to me that the framework I chose would reflect my interest in how youth leadership is developed in the RCL.

Bhaskar (1986) differentiates between two domains - the transitive domain, including the natural and social structures which are lasting, although the subject changes. In this study, the transitive domain would be the observable characteristics of the RCL, including policy documents that put these councils in place, and day to day operations of the RCL. The reason why it was helpful for me to investigate my research participants and their situation through the transformative domain is that even though policies are in place, the learners on the RCL

change annually. With a sound theoretical framework in place, the findings from this research may be found to be applicable to other schools as well.

The intransitive domain refers to all the theories and the constructions we come up with to explain reality (Bhaskar, 1986). In this study the intransitive domain refers to deeper structures, including thoughts and feelings of the learners on the RCL. It would be impossible for me to do a study such as this and not look into the perspectives and feelings of the learners on the council. The intransitive domain provides me with a platform by which I can document the findings of this part of my research.

In Chapter 2.8 I discussed the three levels of the Empirical domain as divined by Bhaskar (1986). In this study, the real may refer to the factors which are impacted by cultural, historical, political and other forces which have shaped reality (Bhaskar, 1986). Here CHAT would provide the ideal scaffolding to support my choice of a critical realist study due to the fact that CHAT places a lot of emphasis on cultural and historical backgrounds.

Critical realism will also provide the necessary scaffolding by which questions such as – What is knowledge and truth? – can be investigated, as well as the aim of this study – What is the leadership role of the RCL in schools?" In other words, a person who looks at the world through a critical realist perspective makes sense of social practices through the theories that he or she chooses to embrace and the causal mechanisms which influence the situation.

3.3 The case-study method

I used a case-study to gather interview and questionnaire based data in a real life setting. This included: the selection of the case study school and respondents (size of the sampling and sampling procedures), the research instruments which were used, (documents, questionnaires, observation schedules, interviews), the administration of the questionnaires and the processing of data.

This is an interpretive case-study since I was attempting to develop a deep understanding of a particular case and its participants within their context (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 139). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 181) the advantage of doing a case-study is that events can be investigated within the contexts in which they unfold.

Furthermore, Wellington (2000, p. 47) describes a case-study as a detailed examination of a single event, or one setting or subject. My study will focus on one single subject: the leadership roles learners play in a school and how these roles are perceived. In this study I was in the position to have frequent and regular interaction with the research participants, in the sense that I live only a short drive away from the study school and had access to the school and the day to day operations of the school whenever I needed to visit the school. During the duration of the study I would typically visit the school every two weeks. Hence I was able to identify patterns and relationships within these events, which brought about concrete supportive findings for my study. It also allowed for learners on the RCL to have a means by which they could be involved in reflexive practice, and to think about the role they played in the governance of their school.

Stake (1995, p. 3-4) differentiates between three different kinds of case-studies. In an **intrinsic study** – the choice of the study is really not the 'choice' of the researcher. For example, when as a teacher I have to observe a learner who has learning difficulties, or when we undertake to evaluate the assessment programme used in our school. By looking into this assessment programme, we will not learn anything about other assessment programmes, but only have greater insight into the particular case that we are studying. We thus have an **intrinsic** interest in the case.

Secondly, Stake (1995, p. 3) discusses the **instrumental case study.** This is where we have a research question or the need for some general understanding. We could better understand that which we are wondering about through studying a particular case. Here the case study is **instrumental** in our understanding of the particular case.

And lastly, Stake (1995) differentiates the **collective case-study** from the other two case-studies. This is where we choose to investigate several teachers or schools, for example. Each case study will then be instrumental to the finding of the research question that the researcher wishes to answer and there will be a golden thread that runs through all these case-studies.

My research is an instrumental case study. This is because this research was undertaken with a very specific research question and focus in mind: my interest in learner leadership development. Stake (1995) further states that the methods we use to do our data collection

will be different, depending on the type of case study we do (p. 4). I will explain the methods I used in this study later in this chapter.

In the following section I discuss the context in which data collection was situated and give the reader some background about the school.

3.3.1 The case-study school

The site of this study was a public school situated in the Makana municipality in the Eastern Cape. The research participants were chiefly the RCL of this school, as well as a few other selected members of the organisation who was chosen based on the fact that they were easily assessable for me to conduct interviews with them. In the case of the learners who were interviewed, all the members lived in the hostel, which meant that I could interview them at times which were convenient for me, often at night after sport and other cultural activities.

The school is a co-educational school with teaching taking place from Grade 0 to 12. The parents of these learners do pay school fees. However, many learners get government grants, and so this school struggles at times to obtain necessary resources. 380 learners attend this school. Some of the learners in the school come from wealthy families, while others live in the nearby informal settlement and their families often lack the resources to make ends meet. The school only offers teaching in Afrikaans, even though many of the learners who attend this school speak isiXhosa as their home language. This no doubt has an impact on learner participation in the linguistic culture of the school.

This school was chosen for a range of reasons. It is a school where I had previously taught for a number of years, and is situated about 60kms from where I reside, making it relatively easy for me to do data collection. The school was also willing to participate in the study and supportive of the research. Finally, my experience of the school beforehand indicated that the phenomena I wished to focus on – learner leader voice and leadership development – were issues in this school. Selecting this school was thus both convenient and purposive.

3.4 Sampling procedure

The sampling process is a term used to describe the method used to select a given number of people, also referred to as a sample, from an entire population (Mertens, 2005, p. 69). During the sampling process a decision is made as to who will be included in the study. A decision about the sample of the study must be made early on in the research process. This decision will be based on logistical factors such as time, costs involved and the accessibility of the research site/ participants, to the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 143), as well as more important reasons such as who is likely to be rich sources of data.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011) sees purposive sampling as a feature of qualitative research. However, it is by no means exclusive to qualitative research. In this type of sampling, researchers hand-pick the cases which will be included in their study, based on the assumption that these cases would be in the best position to provide relevant data. I chose a sample of 18 participants: The ten learner members and four parents chosen to be representative of the demographic of the school, who were on the RCL; the teacher in charge of the RCL; the headmaster; the chair-person of the SGB; another teacher chosen at random and an ex-teacher of the school who had also been a pupil at the school for 12 years. This ex-teacher was chosen on the basis that she still lives in the area, and I therefore had access to her, but also on the basis that she and three of her siblings were on the RCL of the study school, and their father was the chairperson of the SGB for six years, I thus felt that she knows the school well and would be able to give some valuable input into this study.

It was important for my study to firstly get the views of learners on the council, as well as those of the teacher in charge of the council. The reason I decided to also interview a teacher who was slightly removed from the council was to find out if the way in which the council perceives itself and its workings, was also the way in which other members of staff viewed their functioning in the school. The principal was interviewed, as traditionally the principal of a school is seen as the prime leader, and no functions or plans that the RCL might have may be implemented without his, or the SGB's permission. I also thought that it might be interesting to interview a teacher who had had a lifelong connection with the school, to find out how notions of leadership had changed over the last 20 years at this school.

Of the five parents (of whom one was the chairperson of the governing body) who were interviewed, two were males, two females and all were from different ethnic backgrounds, as I was interested in whether different cultures perceived learner leadership differently.

The three learners on the RCL who were interviewed represents the demography of the school in that they were all from different ethnic backgrounds, two were female and one were male. The ten learners on the council who were democratically elected by their peers and who fill in the questionnaires were also representative of this demography.

These participants were chosen because I believed that they were in a position to understand the study's phenomenon and that in the long run they and the school at which they were involved would benefit from this study. Uushona (2012) warns that to merely choose the participants does not guarantee that they will understand the chosen phenomena – but when data gathering tools are carefully selected, that would play a big role in the participants understanding the phenomenon (p. 39). This emphasises the importance of well thought-out data generating tools. I elaborate on these below.

3.5 Data gathering tools

I started the data gathering process by doing a contextual profile of the school at which this study was based. It was in this key step that CHAT and critical realism were applied. As mentioned above, Bhaskar (1986, p. 96) sees critical realism as an under labourer, because it has the potential to provide a basis for social enquiry. In terms of Bhaskar's (1986) domains, the transitive domain would be the observable characteristics of the RCL, including policy documents that put these councils in place, and the day to day operations of the RCL. In this study, the intransitive domain, as identified by Bhaskar (1986), includes those forces which are less fluid and not open to empirical investigation, but which can, nevertheless, be accessed through the transitive. These would include, for example, cultural and historical prejudices against the notion of children as leaders. The richness of these descriptions have a direct impact on the data analysis where retroduction is used to account for research findings. Hence the history of a study site plays a key role in accounting for prevailing attitudes and practices, and being aware of these would be important.

Traditionally, this school has always sent the RCL on a leadership camp at the end of the previous year, immediately after the election of learners onto the council. On this camp, the teacher in charge and other facilitators would talk to learners about their role in the school, have team building activities and do some planning for the year ahead. However, this year the RCL did not attend a camp as a new teacher had taken over the duties of overseeing the RCL. However, I still managed to observe what was 'taught' and hence how the role of the RCL was envisioned by the teacher in charge, through the attendance of functions organised by the RCL. My observations were recorded in a research journal and some preliminary interviews were done with a few of the RCL members to find out what they expected from the year ahead and what they felt they would learn. This was an opportunity for me to gain insight into the body's constitution and the role that they played in the school.

I also attended one of the council's monthly meetings which helped me gain a sense of how the RCL was living out their intentions established by themselves at the beginning of the year. I also learned a great deal about the difficulties they experienced. During this observation, I paid special attention to leadership development as detailed in the observation schedule attached (Appendix D). It was also during this time in the data generation process that I administered the other data collection instruments detailed below and attached to this study. The data collection was concluded in June 2016.

This study rested on a range of data collection tools. The advantage of using a variety of methods when generating data is that the limitation or inadequacy of one method is complemented by another. This brings about comprehensive data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2005, p. 218). Golafshani (2003, p. 597) argues that the use of different kinds of data generation methods allows for triangulation and a more comprehensive description which should result in more reliable findings (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In order to ensure that the data I generated was trustworthy and valid, and that there was consistency in the data I collected, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, document analysis and observations were used. I elaborate on each of these briefly. Examples of data collection schedules are attached to this thesis.

3.5.1 Observation

Observation provided me with first-hand impressions of how the council functioned, how it was received in the school, and to what extent leadership development was happening (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 306-314).

One observation was done. This observation was done during a meeting of the RCL which was held after school. The meeting was 25 minutes long. The meeting was led by the teacher in charge of the RCL and the main aim of the meeting was to discuss the role that the RCL would play during a big sports day which was to be held at the school the following weekend.

I have included the observation tool which I used during the observation as an addendum. The tool was designed in such a way that the activity which was observed could be explained thoroughly. The tool paid attention to who was in control of the activity, who gave input, and who just sat back and listened and did not participate in the activity. This information was important for my study, as I wanted to place some emphasis on power relations within leadership. I discussed the notions of power and the contradictions within power relations and the CHAT framework in Chapter Two. The observation tool also leaves room for the observer to indicate whether or not the set outcome for that activity was reached and again, here the observer has some space to indicate why he/she felt that the outcome was reached or not.

3.5.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administrated to the staff as well as all members of the RCL (See appendix E). Here I gained another perspective on learner leadership and the RCL. The staff's views are important because they constitute the context in which the activity functions. Their notions on learner leadership and the RCL in particular may have a significant effect on the body's functioning. I included learners on the RCL here because I was interested in knowing how they themselves viewed their role in the school and the leadership role that they played (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 248-260).

The same questionnaire was administered to both the learners on the RCL and the teachers. I asked all the teachers at the school, a total of 22 teachers, to complete the questionnaires; however, only seven questionnaires were returned. A possible reason for this was that being a

teacher myself, I know the amount of administrative tasks teachers have to do daily and perhaps some of these teachers just felt that they could not fill in more 'forms'. However, the questionnaire only had 20 questions to answer and this would in actual fact only have taken about five minutes to complete, so this was disappointing. Nevertheless, significant data were gathered.

The questionnaire asked respondents to choose an indicator from one to five. A value was given to each indicator, ranging from "I agree strongly", "Undecided" or "I do not agree at all". Questions that were asked focussed on how the RCL and their function in the school was perceived, what the enabling and constraining factors were that the RCL faced in fulfilling their duties, and whether or not the role of the RCL was necessary for the optimal functioning of the school. The questionnaire is attached as appendix E.

The answers I gathered from these questionnaires strengthened the answers I received in the interviews and echoed what I saw during the meeting which was observed. It was also interesting to see that in some of the questions, both teachers and learners felt the same; however, in other questions it was clear that teachers and learners had virtually the opposite response. I discuss these and other interesting findings in the next chapter.

3.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of giving the researcher the chance to learn about the natural setting of the research participants in their own words (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 141). I interviewed three members of the RCL to gain their perspective on learner leadership, the functioning of the RCL, and how they experienced the challenges. An interview with the teacher in charge of the RCL was also done, as well as interviews with two other teachers to gauge their response to these issues. I further interviewed four parents and the chairperson of the SGB as they were role players at the school as an activity system and their contribution to this research project has enriched the data.

The interviews were recorded and thereafter transcribed. The findings from the questionnaires laid the platform for some strong arguments, and strengthened and supported findings from the interviews. Interviews were conducted in both Afrikaans and English, depending on the preference of the respondent; however, the questions asked during the

interviews were the same in English and Afrikaans. A copy of the English interview questions is attached.

3.5.4 Document analysis

During the document analysis stage of this research process I examined the South African Schools Act more closely, as well as the manual for RCLs (Naidoo, Westraad, & Bradfield, 2010). These documents contain the seeds of the transformation agenda which is playing out in schools currently, in the form of leadership distribution among parents, teachers and learners. Furthermore, during the meeting which was observed, some problems and barriers that the RCL faced were also discussed, and this was helpful as these points also emerged during interviews. I talk about triangulation later in this chapter.

3.6 Data analysis

I engaged in three stages of data analysis. Firstly, in order to surface attitudes to learner leadership and the RCL in particular, I applied discourse analysis (Janks, 2002) to the documents as well as interview data. Discourse analysis has the potential to reveal deeply held beliefs (prejudices in many cases) people hold, in this case, beliefs about learners as leaders. In his study of learner leadership (2004) Nongubo demonstrated through discourse analysis, how official documents, while apparently promoting stakeholder (learners included) involvement in leadership and management, nevertheless betray suspicion and paternalistic attitudes which position learners as *children* who need to know their place! A 'light' discourse analysis of documentary and interview data revealed power dimensions which were crucial for my enquiry. Zeeman, Poggenpoel and Myburg (2002, p. 98) see discourse analysis as a valuable approach in educational research because it challenges the dominant way in which objects of a study are viewed. The roots of discourse analysis are situated in literary studies and linguistics (Ward, 1997, p. 129). Durrheim and Terre Blanche (1999, p. 48) see discourse analysis as being a qualitative tool that should be situated in the broader context of post-structuralism and social constructionism. In this sense discourse analysis sits well with my research interest as transformation and social justice are the chief drivers in this project.

In structuralism the emphasis is placed on the structure of language and how meaning is created. Structuralism seeks to find the deeper, underlying 'facts' that support the texts. Post-

structuralists, however, argue that there are no meanings set in stone, only interpretations. For post-structuralists, the meaning of a text (used here in the broadest sense of the word) is never factual or final. Emphasis is placed on uncovering attitudes, the reader's opinions and whether or not he/she is biased. But, most importantly emphasis is placed on power relations within texts, for example – if a student were to come up with a new theory, that theory would most probably not hold as much power as when a professor were to come up with the exact same theory (Ward, 1997, p. 86-104).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2000) do not see discourse as being abstract, but rather that "it exists in concrete social situations and has very real effects" (p. 48-52). In my study the discourse I will be looking at is people's utterances on learner leadership, and this is situated in "concrete social situations" in a particular school. Zeeman et al. (2002) further state that a "discourse is a system with broader patterns of social meaning" where the encoding of language forms the objective of the study in post-structuralist and structuralist research (p. 99). In simpler terms, the same situation would look different in every school because of what it means to those involved; the language is most often unique to a certain context (or school) and it is often about what is said, or not said.

The main aim of discourse analysis is "to account for how particular perceptions of the world became fixed and passed as truth", rather than to try and explain the world by making claims about the truth (Durrheim, 1997, as cited in Zeeman, L., Poggenpoel, M., Myburg, C.P.H & van der Linde, N. 2002, p. 99). It is looking at history and seeing how the "truth" is produced through discourse (Foucault, 1984, p. 88). Applying this to my study would therefore mean that I needed to look at the differing perspectives of learners, taking into account the historical background of learner leadership in the country, and reflecting on the current leadership situation in the school of study. I would investigate what the "truth" is, as experienced by learners, and how this "truth" has come to be. There is a strong link with critical realism here and this is applied in Chapter Five.

The second stage was generic qualitative data analysis, which sought to identify themes, patterns and relationships among various sets of data in order to provide evidence for the claims which were being made in the research (Koshy, 2005, p. 109). Here I looked for relationships and discordance among the perspectives of staff, members of the RCL and other selected learners. In terms of critical realism, I worked within the empirical domain. After the

data were shaped into meaningful responses to the questions, I was interested in establishing explanations for my findings. This was the third stage of the data analysis process. Here I used CHAT as an invaluable tool. Here is a brief example on which I elaborate later on in the study:

The **subjects** of the activity were the RCL members, and the **object** was leadership development through membership of that council. Imagine a situation where the RCL lacked a clear constitution and hence also a sense of vision and direction – one would surface contradictions between **tools (instruments)** and **objects**. Here I had to draw on contextual profiling to find reasons. These reasons are fully explained in the findings of this research document.

3.7 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a research finding is what it claims to be (Bassey, 1999) and to what extent it is believable. Validity rests on several measures that need to be employed in a study. One of these – triangulation of several data sets – has already been discussed. A second criterion is the extent to which arguments presented by the researcher are rigorous enough to be regarded as scientifically justified. In qualitative research, rigour is linked to evidence – authentic data gathered systematically and accurately – and marshalled in ways that inspire confidence. Rigour is thus closely linked to richness, since, as Kearney (2001) argues:

> The utility of research findings in specific situations must be based not only on their fit with the… issues at hand but also on the richness and informativeness of the findings as evidence. At their best, qualitative findings teach the reader something about how context, history and individuality constitute meaning and explicate human action in a closely observed, highly specific unique situation (p. 145).

To ensure validity in my study, my supervisor checked and approved all data gathering instruments (interview schedule, observation schedule, questionnaires). I piloted my interview with two colleagues and asked two learners to answer the questionnaire before starting the data gathering process. Stake (1995) states that it should be routine to pilot the questions of an interview (p. 65). It was important for me to pilot my interview, because if I were to get half way through my interviewing process and only then find that some questions were unclear, it would mean that I would have to start the whole process from the beginning.

During this pilot stage I could thus change the questions which were unclear to the respondents and expand on some of the questions so that the respondents would be able to answer the questions, without having to wonder about the exact meaning of the question.

In conducting the interviews, I used an audio recorder and also recorded the meeting I attended, with the permission of the respondents. The aim of these recordings was to make sure that the words were accurately captured. After interviews were transcribed, respondents were given the opportunity to read them and affirm that they portrayed their responses accurately (Maxwell, 2008, p. 244). In order to sketch the phenomenon of learner leadership as accurately as possible, I used four sources of data for triangulation. Triangulation is seen by Golafshani (2003, p. 603) as a strategy by which the validity or reliability of research or its findings is improved. While collecting data for validity, it was also important to me to consider educational research and the ethical issues involved with this field of study. As I have taught at the study school before, I knew most of the learners who were interviewed quite well, and I had to take into consideration my Power relationship with them when analysing data.

3.8 Ethical protocol

Uushona (2012, p. 46) sees ethical protocol as "the parameters of ethics within which researchers bind themselves when conducting research". Early on in my research I went to talk to the principal of the school involved in my study during which time I explained the potential value of the study, as well as its educational purpose for the case study school. He was happy with the study being done at his school. Carr (1995, as cited in O' Hanlon, 2003) places special emphasis on the ethical awareness of research practices in education. He says: "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).

Consent letters for all participants in the study were prepared. These consent letters guaranteed participants' confidentiality and anonymity. They were also informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. During the whole data generating process I emphasised confidentiality and anonymity and the

ethical issues were explained to all research participants. Copies of these documents are attached as appendices.

3.9 Reflection

During this chapter I was exposed to the dynamics of the 'in field' research process during which I experienced the workings of the different data generating tools and how they all came together through triangulation. These data generating tools were used efficiently to examine the phenomena which the study investigated. All data were gathered within the parameters of ethical awareness of research practices in education.

My research experience was a very pleasurable one, and in working with the teachers and learners at his school, I was always welcomed with open arms. The headmaster of the study school has been especially supportive of this research, and he has shown a great interest in the research findings. The learners were always eager to talk to me, and only one of the parents whom I had approached to do an interview with said that she would not be willing to be a part of the research project (she did not offer reasons for her not wanting to be a respondent). I interviewed one of the parents as well as the chair-person of the SGB in their homes and was received with enthusiasm.

If this chapter can be seen as the roadmap that I took in generating data, then the following chapter, Chapter Four, can be seen as the road I had to take: in it I present the data gathered. Chapter Five can then be seen as the destination which was reached as findings are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the data. It is the road taken on the research experience and with it I hope to give the authentic perspectives and views of participants with regards to learner leadership and how it is developed in a school in the Eastern Cape. Data were gathered through questionnaires which were filled in by both the ten learners on the RCL as well as by seven teachers. I also conducted interviews with three of the members of the RCL as well as with two teachers, the principal and a teacher who once taught at the school and who, ten years ago, was herself on the RCL at this school. A further four interviews were conducted with parents with learners in the school, as well as with the chairperson of the governing body. An observation of a meeting held by the RCL members was also done and all these are presented bearing in mind the main research questions: *How is leadership promoted on the RCL and what leadership roles do learners on the council play in schools?*

The data are presented under the following sub-sections:

1) Perceptions of the functions of the RCL;
2) The overall functioning of the school and the RCL's contributions to the school;
3) The notion of leadership and the RCL's role in leadership in this school;
4) Constraining factors that hinder the RCL from fulfilling their duties;
5) Enabling factors that aid the RCL in the fulfilment of their duties;
6) The skills and competencies learner leaders should acquire on the RCL;
7) Some underlying causes of attitudes towards learner leadership.

I now present participants' profiles and codes after which I present the data around the central themes which were identified and stated at the beginning of this research study.

4.2 Coding and profiles of research participants

Data sources are better understood by those interpreting research through coding and participants' profiles. In practice, this means that I would for example use the code GB in the

data when referring to the chairperson of the Governing Body comments and T 1-3 when referring to the different opinions of the teachers. I include a short profile of each of the respondents, to have some background information regarding the respondents. This also assists those interpreting this research to appreciate and evaluate the data which are presented, based on the sample. The participants' profiles further validate "the purposefulness of purposive sampling" (Uushona, 2012, p. 48).

The participants all had different viewpoints on learner leadership, depending on their own personal experiences. Their views may also have been influenced by their personal views on leadership and what leadership entails or should entail. As I focused my study on the perspectives of different role players within the school, these viewpoints were of great interest to me. This is because, as stated in my research questions, I am interested in how the notion of leadership is understood in this school and how learner leadership is developed. For this reason it was important to hear the opinions of those role players who are directly involved at ground level with what is happening in the school. Through their opinions, the aims of the research could be addressed.

Codes were used for all participants and the school's identity was withheld for ethical reasons. Below follows a short description of all participants as well as their codes which are used during the discussion of data presented.

4.2.1 Headmaster (H1)

The headmaster of this school has recently been appointed (since the beginning of the year that the study was conducted). However, he has been at the school for about 20 years during which time he fulfilled many leadership roles such as departmental head and head of the hostel. He is also very involved in the community and is the chairperson of the church council, the Village Green and *Die Rapportryers*. He holds an Honours degree in education.

4.2.2 Chairperson of the Governing Body (GB)

The chairperson of the Governing Body is an advocate by profession. He has been serving on the school's Governing Body for the last three years and has been the chairperson for the past two years. His daughter is the deputy chairperson of the RCL.

4.2.3 Teacher in charge of the RCL (T1)

This teacher has been at the school for the past five years. She holds a degree in physical science and teaches mathematics and science at the school. She has only been the teacher in charge of the RCL since the beginning of the year that this study was conducted and so is very new in this role. The headmaster asked her to take over this responsibility after the previous teacher who was in charge of the RCL left the school the previous year and so it was not a task she had applied for or something which was voted for.

4.2.4 Teacher (T2)

This teacher is in charge of the primary school learner leadership committee, and so it was important for me to find out her opinions as the leadership committee she heads up could be the building block for the RCL four or five years down the line. This teacher has been at the school for six years and holds an Intermediate Phase teaching qualification.

4.2.5 Ex-teacher for two years and ex-pupil of the school (T3)

This teacher was herself a learner in the school and both she and her three siblings were on the RCL. Two of them were head girls. Their family has an association with the school which has lasted more than 25 years. Her father was the chairman of the SGB for five years. She has herself taught at this school for two years, before accepting a post at a neighbouring school. She holds a degree in graphic design as well as a teaching diploma.

4.2.6 Parents (P1-P4)

A total of four parents were interviewed. Of these two were white parents and two were black parents, as it was important to me that I have interviews with parents who represented the overall demographics of the school. These parents were also from different backgrounds in terms of social status, financial situation, the areas in which they resided, their highest level of qualifications and their occupations.

Two male parents and two female parents were interviewed. It was important for me to have a gender balance as well, as I believe one's historical background and the way in which one

views leadership may be influenced by whether one is male or female. This is because in the traditional sense of the word, in former Model C schools in South Africa, males were often seen as having more leadership abilities than females. In my particular school of study, in the 59 years of its existence, the school is yet to employ a female as principal.

4.2.7 Learners on the RCL (L1-L3)

Of the ten learners on the RCL, I conducted interviews with the chairperson of the committee, the deputy chairperson and one other learner chosen at random. They are referred to as L1-L3 in this discussion. I also administered questionnaires to all ten members of the council and these are simply referred to as opinions by learners during the data discussion.

The RCL comprised learners from Grade 11 and 12. Some of these learners had been part of the council for two years (the Grade 12 learners), although a learner is not automatically re-elected onto the council, but has to go through the election process. The election involves a nomination process where Grade 11 and 12 learners may select fellow learners to be on the RCL. From here a meeting is held, generally referred to as 'the election circus' by learners at the school. Here, candidates are given the opportunity to convince learners to vote for them by giving a speech in front of the school, where afterwards any member from the school can ask these learners questions. A final shortlist is then produced and all learners, Grade 8 to 12 may vote for their RCL representatives. After these members have been selected, they then vote for their own chairperson and deputy-chairperson.

The following tools were used to gather data:

1. Questionnaires to members of the RCL;
2. Questionnaires to staff members at the school;
3. Interviews with members of the RCL;
4. Interviews with the headmaster;
5. Interviews with three teachers;
6. Interviews with four parents;
7. An interview with the chairperson of the governing body;
8. An observation of a meeting held; and
9. Some discussions with different role players, after their formal interviews.

4.3 Perceptions of the functions of the RCL

As discussed earlier in this thesis, there are over 200 different definitions of leadership, each of these bringing with it a different opinion on what the role of the leader is and the function the leader should fulfil, usually based on the situation or organisation in which the leader operates. It therefore came as no surprise to me that no real consensus could be reached on the actual role that the RCL plays at the school. Here I summarise the interview and questionnaire data, answering the questions: *What is it that role players expect the RCL to do and what is it that they themselves (the learners on this council) believe they should do.* I arrived at these themes which are discussed in the few sections which follow after I noted a trend emerging in the answers I received from respondents during the interview process. In order to make sense of the data, it was thus necessary for me to categorize these themes together.

Of course, with these contradictory roles that role players (especially teachers and learners) felt the RCL should play, came tensions and contradictions. I explore these in Chapter Five, using the CHAT framework.

All the participants felt that the RCL was fulfilling their role and function within the school, although some (P1, T2 and T3) said that they did not fulfil their function as well as they should. In the next section, I discuss the different perceptions that role players had about the role the RCL should play in the school.

4.3.1 Handling of discipline in the school

One of the questions raised by this study was whether or not learners really knew the difference between leadership and management. One of the statements made in the questionnaire was that the RCL was just as responsible for the general discipline as the teachers were. The majority of the learners indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. All three of the members of the RCL whom I interviewed indicated that they saw the main function of the RCL as having to help with discipline at the school. To ensure good discipline at a school is more a managerial task than a leadership role, and so I wondered if the RCL themselves felt that they were really leading, or rather that they were only used to undertake general chores in the school. Although this question was not directly

raised, from the data gathered I concluded that the RCL at this school was mainly being used in a managing role, and not really leading. I discuss this more fully later in this thesis.

During the interviews, T1 and T2 also stated that the main role of the RCL was to help with the discipline in the school. T1 did add that they should have a bigger role to play, such as helping in handling problems in the school – presumably discipline related problems. One of the parents echoed the notion that the RCL's main function was to keep discipline, "*to guide the other kids not to do naughty things*". The chairperson of the SGB distinguished between the ideal RCL and the function that the current RCL fulfilled in the school. In his opinion the ideal RCL's main function would be to help with the overall discipline of the school.

T2 also emphasised this when she said that the RCL should support the teachers when it came to the improvement of discipline at the school. Later, when asked if she thought that the RCL was necessary in this school, she again referred to the disciplinary role they played in answering: "*They are definitely necessary, because they have to take our hands in aiding with the discipline in the school because we can't be everywhere*". In answering the same question, T1 also said that the RCL has an important function to play in the school and indicated the RCL's disciplinary role in the school, but added that their function should be more than just helping with discipline in the lines.

Although H1 listed a number of functions that the RCL played in the school, and emphasised that discipline was not the body's main aim, he did include the disciplinary role that the council played in the school.

T3 however felt that it was vital for the school to implement a better disciplinary system if the RCL were to be expected to help in improving the discipline in the school, and so she felt that the RCL was only a "*school requirement*" but that these learners really had very little input into the way in which the school was managed.

4.3.2 To be a communication channel between role-players

One of the main duties of the RCL as indicated by the participants in this research project, was that they should be a channel of communication between learners in the school and other role players (teachers, principal, parents and the SGB). When asked about the level of

communication that took place between the RCL and other role players, members of the RCL were divided, with some learners agreeing that the communication was good, while others disagreed; three learners were undecided.

During her interview, P1 said that the RCL should have the learners' best interests at heart and communicate the interests of the learners to the Governing Body and principal. To this, P2, P3 and T3 added that they should also be the communication channel between learners and teachers, although P2 did add that "*the communication is not always one hundred percent*". P3 said that she hoped that the Governing Body would take to heart the needs that learners of the RCL who are on the Governing Body raised.

During her interview, T1 said that the role of the RCL should include representing the learners in the school. P1 also echoed this. H1 also indicated that the main role of the RCL was that they should represent the school – "*the RCL are the school's voice*" – and that they should speak on their behalf at other bodies, such as the Governing Body meetings. T3 added that the RCL should be the mediator between the learners and the management of the school and that they should communicate learners' needs, worries and challenges to the schools management team.

Of all the learners interviewed, only L1 emphasised that the RCL represented the learners in the school, especially during SGB meetings.

4.3.3 To develop learners

From all the feedback I received, only P3 indicated that the function of the RCL, "*is to develop them*". To this he added that the RCL further "*helps and guide them through their academic year*". T1 did indicate, when asked about the role of the RCL, that their "*leadership abilities should be further developed"*, which to me indicated that she did realise that the RCL should be a body where learners' leadership abilities are developed.

During her interview, T3 said that one of the functions of the RCL was "*to be a lifelong experiment for the SGB where new leadership models can be tested".* This suggests that she also saw the RCL as a learning opportunity, a body having to develop leadership in its members. However, T1 did indicate that the teacher in charge of the RCL was new, and that

perhaps not much had been done to develop leadership in the members of the RCL. During a conversation with the teacher in charge, she indicated that it was not possible for her to take the learners on the council on a camp that year. She did however attend a presentation by FEDSAS about leadership and gave me a copy of the leadership programme that she wanted to complete with the learners. At the time of writing this however, the training had not taken place.

T2 also stated that, "*perhaps opportunities should be given to these learners where their leadership skills can be developed"*. However, she did not see this as the main function of the RCL.

4.3.4 To help with decisions that have to be taken and to represent learners

When asked in the questionnaire whether the RCL should be able to give input into the daily school programme, the majority of the learners agreed or strongly agreed that the RCL should have a say in the school programme. There was however, a contradiction that surfaced. Of the seven teachers who completed the questionnaire, only one teacher indicated that she strongly agreed with this statement, while three teachers did not agree at all.

When asked if learners on the RCL should be in charge of extra-mural activities and whether or not members of the RCL should be allowed to punish learners in the school who did not participate in extra-mural activities or who arrived late at practices, the participants were divided and most of the learners indicated that they were undecided. However, the teachers strongly agreed that learners should be able to give input into the extra-mural activities offered at the school.

T1 felt that one of the roles that the RCL should fulfil was to organise functions for the learners, such as the Valentine's Ball and raising funds for charities. L2 also indicated that the thing she loved most about being on the RCL was that they were involved with projects in the community, such as raising money for cat and dog food for the SPCA and giving flowers to the elderly at the old age home.

According to the chairperson of the SGB, the ideal RCL would be a representative body that would be the "*mouthpiece*" for the wishes that learners in the school had and would "*see the bigger picture of how the school should be managed"*.

4.3.5 To encourage fellow learners and to play a caring role in the school

In the questionnaire, most of the learners indicated that they saw one of the roles of the RCL as having to encourage and motivate fellow learners. The teachers similarly indicated that they felt that the RCL should encourage and motivate fellow learners in the school. However during the interviews, none of the teachers who were interviewed saw the role of the RCL as having to encourage fellow learners.

Although P1 did not indicate that he saw the role of the RCL as having to encourage fellow learners, he did say that the RCL should take care of fellow learners, and have their best interest at heart: "*They should look out for the kids*".

L3 was the only learner interviewed who said that one of the main functions of the RCL was that they should encourage the learners in the school to do better academically, and added that they should also ensure that the learners "*enjoy school"*.

4.4 The overall functioning of the school and the RCL's contributions to the school

In this section I discuss the contributions that the RCL make towards the overall operation of the school. It is possible to say that for a school to function well, they have to do well academically or on the sports field or, that there should be a good team spirit amongst learners at a school. However, I was more concerned with the role players' opinions on the functionality of the school – in what manner they wanted to measure functionality and more importantly the role that the RCL played within the school. Practically it would not make sense to have an organisational body of learners in leadership roles, if the role players and often the RCL members themselves could not say what the contribution was that they made to the school.

4.4.1 The role players' perspectives on the RCL's contribution to the school

When parents were asked – *Can you think of any contributions or achievements that the RCL has achieved that have led to the overall improvement of the school this year?* – three of the four parents said that they could not think of any contribution the RCL had made to the school. One parent indicated that a member on the RCL had spoken to a child where there was a small issue in the hostel.

During my time spent at this school, as well as in a discussion with P1 and in the interview with GB, I became aware of a situation where there were learners in a class who complained about the way in which they were being taught. The two head RCL members then discussed this with the principal, and he indicated to them that this could be an issue that should be raised at the SGB. After the issue was discussed at the SGB and the leadership team had a discussion with the teacher involved, the way in which learners were taught by that particular teacher improved. To this GB added that he had been at several meetings where the input the learners gave had "*changed the direction of decision taking"*. This I think is a positive change that learners have made in the school, although none of the learners even thought of this as a contribution they had made when asked in a questionnaire what contribution they thought the RCL had made in the school. The fact that this did not occur to the learners as a contribution, suggests a restricted view of leadership.

The role players indicated that the RCL played an important role in this school. However, members of the council were equally divided when asked if they were granted the opportunity to make their own decisions. Half of the participants on the RCL agreed that they could, for example, take decisions about organising their own functions, while half of the RCL did not agree with this statement at all. To the same question, three of the seven teachers said that the RCL should not be allowed to make their own decisions. Of course, the question was then raised about whose responsibility it was to organise functions, for example, social dances at the school.

From the questionnaire, it was clear that members of the RCL saw the RCL in this school as an important body in the school when it came to, for example, big decisions that had to be made. Also, all the learners indicated that they felt that the RCL made a positive contribution

to this school, with the exception of one learner who did not agree with this statement. From the questionnaire, most of the RCL members thought that the help they gave in improving school discipline, for example, by doing line duty after break time, was their most important contribution. Second on their list of contributions, was that they had organised a Valentine's Ball.

One learner indicated that they improved the overall spirit in the school which encouraged more learners to participate in sport. Another learner indicated that the school was divided into two groups, those who did sport and those who did not. Learners who did not participate in sport were encouraged to take up a sport.

4.4.2 The overall functionality of the school

During the interview, L1-3 were asked if they thought the school functioned to the best of its ability. In response all three learners felt that some improvement was necessary for the school to function to the best of its ability. One of the main reasons given was discipline at the school. L1 said, "*Teachers allow learners to simply walk over them, and this sets a bad example for us, and we (the RCL) then struggle with discipline"*.

Another suggestion learners made for the improvement of the school was to introduce a wider choice of sport and other extra-mural activities. Swimming for example, was not offered as a sport at this school. This stemmed from the fact that the previous headmaster of 13 years, who only left the school at the end of the previous year had lost a son who drowned. The swimming pool was then closed at the school. However, as discussed earlier, there also seemed to be a lack of interest from the learners.

In conjunction with the issue of sport mentioned above, L1 also felt that the school lacked a school spirit – "*gees*". However L3 said that she felt that the team spirit and overall sport performance at the school was on the rise and she felt confident that the school was heading in the right direction as far as sport was concerned. For her, the academic side of the school needed to be improved for the school to be functioning to the best of its ability.

I do think that the RCL was trying to contribute to the school's success, because when asked which issues get discussed most at RCL meetings, discipline was singled out. Other topics

that were also discussed at meetings were events such as sports days and social events at the school. This I also saw during my observation of the meeting I attended.

4.5 The notion of leadership and the RCL's role in leadership at this school

This study is interested in how leadership is promoted on the RCL and what leadership roles learners on the council play at schools. It was therefore important that I find out how the notion of leadership was understood in this school and what role the RCL played as leaders. I now present my findings of this investigation, in sub-sections under the headings: learners, parents and teachers. I include the headmaster's answers with those of the teachers, and the chairperson of the SGB with those of the parents.

4.5.1 Learners

My interviews with L 1-3 took on a different focus, as from them I wanted to know whether or not they felt that it was enough for them just to be on the council or, did they actually personally get something from it. I also wanted to know what contribution this leadership position, in which they were being placed, made to their personal growth.

L 1-3 all felt that they got something out of being on the RCL. L1 said that she had learned how to communicate with a wide range of people and how to work with them. L2 showed she understood the notion of leadership, with regards to the RCL, as being the platform where, in her own words: "*I have developed communication skills*".

For L2, the fact that she was in a leadership position at school encouraged her, "*to not go against her moral values".* She therefore suggested that leadership means that one is "*doing the right thing all the time*". To this she added that being a member of the RCL helped her to "*have discipline*".

4.5.2 Parents

The findings presented in this section come from answers parents gave during interviews. The question *"Do you think that the RCL is working or necessary in this school?"* with the subsequent answers given, as to why parents felt that they are necessary – (because all four

parents, as well as GB felt that the RCL was necessary) – gave me some insight into how parents viewed the notion of leadership. One parent said that it was important because, "*that is where they are being taught or shown direction*". She thus saw the leadership platform as a place where leaders could be developed, and thus believed that leaders are made and not born. This shows a contradiction that will be discussed in more detail later.

Again, all respondents were positive about the RCL and the leadership role which it fulfilled in the school. One parent (P3) felt that the RCL could be a place where a bridge between races could be crossed. He understood the notion of leadership as a partnership between learners from different backgrounds who worked together. In his words: "*You don't know a person at a distance, but if you work together, at least you will understand each other. Remember we've got different backgrounds but we have to compromise in order to achieve what we want to achieve*".

P1, P2 and P4 emphasised that they saw the role of a leadership platform in the school, such as the RCL, as being the communication link between different role players. They thus felt that leadership was about listening to different opinions, and communicating these different opinions on platforms where opportunities should be given for learners to be heard. P4 added that one could not listen to the opinions of every learner in the school, but that leadership was about decision-making, and therefore you should listen to the decisions which the learners on the RCL decide to make in the best interest of the school. This parent was positive about leadership and felt that the RCL as leaders in the school should be allowed to make their own decisions. To this GB added that he saw the leadership of the RCL as a "*two way process between micro and macro management".*

4.5.3 Teachers

Personally I think that one of the biggest debates around leadership has always been: *Are leaders born or made?* It was interesting that when I looked at the notion of leadership and teachers' opinions on leadership – without even asking the question directly – it was clear that teachers all believed that leaders were made and not born. T2 said: "*They must also learn leadership; it is something which has to be taught".* To this T3 added: "*I would love to see them develop mor*e".

T1 understood the leadership role that the RCL has to play as one of "*service delivery*". There were Grade 11 and 12 learners on the RCL, due to the fact that there were only 350 learners in the school. T1 thus said that if a learner on the RCL did not "*deliver*" in his/her Grade 11 year, they would not automatically be re-elected. To this she added: "*If they better serve the school, they get the co-operation of their supporters, which in turn will establish a belief in the school from its learners*". She also added that: "*A leader is only as successful as he/she serves*".

T1 also believed that the RCL has the capacity to influence the management structures of the school in such a way that the school could benefit from it and added that the RCL could inform the management structures about shortcomings and needs from a "*real life scenario*".

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the different roles that role players in the school believed the RCL should play. T1 also named some functions and roles that she believed the RCL should play, but went on to provide some practical examples on how to achieve these, for example – school spirit and school honour and how to improve this. T3 echoed that she wanted to see the RCL taking up their roles and functions, but did not elaborate on what she saw as their roles and functions. She also did not give any practical examples of how they could "*develop*" as leaders, something she deemed necessary.

4.6 Constraining factors that hinder the RCL from fulfilling their duties

In this chapter I have thus far looked at the perceptions of the different role players and how they viewed the functioning and role of the RCL. I also discussed their perceptions on whether or not they felt that the RCL was working in their school, and how they viewed the notion of leadership. In the next few paragraphs I discuss some factors which might hinder the RCL from fulfilling their duties. My main focus here was to find out from the learners on the council themselves what they felt were constraining factors when it comes to fulfilling their duties as leaders in the school. However, because I was interested in all role players' perceptions, I also included the opinions on constraining factors, of the parents, headmaster, chairperson on the SGB and teachers.

During the interviews that were administered, I asked respondents what they thought the constraining factors were that learners on the RCL had to deal with. I will now classify and

discuss their answers under different headings in this section, using triangulation by incorporating observation and questionnaires to strengthen my findings.

4.6.1 Members of the RCL feel intimidated by adults and teachers

P2 said that she felt the biggest challenge learners on the RCL faced was that they may feel intimidated by adults and that "*it would be difficult for learners to raise their opinions in front of adults*". She said that learners were "*afraid"* due to the age difference and felt that due to the age difference they did not have the right to say certain things.

From the viewpoint of someone who takes part in the SGB meetings, GB stated that he thought that the members of the council, "*were feeling frustrated during meetings because the meetings of the SGB do not focus on the RCL*". He added that the learners might expect the SGB to intervene more in how the school was managed at a micro level, "*but that is not the role of the SGB*".

4.6.2 The personality type of the learner on the RCL

P2 said that a contributing factor could be the personality type of a learner on the RCL: "*If you don't have a strong learner on the council, they will not be able to represent the school at meetings*". P1 also emphasised that a lack of self-confidence could be a constraining factor to the success of the council. H1 added that often learners elected onto the RCL were not strong enough to handle pressure and then they "*sak uit na 'n kwartaal of twee*" (After a term or two they are not able to handle the pressure anymore).

P3 placed a lot of emphasis on the role that a member of the RCL's personality plays in the functionality of the council. She said that a learner who had a stronger personality would follow up on instructions given to them by teachers, while learners who were more introverted would listen, but not follow up on the instructions given. She further added that a learner on the council should have an "*onbesproke karakter*", meaning that the type of learner who gets chosen onto the council should set an example at all times. She gave an example of the rugby captain who overstepped the line in some manner and said that she did not think that that learner should be allowed to continue in his leadership role.

4.6.3 Negative attitudes from fellow learners

P1 said that she felt that members of the RCL often experienced negative attitudes from fellow learners. In her opinion this was due to the fact that, "*Fellow learners' feel that learners on the council feel that they are better than learners who are not on the council"*. To this P4 added that, "*They deal with a lot of things, like other kids who disrespect them*". T2 also emphasised this notion by saying that, "*Learners who are on the council for the right reasons, do not receive the co-operation from fellow students*". She did however not elaborate on reasons for this.

P3 said that she was not sure if learners on the council, "*are really respected in their roles*". She expanded on this by saying that the school realised that a council had to be chosen every year, because it was a "*compulsory committee*" and so fellow learners often voted based on emotion, rather than logic. This often meant that the learners chosen onto the council did not experience respect from fellow learners, which in turn meant that the function of the council was "*null and void"*.

One of the learners in his questionnaire said that he believed that the "*head boy*" was the most important person on the RCL when it came to discipline. Yet, the learners in the school did not respect him when he addressed them regarding a disciplinary issue. L2 indicated that as a girl on the council, the boys in the school did not respect her, and she struggled to get them to listen to her when she addressed them regarding disciplinary issues.

4.6.4 Lack of communication

During her interview, P1 said that she thought that, "*sometimes the communication could get deurmekaar"* (confused) and that the council was then not functioning to the best of its ability. When asked how the school's management structures could be improved, GB said that the school should start with its communication channels, indicating to me that he also saw the lack of communication between the RCL and other role players as a constraining factor.

T3 said that the lack of communication was a constraining factor when it came to the RCL's fulfilment of their duties and said she did not know how often meetings between the RCL and the "*teacher in charge*" and other role players took place. H1 agreed, and added that the

school and other role players, like teachers, should help set a platform for the RCL to talk to the school, perhaps one class at a time to find out what the needs of the learners were.

4.6.5 Social factors

There is no denying that the social factors and background of a learner and the greater school community plays a huge role in the overall functioning of the school. These factors are discussed in more detail in Section 4.9, but for now I will just touch on what was mentioned. Only P3 listed social problems such as pregnancy and drugs as being constraining factors for the RCL. He argued that these factors lowered the "*standard of the school"* which should always be raised.

I would like to include religion in this section. Although none of the respondents felt that religion or the lack thereof was a constraining factor, when asked what should be discussed more during RCL meetings, L2 said that religion in the school should be discussed. She said that learners needed motivation, and they needed to know that "*they have someone to look out for them*".

4.6.6 Maintaining discipline in the school and the lack thereof

During my time spent at the school it really seemed that discipline, or the lack thereof, was one of the main factors influencing the overall functioning of the school. It was expected of the RCL to help with the overall discipline in the school, instead of to lead. It should thus come as no surprise that a lack of discipline in the school would be one of the constraining factors that hindered the RCL from functioning to the best of its ability. When asked what he thought the biggest challenges were that learners on the council faced, P3 listed discipline at the top of his concerns.

T4 also placed emphasis on the role that a good disciplinary system plays in the overall functioning of the school and said that the school did not have an "*adequate disciplinary system which supports the RCL*". She elaborated on this by saying that detention was the only punishment for learners with disciplinary problems, and that she could not in the past 10 years recall a case where the learners had had a disciplinary hearing or that a learner had been expelled. The point she wanted to make was that it did not help having the RCL in place, if

they could not do anything about learners who misbehaved. She concluded by saying that the RCL was a compulsory school system rather than a working system.

T3 said that there came a point where fellow learners did not want to listen to the RCL when being addressed about discipline. Another point she raised was that members of the RCL and teachers all had different standards when it came to what was acceptable as far as discipline was concerned.

In the questionnaire, one of the learners wrote that "it feels as if there is no control over the school, it feels as if a third party is in control of the school". To this he added that the RCL needed to work harder to improve the overall discipline in the school. He said *"detention does not work"*, but did not offer an alternative.

L3 said that the one issue she felt should be discussed more at RCL meetings was the overall discipline of the school. To her this was the single biggest issue in the school. She also added that she felt the RCL should discuss the fact that certain teachers could not control their classes.

4.6.7 Need for leadership development

In the questionnaire, all learners and teachers indicated that more should be done to develop learner leadership in this school. However, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the council did not attend a training camp in the year of this study. T1 said that the RCL, "*moet ook maar leierskap geleer word"* (The RCL must also be taught leadership). In other words, they are thrown into the deep end and expected to be leaders. During discussions with T1 she did indicate to me that she recently attended a seminar about learner leadership development. She also gave me a copy of the booklet that she planned to share with the learners on the council, but at the time of doing this write-up, the training had not yet taken place. This teacher got given the responsibility of taking over the RCL without her necessarily applying for this "position" and so she too was perhaps thrown into the deep end.

H1 also indicated that he thought that one of the biggest constraining factors for the RCL was the lack of leadership development on the council, and also offered the excuse that the teacher in charge of the council had only been in this position since the beginning of the year.

To this he added that it was difficult to develop leadership on the RCL because learners were elected onto the council for a term of one year only. T2 similarly felt that the lack of leadership development on the council, due to the fact that the teacher in charge of the RCL was new, was a big constraining factor for the functioning of the RCL. She added that it was often only the two head leaders (the chair-person and the deputy chair-person) on the council that fulfilled certain leadership roles; she felt that the whole council should be taught what was expected of them.

During the interviews I asked learners what could be done to overcome the obstacles that the RCL faced. L1 said that clear boundaries should be stipulated for them as to what they were allowed to do and what not. I believe that this could have been done on a leadership seminar in the beginning of the year. However, to the same question, L2 gave the insightful answer that as a member of the council you should sometimes step back and allow someone else to do the task that you would have wanted to do. This indicated to me that this learner had had some form of leadership development, and was thinking like a leader.

4.7 Enabling factors that aid the RCL in the fulfilment of their duties

In the following section I discuss the enabling factors that aid the RCL in the fulfilment of their duties, and again classify these factors under separate headings. Although it might look ambiguous that I list the same factors as enabling and constraining factors, those reading this research must understand that I am interested in the perceptions of all role players – where one role player might have felt that there was a lack of communication, another role player might feel that the good communication channel between the RCL and teachers, for example, was an enabling factor. Furthermore, qualitative research does not deal in certainties or 'facts', but with attributed meanings.

4.7.1 Support that the RCL receives from other role players

It was evident that the RCL was supported by other role players in fulfilling their duties. When asked in the questionnaire whether or not there was a good relationship between the RCL and other stakeholders in the school, all members of the RCL agreed strongly, or agreed that this was the case, with only one member being undecided. In answering the same

question during the questionnaire, all teachers also indicated that they felt that there were good relationships between all role players in the school.

A good relationship between the RCL and other role players was also noted during my observations and can be seen as an enabling factor in leadership development on the RCL. For example, during the meetings held, the teacher in charge would give out the instructions, such as the duties of the RCL during an upcoming sports tournament, but would then ask every RCL member individually and by name if there were any other issues he/she would like to raise.

One of the enabling factors in support of the RCL fulfilling their duties was that most questionnaire responses highlighted that they were getting enough support from teachers and other role players in the school, while three learners were undecided.

4.7.2 Good communication between the RCL and other role players

Questionnaire data indicated that only one member of the RCL felt that they could not openly communicate suggestions to the principal and other role players. The fact that the majority of respondents '*strongly agreed'* with this statement and felt that they could give suggestions freely could be seen as an enabling factor when it comes to the way in which the RCL functions and leads at this school.

To the above, H1 added that there was a good channel of communication between the RCL and other role players, but agreed that there was always room for improvement. He added that as the principal, he saw the two head leaders of the council once a week to discuss issues which the RCL felt needed to be addressed. He also added that the RCL was, *"set as a point on the agenda of SGB meetings"* and *"their input was always asked"*. However, during a discussion with GB, he stated that the RCL members were asked to leave the meeting at a certain point on the agenda when teachers were discussed.

Questionnaire responses suggested that the majority of teachers felt that there was good communication between the RCL and other role players. This fact was evident to me during the observation of the meeting, where there was an open channel of communication, and every learner was given the opportunity to give his or her opinion. Questionnaire data showed

that all the teachers also indicated that the RCL could talk to the principal or other role players at any time if they had any suggestions which would contribute to the improvement of the school.

During the interview, I asked learners which issues they felt needed to be discussed during RCL meetings, which were not currently being discussed. L1's answer to this was: "*Meetings are always very open, and there is nothing that we can't discuss*", which to me is another indication that there is good communication during RCL meetings.

4.7.3 The development of learner leadership skills

Although no real evidence of learner leadership development was evident from my visits to the school, both teachers and RCL members agreed that the development of learner leadership skills was a high priority at this school. I think the fact that the teacher in charge of the RCL had attended a seminar on learner leadership development and had every intention of starting a course on leadership with the learners, was a clear indication of the priority of leadership development at this school enjoyed.

During her interview, L2 said that she had seen a change in herself since being elected onto the council. She said that she had not always obeyed the rules, but since her election, she had changed her attitude towards the school, and was now obeying the school rules.

4.8 The skills and competencies learner leaders should acquire on the RCL

I now come to the skills and competencies deemed necessary for a learner on the RCL. It is important to note here that this list is not the opinion of the researcher, but compiled from the opinions of the respondents. Again the skills and competencies will be discussed under different sub-headings.

4.8.1 Leaders on the council should be developing themselves as leaders

One of the statements of the questionnaire was whether learners agreed or disagreed that the RCL members received enough training in leadership. Here, opinions were divided amongst

the learners on the council with exactly half of the members agreeing and half disagreeing. Two members indicated that they were undecided.

An interesting finding which arose from the questionnaire was that RCL members indicated that the development of learner leadership was a high priority of the RCL, yet in the very next question participants indicated that more needed to be done to develop learner leadership at this school.

4.8.2 The RCL should have an input in the activities offered by the school

One of the important functions of any group should be that all its members are given the opportunity to provide input into the operations of the organisation it serves. All members on the RCL indicated in the questionnaire that they felt that the RCL should be able to give input on the sport and cultural activities that the school offered. However, it was not clear to me whether or not these learners knew how they could have an input here and what skills were needed to make this a reality.

During her interview, L3 was asked what she liked most about being on the RCL. To this she answered that she enjoyed being able to have an input into what happens in the school, and that she could talk on behalf of fellow learners when decisions had to be made.

4.8.3 The RCL should comprise learners who are strong academically

Most of the learners felt that a higher academic achievement was expected of RCL members; however, I had to raise the question of what the school was doing to improve the academic achievements of its RCL members and why learners felt that this was necessary. However from data collected I could not arrive at an answer as to what the school is doing to better the academic achievements of its learners.

Interestingly, on this point, only two of the 10 members of the RCL were in fact in the top five of their grade, and so it was clear that when the school voted for the learners they wanted on the RCL, they did not necessarily take academic achievement into account.

4.8.4 Learners on the RCL should follow the school rules at all time

The notion of compliance emerged as a strong theme. T3 told me about an incident where a learner in a leadership role in the school went against the school rules. He felt so strongly about it that he said the learner should be removed from his leadership position. L3 also said that her self-discipline had improved, and that she now obeyed the school rules since she was elected onto the RCL.

When asked about the process of voting a learner onto the council, T4 said that the final step before voting commenced was that the candidates' names were discussed in the staffroom where teachers could decide to remove names from the list, for example, if that learner was a disciplinary problem in the school. It is thus clear that both teachers and learners felt that the members who were elected onto the RCL should be better behaved than those not on the council.

4.8.5 Learners on the council should be involved in their communities

L2 said that the thing she liked most about being on the RCL is the fact that the council did charity work. Some examples she gave here was that they collected food for the SPCA and took flowers to the old age home. During my observation of the RCL's meeting, it was clear to me that work in the community was a priority for many learners on the council, as a number of learners took part in the discussion about the organisations that the RCL should support and the plans they had.

4.9 Possible reasons for attitudes towards learner leadership

There are a number of factors which influence the beliefs a society holds. In the next section I discuss some of these factors which might have played a role in the beliefs the different role players hold about learner leadership in this particular school. I now discuss the role which – home environment, history, status and the mind-set that believes that children are just children – play in the belief the role players hold with regards to learner leadership. I identified these as themes to be discussed after they emerged from the data collected.

4.9.1 Home environment

I believe that a learner's home environment plays a significant role in his/her development as a learner, and the way in which he/she relates to different situations and people. During the structured interviews I had with the four parents, and chairperson of the SGB I asked them what role they thought a child's home environment played in the way in which he/she fulfilled his/her leadership roles. I now present the answers to this question.

P1 said that parents should support the child and encourage him/her to attend meetings held, and motivate their child to keep fellow learners in the school positive. She felt that if the home environment was a "*healthy*" one, the learner that came from such a home would be able to take up his/her leadership role in representing the school on the SGB. P4 felt that the most important role a learner's home environment played was that of teaching the child respect.

P2 also emphasised the role that a learner's home environment played. She felt that if a learner's self-confidence received "*a boost"* at home and a learner was expected to take responsibility for their actions at home, it would "*be easier*" for them to take up a leadership position – more so than a learner who came from a home where his/her self-confidence had not been developed.

P3 felt that the number one role the home environment played was that parents should be role models for their kids. He also felt that parents should teach their children certain values and emphasised that, *"If you are a busy parent or you don't have time for your family you won't be able to pick up when things are wrong in your child"*. To this question SG said that the extent to which a child was allowed to make decisions in his/her home environment would determine their perception and "*definitely influence him* [sic]".

Although no real consensus was reached as to what role a child's home environment plays, I believe that the answers given provide a basis from which to work and give some indication of the different roles a child's home environment can possibly play in the way in which he/she takes up his/her leadership role. However, I do not offer these roles as the only possibilities and acknowledge that there are many other roles a child's home environment may play.

4.9.2 History

Earlier in this thesis I discussed how the notion of leadership has changed over the last decades in South Africa (see Chapter Two). As I am interested in the perceptions of role players and how they view leadership, one of the key questions I asked parents during the interviews was: *When you think back on your own school career, what would you say are the differences and similarities in the way in which learners lead and manage their schools and have these roles changed?* In response to this question, P1 said that the roles had changed tremendously – she could not recall that learners were represented on the SGB, and so she believed that learners today have a larger say in certain aspects. To this she added, "*Learners opinions are taken more seriously today than in the past"*.

However, in contrast to this, P2 believed that learners received a lot more exposure when he was at school – they went out more and participated in more events than members of the RCL do today. To this she added that, *"children's leadership has decreased"* and that *"there aren't so many strong leaders as back in the day"*. T1 echoed the "*traditional roles*" of the RCL when she said: "*It is traditional that the RCL has to only deal with discipline in the school"*. If this is the perception of the teacher in charge of the RCL, it is no wonder that GB felt that learners do not get as much exposure today as leaders did twenty or thirty years ago.

Both P2 and P3 come from a previously disadvantaged background under the Apartheid regime. P3 emphasised this when he stated that, "*We come from different backgrounds*". He strengthened this by saying: "*My child, I don't want them to go the same route which I have taken*". He also said that the facilities at schools are a lot better than they were in the past so, *"it is a huge difference*". P3 started off by listing some obvious differences, such as that there were standards and not grades when she was at school and that the RCL were called prefects. She then elaborated on these differences by saying that prefects only used to lead on the school premises, but today, members of the RCL are expected to lead and set an example on and off the school grounds.

In response to the same question, GB said that although he himself was a prefect at school, he felt that it was a lot more democratic today and that prefects in the past, "*had no say in how*

the school was led and controlled". He elaborated by saying, *"Children are being listened to a lot more today than in my day*".

After finding out how parents felt about how the role of the RCL had changed, I was also interested in the perceptions of parents with regard to the amount of pressure learners are under, compared to twenty or thirty years ago. Three of the respondents felt that learners were under more pressure today, and two felt that they were not. Some of the reasons parents gave for believing that learners were under more pressure today included more peer pressure, advances in technology and more responsibility. To this P1 added: *"To find a balance between representing the learners who voted them in and the school's morals and rules is difficult*". Although GB believed that learners were under more pressure today, he added that he believed, "*They are also better equipped and more aware of their role in the school than some years ago".*

In contrast to this view, P3 felt that learners were not under more pressure today than some years ago. Reasons given for this view point were that they had good skills, they wanted to move forward in life, they had more experience and they received more guidance from teachers. P4 also agreed that learners had more responsibilities than twenty or thirty years ago, which also meant that the pressure on the prefects was greater then. Unlike the RCL at this school, prefects had to go out and communicate with fellow schools, something she felt added a lot to the pressure those learners felt when performing their roles.

4.9.3 Status

A number of role players felt that some learners only wanted to be on the RCL to receive the status that came with it. In this school, the chairperson and deputy-chairperson automatically receive the trophies for best leaders in the school during the prestigious prize-giving ceremony at the end of each year.

T1 said that although there were learners on the council who were motivated, "*there are a few on the council who are only there for the status they get".* T4 also emphasised this when she said that learners' leadership skills should be improved and developed on the council because, "*they often think the RCL is only about that status that you get".*

All learners and teachers indicated on the questionnaire that better discipline and academic achievements were expected from members of the RCL, which indicated to me that within the school structure, the RCL members were seen as having more status than other learners. Also, in the hostel, learners who were on the RCL had an advantage over other learners in the sense that they may study in their rooms, whereas the other learners must sit in the study room and study under supervision. So, perhaps without knowing it, other role players were giving members of the RCL a certain 'status' of being superior over other learners.

4.9.4 "Children are just children"

I would like to start this part of the data presentation with a discussion of the meeting of the RCL I observed. Here, the teacher in charge of the council led the whole meeting, although she did ask all the learners if there were any other issues they would like to raise at the end of the meeting. The meeting's main aim was to organise a big sporting event, and here she led all the decision-making. One would expect of a council with a chairperson, that the chairperson or deputy-chairperson would chair the meeting. Therefore it was clear to me from the way the meeting was conducted that the teacher in charge did not feel that the learners could themselves take care of the meeting. One would expect the teacher in charge of the RCL to simply play a mediating role and only intervene when absolutely necessary and let the learners themselves conduct their own meeting. I will draw on data to support my view here in the following paragraph.

The members of the RCL indicated in the questionnaire that they agreed or strongly agreed that the RCL was seen as an equal during meetings with other role players at the school. Only one learner did not agree with this statement, while one learner was undecided. To this question, five of the seven teachers agreed that learners should be treated as equal partners at meetings. However, in my discussion with GB and H1, both said that the representative members of the SGB would be asked to leave SGB meetings if "*sensitive topics*", such as matters pertaining to teachers, were discussed. This indicated to me that learners were not really treated as equal role players, but just seen as children who could not make a contribution towards important decisions.

There was a contradiction in the answers given by the RCL members during the questionnaire. While all the members agreed or strongly agreed that no decisions at the

school may be taken without the involvement of the RCL, in the previous question, members of the RCL found that they did not have the capacity to deal with problems in the school, and that "*all problems should be referred to a teacher*". This could be some indication that learners themselves did not believe that they had the ability or competence to make important decisions at the school.

The word "tradition" came up frequently during interviews with parents and teachers. This indicated to me that parents and teachers seemed to be clinging to the traditional view of parenthood and childhood, one which saw children as less important when it comes to the leadership roles in the school. One of the teachers also said: "Learners are not necessarily leaders; they should be taught what to do". This raises the issue of whether leadership development is about being taught 'what to do' or how to lead, or be a leader. So learners are not seen as leaders really making their own decisions, but only performing certain managerial tasks given to them by the teachers.

Questionnaire responses showed that all the teachers felt that learners should refer all problems to the teachers. Also, teachers disagreed that no decision in the school may be taken without the involvement of the RCL, which again pointed to the fact that teachers did not trust members of the RCL who were in a leadership position enough, to be able to make decisions on their own.

During my interviews with teachers, I also noticed that teachers felt that learners were "just children." T3 said that she would expect to have a more grown-up relationship with members of the RCL, because with it they would develop a sense of responsibility – something she felt was lacking. She also added that although the learners on the RCL had all the best intentions in the world, "*The school does not have the type of learner who sees authority and structure as an asset. Hence, learners elected to the RCL do not necessarily value discipline as highly as they should".*

When asked about her relationship with the RCL, T2 said that the members of the RCL respected her and always talked to her with respect. She said: "*Their attitudes are right when they talk to me".* This indicated to me that she did not see the RCL as an equal partner in the school. She expected them to respect her without any mention of the respect she has for them or that she had done anything to earn their respect.

4.10 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter were gathered through questionnaires, discussions, observations and interviews with different stakeholders as well as members of the RCL and presented in this chapter through triangulation.

In the topics presented in the interviews and questionnaire, participants offered their views from different perspectives, as they were all from different backgrounds and involved in the school in different facets. Participants often did not agree with each other on similar topics, and there was thus tension in the group's viewpoints. Through the observations I was able to verify some of the claims made during the interviews. However, in some cases the observations and claims contradicted each other. My findings point to a mixed picture of learner leadership in this school, where some role players felt that the RCL was successful and fully integrated in the leadership and management structures of the school while other role players felt that that was not the case.

Overall the notion of learner leadership that emerged is not an encouraging one. I found little evidence that learners were acknowledged as recognised leaders in the school. The data I have presented give many examples of where learner leaders are in in fact not taken seriously as partners. What remains is to present an analysis of what is 'wrong' with the RCL as an activity system, and try to account for this.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter can be seen as the destination of the research. In it I will discuss the findings, by using CHAT as an analytical framework. Here I also include a visual representation of the second generation CHAT framework, with specifics from this study placed onto the framework. I then move on to discuss the contradictions in the activity system that were surfaced during the data discussion in Chapter Four, after which contradictions are discussed with reference to the literature which was discussed in Chapter Two.

I then discuss causal mechanisms, in other words, the possible underlying reasons why things are the way they are, and argue for social justice as a possible answer to the research questions. A discussion of the current leadership situation at the school and how it promotes or fails to promote social justice then follows.

5.2 The use of CHAT as an analytical framework

According to Hatcher (2005), an activity system is a "collective labour process". It has six inter-related components which interact with each other. They are objects, subjects, artefacts, community of practice, division of labour and rules (p. 256). Second generation CHAT emphasises individual action and collective activity and because the RCL in its being is a system which consists of many individuals that then make up the council and its daily activities, CHAT is an appropriate framework and will be used to discuss my data findings. A visual representation is now given, after which I will discuss all of these study specific components:

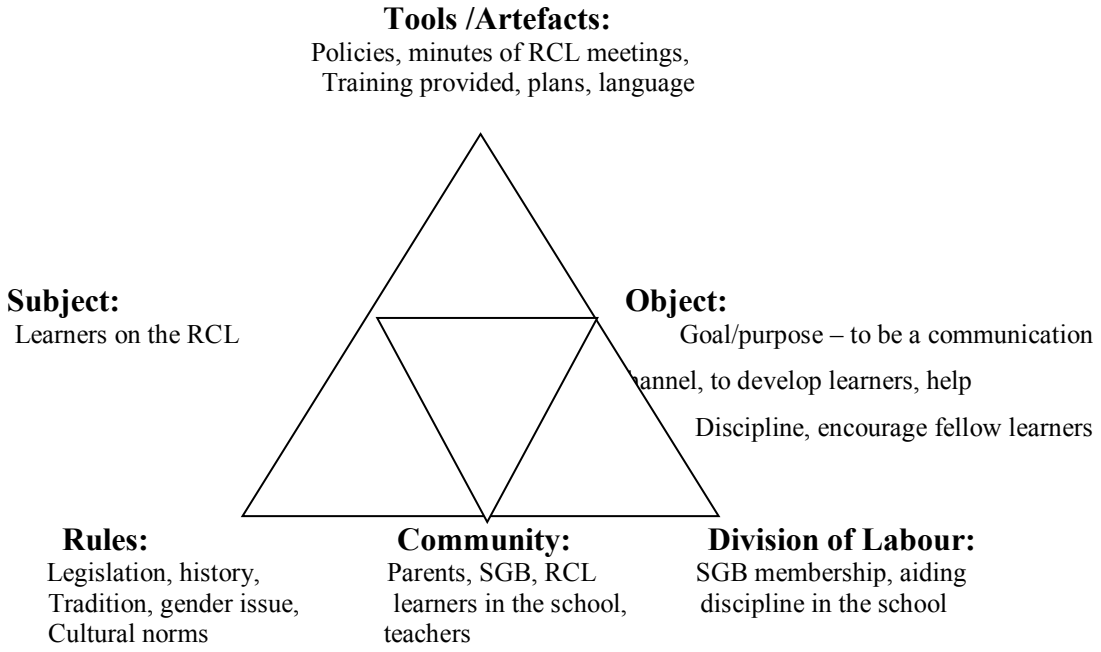

Figure 2: Adapted from Engeström's second generation Activity Theory (as cited in Engeström & Sannino, 2011)

The **tools or artefacts** include the interaction with others as well as an individual's prior knowledge, or the joint knowledge of all members who make out the object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In my research, minutes of the RCL meeting, training provided, the plans the RCL made and policies which are in place, all constituted the artefacts. When talking about tools, it is also important to look at the skills and knowledge that each individual, in this case the RCL, but also other role players, bring into the activity system. For example, a teacher who taught at another school will bring some knowledge from that school to her new school and this knowledge might be used to improve the RCL (subject) to achieve their object. Another example is when the RCL is faced with a difficult decision which they have to make, they could turn to members within the group, as well as other role players' existing knowledge to help them in making the decision.

Language is also seen as an **artefact**. It is often about what is said or not said and the way in which something is said. It is often in the interaction between members of the activity system that a lot can be seen as far as power relations go and this is often revealed through discourse

analysis. And so although this study's main focus does not fall on the discourse it would be impossible to ignore the way in which certain things were said during the interview process.

There is also interaction with the **object**, the reason why the individual or group chooses to be a part of an activity, and it is what holds the activity together (Kaptelinin, 2005; Hyysalo 2005, as cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). For my research I thus asked all role players what they thought the role of the RCL was. These factors would be the object of the RCL, that which they themselves and other role players in the school had identified as the aim of the RCL (the activity system).

In second generation CHAT, **rules** refer to the way in which actions are structured. These are often historical and are seen as a relationship between the subject and object and the subject and the community. In my study, rules included legislation, history, tradition, gender issues, and cultural norms. They are seen as a relationship between the subject and object and the subject and the community. Beliefs more often than not stem from traditional values or norms which have been passed down through generations. There is often a thought pattern which says: we do it in this way because this is the way in which it has always been done.

The **community** in my study would refer to the setting in which the action takes place, i.e. the school, as well as the RCL as a group, who all have the same object (the action being undertaken by the group) in mind. In my study, the community is the principal, members of the SGB, teachers, parents, learners and members of the RCL. This would also include the role which role players (community) thought the RCL (subject) should play in the school and what their main functions should be. An interesting issue here is the possibility of a contradiction between the activity, object and the community.

The RCL is in essence about the relationship with one's peers and other stakeholders. By putting these relationships in the place of the community on the second generation CHAT framework, I was able to look at organisational aspects with regards to the RCL, and how these learners are leading, as well as what role they played as part of a bigger organisation (the school). Included here would be the RCL's role during meetings, and the amount of input they give and the 'voice' they have during meetings.

As Spillane et al. (2004) point out, the tools or artefacts are usually a reflection of other people's experiences who have had to solve similar problems, and so these tools or artefacts would shape the way in which the RCL would interact with reality (p. 28). For example, one of the study school's neighbouring schools could have had an issue that they had to deal with. Should the study school have the same issue, they could go to the neighbouring school and ask them for advice, as they would have some kind of policy or action plan in place. These tools are created, transformed and developed during the activity itself and carry with it a specific culture – "the historical remnants from the previous human action" (Spillane, 2004, as cited in Vaeta, 2015, p. 20). The way in which schools deal with issues or problems, for example within the RCL, would be different from school to school, as all schools are different. However, it is also possible for schools to learn about similar experiences from each other.

If we look at the history of leadership practices in South Africa, as discussed in Chapter One, we can understand that parents may be unwilling to trust learners with leading their schools. Throughout history, researchers (such as Ndlovu, undated; Ndlovu, 1998; Bonner & Segal, 1998; Majeke, 1994; Pohlandt-McCormick, 1999) have shown that learners and parents have fostered resistance through 'autonomous' action by taking things into their own hands – for example, destroying schools (during the 1976 Soweto uprisings). Even now in 2016, classes are being disrupted at universities (during the fees must fall campaign). These are all an attempt by young people to want to be heard. They feel frustrated because they are not given a platform to raise their concerns and so feel that they do not have any other way in which they can make themselves heard.

Some learners may feel that they acquire status ("rules" on the CHAT framework) when they are chosen to be on the RCL. This is a notion which seems embedded in the school and in the broader South African community. Students who were on the RCL of their schools for example, get some sort of monetary endorsement from universities for further study, which indicates that universities also see these learners as somewhat 'better' than other students.

Another factor which would form part of rules on the CHAT framework, is gender roles. Here, it is important to look at the history of leaders at the study school, as this gives us a good idea about how the school views leadership. In many schools there is an indication that males are still seen as dominant and that the patriarchal system is still very much in place.

Chabaya, Symphorosa, & Newman (2007, p. 235) argue that gender stereotyping, being the remains of the patriarchal system, is one of the major reasons for the under representation of female leaders in schools. The point of gender inequality and the dominant leadership position males hold in schools is also emphasised by Coleman (1994), Peterson and Runyan (1999), Logan (1999), Davidson and Burke (1994) and Shakeshaft (1989). South African researchers such as Greyvenstein and Van der Westhuizen (1992) have also given a lot of attention to the fact that it is believed that a "woman teaches and men manage" (p. 236).

Often, there are some suggestions that even the learners at a school hold on to the notion that males are seen as dominant. But here again, culture comes into play, as in many cultures the female is seen as having to be a 'servant' to the male and as not having any power. The female should respect her husband and not say or do anything which might show her stronger side. Learners see this behaviour in their homes, and so at school, many boys do not want to respect girls, even if they are in a leadership role at school. Shah (2010) argues that it is important to understand and be informed by the different cultural belief systems as they inform educational leadership, and so in my study school, I saw how boys treated the girls in leadership positions differently from the boys in leadership positions.

My study school is an ex model-C school, and so although the community of learners in the school comes from all races, the fact that there is only one teacher of colour at this school, tells me that this school is not fully integrated into the rainbow nation which South Africa strives for. On the CHAT framework therefore, this would refer to culture (the diversity of the school).

Division of labour in second generation CHAT theory is the way in which tasks are divided within the group, for example, learners on the RCL (relationship amongst RCL members.) One would expect tasks to be divided equally amongst the RCL members, so that every learner on the council feels that he or she can make a contribution to the leadership of the school. Division of labour would also include the amount of learner involvement in the SGB and other meetings and the role the RCL plays within the greater school management and leadership structures.

It is evident from the discussion above that there will be some tension amongst these different elements. The CHAT framework refers to these tensions as contradictions. In the next

sections I will now discuss these tensions generally, with specific reference to the findings from the data gathered. I will also look at causal mechanisms and give the possible reasons for why things are the way they are.

5.3 Contradictions surfaced within activity system and causal mechanisms

Concepts are presented in a triangle, because there are tensions in activity systems – systemic contradictions which subjects experience while part of an activity – and these pressures play a part in the subject's ability to reach its object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). From my research I found tensions amongst the different participants and stakeholders and other factors which influenced the daily operations of the RCL. It was important for me to highlight these tensions, as they could be an inhibiting factor as to why the activity system (in this case the RCL) was not fulfilling its main aim (see Section 4.3).

The CHAT framework also distinguishes between primary and secondary contradictions. A primary contradiction is a contradiction which surfaces within the same components on the framework. This is a contradiction which surfaces among the community – for example, a contradiction between the members of the SGB and the teachers.

A secondary contradiction is a contradiction which arises between two different components within the activity system such as the subject and community – for example, if there is a contradiction between the RCL members (subjects) and parents (community).

5.3.1 Contradictions in the perceptions of the role of the RCL

Firstly, I discovered some secondary contradictions in the perceptions of the role of the RCL amongst different role players. This is really a significant tension, as learners on the RCL themselves were not too sure of their role. There is thus a contradiction between the subject and the object. Furthermore, different role players (community) could not reach a consensus as to what the role of the RCL was. There is thus also a primary contradiction, as there is tension between the subjects within the activity system.

As discussed in Section 4.3 of the data discussion, the main aim of the RCL as identified by the role players were:

1) To help with handling discipline in the school;

2) To be a communication channel between role players;
3) To develop learners;
4) To represent learners in decisions which have to be taken; and
5) To encourage fellow learners and play a caring role in the school.

Official guidelines published in the SASA (1996) indicated the following as the role of the RCL:

1) To build unity among learners in the school;
2) To address the needs of all the learners in the school;
3) To keep learners informed about events in the school;
4) To encourage good relationships within the school between learners and educators, and between learners and non-teaching staff;
5) To encourage good relationships within the school between educators and parents of learners; and
6) To establish, for the benefit of learners in the school, fruitful links with Student Representative Councils at other schools and with youth organisations.

From the answers I got during the data collection, it was obvious to me that learners on the RCL were not clear what the RCL's and their individual duties were. Although there are official guidelines available and the duties which the RCL should fulfil are stipulated, it was clear from my data that the RCL and role players were unaware of these guidelines. Also, some role players felt that they had duties which the RCL itself did not think should be one of its roles.

5.3.2 Contradictions in the handling of discipline in the school

From my data, I concluded that all of the participants felt that the RCL's role was to handle discipline at the school. However, data (Section 4.6.6) also indicated that disciplinary problems at the school were a major problem, which meant that there was a secondary contradiction between the subject (RCL) and the object (the fact that the subject is not fulfilling their function as far as discipline is concerned.)

A possible reason why all role players felt that discipline was an important function of the RLC might be that it had always been a part of the RCL's function. Even parents, teachers and SGB members grew up with 'prefects' which the RCL replaced, who had to keep discipline at the school. However, the disciplinary system in the school has changed in the sense that some years ago, corporal punishment was used in schools to discipline learners. However, corporal punishment was taken out of the schooling system without any real substitute 'punishment' for learners who do not obey the school rules. Therefore, it is very difficult for a member on the RCL to punish a fellow learner. This is a systemic problem, which perhaps needs to be addressed at all schools, so that there is a measure of punishment instituted for learners who do not obey school rules.

5.3.3 Contradictions in the RCL being a communication channel

Another contradiction which surfaced from the data was that, whereas all parents, teachers and the chairperson of the SGB felt that the RCL should play a key role in being the channel of communication between fellow learners and other role players, the lack of communication was seen as a constraining factor for the RCL in fulfilling their duties (Section 4.6.4). Only one learner on the council, however, felt that communication was one of the duties of the RCL. Again, this points to the fact that there is tension within the activity system because the RCL did not know what role they should be playing in school management and leadership. But even more so, they were not aware of the expectations which fellow role players had of them and the role they should be playing in managing and leading the school. These learners on the council might also feel that they did not know how to effectively communicate with the rest of the school, which would lead to frustration for RCL members.

The use of language also plays an important role in communication when it comes to the way in which role players lead and manage the school. If there is not an open channel of communication between role players in an activity system, it could hinder the subject (the RCL) from reaching their object (goal). For example, during my data collection process, the chairperson of the Governing Body was very careful about talking about a situation – discussed in Section 4.4.1 – and was very discreet about what he said. This made me raise the question of whether other teachers and parents were aware of the situation, or had this information also been withheld from them? This could cause primary contradictions in the activity system, because the community (parents, teachers and SGB) might not trust each

other, or might be talking past each other. This in turn would cause a secondary contradiction between subjects and the community because again objects were set, but role players did not really know what was expected of the RCL.

During my data discussion I also noted that RCL members were asked to leave the meeting at a certain stage when more sensitive matters were raised. This might be an indication that school management did not trust learners on the SGB and so learners would always feel that their contribution was not regarded as valuable. If they could not have a say in the more important issues at these meetings, they might feel somewhat less responsible for the leadership at their school. This in turn would once again cause secondary contradictions between the subject and community. The fact that parents and teachers on the SGB did not want to view RCL members as equal participants on the SGB is not limited to the study school, but really a systemic problem with deep cultural roots explained in more detail in Section 5.3.10.

5.3.4 Contradictions in leadership development of the RCL

The fact that learner leadership development is one of the aims of an RCL, yet no training or workshops or presentations were done to encourage learner leadership is a secondary contradiction. All members of the RCL felt that more needed to be done to encourage learners' leadership development, and T1 said during her interview (see Section 4.6.7) that learners must be taught leadership, yet these learners did not receive training during the year of the study. Again, this was a systemic problem, because firstly the school curriculum with its extra-mural programme is so full that it proves to be quite a challenge to fit in training seminars, but also at this particular school the teacher who was in charge was newly appointed and to find the time to have the training seminar was a problem. It is also a matter of prioritising time. If the development of learner leadership was important to role players, the training of learner leaders would enjoy priority at this school. This meant that the RCL members (the subject) could not reach their objective – to develop leadership skills.

5.3.5 Contradictions in decision-making and the representation of fellow learners

Division of labour in second generation CHAT theory is the way in which tasks are divided within the group, for example, learners on the RCL (relationship amongst RCL members.) One of the members of the RCL said that she found it difficult to give other members of the RCL the opportunity to also organise certain events, as she liked to be in control. Here we see primary contradictions, as there is tension within the subject.

The teacher in charge said that one of the learners on the council always organised her own personal life so that she could not be at the school during week-ends when certain duties are expected of the RCL. This resulted in tension amongst members – primary contradictions amongst the subject.

Learners' involvement in the SGB and during meetings can also be seen as division of labour. Here the task of managing the school is divided amongst members of the SGB and learners have a specific role to play on the RCL. Again, the learners' involvement on the SGB was marginalised because they were asked to leave the meetings at a certain stage and this might make the learners feel somewhat less important than the other members of the SGB. Therefore, learners might feel that they were not leading their school and did not really have much say in the way in which it was managed. This is seen as a primary contradiction, because there is tension between the members of the SGB (of which the RCL is a part).

However, there is also secondary tension between the subject and the object, as one of the objects of the RCL is to take a leading role at the school. As the RCL members on the SGB were marginalised, they could not then fulfil their objective. If we look back at South African history, learners have often felt they had to take matters into their own hands and have done so. If we look at what is happening today, where learners are taking the governance of their schools into their own hands, it is understandable that adults are reluctant to give learners more of a say in the governance of their schools. Yet because of this, learners feel that their voice is not being heard and so they take drastic action. It has become a Catch-22 situation with understandable frustrations on both sides (see Chapter One.)

5.3.6 Role players' perspectives of the RCL's contribution to the school

Some contradictions which also surfaced from the data collected were that only one of the parents and the principal could think of a positive contribution which the RCL had made to the school. One would expect that a school's leadership structures, such as the RCL, should be in a position to make a positive contribution to the school, yet in this case very few of the role players could say what that positive contribution was. Again, there are secondary contradictions, firstly between the subject (RCL) and the object (goal), but also between the community (role players) and the object (goal). Here, it would be helpful if the RCL as a committee would consult the SASA (1996) to see in which way they could fulfil the aims set out for them in this document.

5.3.7 Non-systemic tensions and the contradictions these surfaced

Differences amongst the subject (in this case the RCL members) cannot be seen as a contradiction, because there will always be differences amongst members of an organisation. These are not systemic tensions, but simply what it is to be human. However, the tension which exists between members of the RCL is worth mentioning, because in some cases it might hinder the RCL from fulfilling its role. During my interviews I found that there was tension between a member of the RCL and the chairperson of the RCL. This learner did not feel that the chairperson had the leadership ability to keep discipline at the school, and it was clear from what he wrote in his questionnaire (Section 4.6.3) that he was not happy with the appointment of this learner as the chairperson. The outcome of this could be that the learner might not give his full participation to the chairperson, who often had to provide the guidance in making a decision. This could result in the council not reaching their set objective and so from this point of view, I could argue that there was a secondary contradiction which surfaced between the subject and the object.

As mentioned, there will always be tensions amongst members of an activity system, however, these tensions can be restricted and members of the RCL can be taught how to handle these differences, for example, during a leadership camp or special talk which deals with conflict management.

5.3.8 The notion of 'culture' as uncovered in the data and contradictions surfaced

Data revealed that one of the biggest contradictions, and perhaps what I would like to focus on as the heart of this study, arose from tradition and cultural norms. During her interview the deputy-chairperson of the RCL said that she found it difficult to discipline boys in the school as they did not respect girls (Section 4.6.3). The fact that many of the boys in the school would not respect this learner because she was female likely stems from the culturally embedded belief that males are dominant to females. To me this suggested that even the learners in the school hold on to the notion that males are seen as dominant to females. This belief is rooted in their culture(s).

Learners see this behaviour in their homes, and so at school, many boys do not want to respect girls, even if they are in a leadership role at school. The above discussion is an example of a secondary contradiction between the subject and the community, but more so between the subject and rules. It is really tradition and cultural norms which have been embedded in young boys, which cause them to not respect girls, as Shah (2010) points out.

To add to this, the school has also in its 60 years of existence never had a headmaster or chairperson of the Governing Body who was not a white, Afrikaans speaking male. This indicates that the school still holds onto patriarchal norms where the white male is seen as dominant, a global phenomenon reinforced by the Apartheid regime the country upheld for nearly 50 years. Global and international trends show that the colonial marginalisation and oppression of certain groups while other groups were seen as dominant, still has impact today. As Blackmore (2010, p. 51) points out:

> How one thinks of oneself as a leader and where one belongs is framed by legal, institutional, cultural, economic and social arrangements in which one's whiteness is universal and confluent with the human conditions in which our silence is possible, because Western contemporary societies define ourselves by that which we are not.

Therefore, if role players (parents and SGB members) elect only white males into leadership positions, it is no wonder that the learners in this school also see males as having more power than females in leadership roles. The appointment of only white males in top leadership positions at this school points to a very narrow view on leadership. Consequently, the need for leadership development in this school, and perhaps in the broader environment of all

South African schools, does not necessarily have to be limited only to the members of the RCL. ***All*** role players could benefit from some kind of leadership seminar to broaden their views on leadership and to eliminate the secondary tension which is situated between communities (role players) and rules (traditional norms).

Parents, during their interviews also pointed to the fact that, *"We come from different backgrounds*" (Section 4.9.2). These different backgrounds meant that different role players all saw the role of the RCL and the way in which it has changed over the last 20 or 30 years differently. Learners are shaped by their own cultural background and belief system and will bring these beliefs into the activity system. The fact that learners come from different backgrounds, could cause secondary tension in the RCL between the subject and object, if not addressed.

5.3.9 The status of being on the RCL and the contradictions surfaced

In Section 4.9.3 I discussed what the data revealed about the status that comes with being elected onto the RCL. The fact that being a member of the RCL comes with a certain 'status' could also be a contradiction, as some learners might only want to be on the RCL for the status they receive – for example, the prizes they would get at the annual prize-giving – rather than to want to work together to improve the school. This caused tension in the group (primary contradictions) because there were learners who wanted to better the school and they were in a constant battle with those learners on the council who were only there to enhance their personal status. This could also cause secondary tension, because if there is tension within the activity system between the subjects, this may mean that the object of the activity system might not be reached.

Furthermore, tension could be caused within the school, as fellow learners might feel that a member on the council thinks that he/she is better than a learner who is not on the RCL and so a secondary contradiction between the community and the subject will surface. If fellow learners (community) do not follow the leadership that is offered to them by members of the RCL (subject) it means that the objective of the RCL (to encourage follow learners) will not be reached. This problem might stem from the fact that society often places a lot of emphasis on members of the RCL and often praises them for being an RCL member. For example, at some universities, members of the RCL receive a discount on their studies for having been a

part of the council. This shows that the way society views members of the RCL affects the way the other learners view them too.

5.3.10 The notion of 'children are just children' and the contradictions surfaced

Another contradiction which the data analysis uncovered was the notion that many adults who were interviewed believed that "*children are just children*" (Section 4.9.3) which caused secondary tension amongst role players (community), but also in the RCL itself (subject). Learners wanted to make a contribution to their school, yet, from the data gathered it was clear that they were not seen as equal participants. The cause of this tension resulted in the RCL not being able to fulfil their duties (object), but also in a primary contradiction – tension and fighting amongst learners (subjects) – as they felt frustrated with the fact that they could not make decisions and help in improving their school.

Also, the teacher in charge did not accept the learners as equal participants, as evidenced by the fact that she took charge of the meeting and did not allow the chairperson of the RCL to lead the meeting at all. This meant that there arose a secondary tension between the RCL members (subject) and the teacher in charge (community). Furthermore, minutes of the meeting (artefacts) were never presented and although the teacher in charge called the meeting with a special agenda in place, the RCL themselves did not know beforehand what would be discussed at the meeting. Secondary tensions thus surfaced between the subject and artefacts. This meant that members of the RCL could not prepare themselves for the meeting. It also meant that the teacher in charge excluded learners from making a contribution to the agenda, which to me indicated that she felt that the opinions of learners were not that important, even though she did give the RCL the opportunity to raise issues during the meeting (see Section 4.9.3 for a data discussion on this topic).

Parents and teachers felt that the RCL was not completely fulfilling their duties and that they could do more, yet they were not given the freedom to make their own decisions and were not seen as equal participants in the school. This then caused secondary tension amongst role players. This perception stems from cultural norms, for example, where it is believed that children are to be seen and not heard. It could be that teachers are against learners having a say in school governance, because historically, school governance was left to teachers and the

headmaster. This example highlights the importance of also looking at the historical background within the system. During my interviews, it was thus important for me to find out from parents how they felt that learner leadership practices in schools had changed, and almost without fail they indicated that they felt learners today have a larger role to play in the governance of their schools (see Section 4.9.2 for a full discussion). The fact that adults are reluctant to allow learners to have a more significant say in the leadership of their schools is a systemic problem which has been culturally and historically embedded in the educational history of our country.

The RCL is in essence about the relationship with one's peers and other stakeholders. I entered these relationships in the place of the community on the second generation CHAT framework. I found that although the entire organisational aspects one would expect with regards to the RCL are in place, learners are not really leading, but are merely part of an organisation. One example of this is that learners are not allowed to stay for the full duration of the SGB meeting, but are asked to leave the meeting once their points on the agenda have been covered. This indicated to me that members of the SGB did not accept learners as equal participants when it came to the important issues regarding the school. Again, this might stem back to the above discussion and cause tension amongst the subject and the community which might result in the RCL not fulfilling their goals (object).

5.3.11 Conclusion

In this section I highlighted some of the most prominent contradictions which had surfaced during the data presentation chapter (Chapter Four) and discussed these contradictions with relevance to answering my research questions.

I now discuss these contradictions with relevance to the literature chapter, in an attempt to better understand and perhaps give some suggestions why these contradictions/tensions exist between the intermediate components.

5.4 A discussion of the contradictions with reference to literature

It was important for me to have a discussion on the contradictions found during the data analysis and discussion sections and also the literature chapter (Chapter 2), as I hoped by

doing so, to better understand the findings of this research. It was also important for me to be able to look at what other writers have written on the topic and to see how similar or different my findings are. Furthermore, I also wanted to find some answers to the research questions set in the beginning of this thesis and give reasons for things being the way they are in this school, and perhaps the educational system at large.

This section is subdivided to discuss the complexities of learner leadership and findings that the study uncovered with reference to the literature on leadership. It also talks about learner leadership development. Section 5.4.3 and 5.4.4 look at adolescent leadership qualities and power as a commodity, respectively. The role of learner leaders in schools is then discussed in relation to the literature chapter.

Looking at literature on leadership has aided me in my journey and so in this section I discuss the contradictions which were surfaced during my data discussion in Section 5.3 and the literature.

5.4.1 The complexities of learner leadership

In Section 2.1 I talked about the vast amount of learner leadership research which has been conducted – Mncube, 2008; Mabovula, 2009; Phaswana, 2010; Mitra, 2006; Smyth, 2006; Mitra and Gross, 2009 – to name a few. However, I also stated there that these writers were inadequate to provide a framework for understanding the complexities of learner leadership and so I realised that it was possible that in most schools the different role players did not understand the complexities of learner leadership. I uncovered this from data gathered at the study school.

This contradiction which I uncovered, namely, that the role players did not know exactly what the role of the RCL should be, meant that the RCL found themselves busy managing, for example, by helping with discipline in lines, instead of leading by being (equal) participants in decision-making. Because the complexities of learner leadership are not understood by role players, it further meant that learners did not know what was expected of them and so they under-performed. This in turn led to other role players feeling that the RCL was not fulfilling their duties and so tension was caused as the RCL was condemned to under-performance.

In Section 2.2 of Chapter Two, I discussed the many different interpretations of leadership which exist within the field. Referring back to the contradictions which surfaced, I concluded that even within a single organisation, it was not possible for its members to come to a conclusion as to what is meant by leadership within the school. Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008, p. 6) say that leadership is there to ensure that the school achieves a vision based on values which are shared by all stakeholders, by guiding the school through the various challenges it may face. During my time spent at the study school, none of its role players could tell me what the mission or vision statements were for the RCL. Furthermore, the members of the RCL all came from different backgrounds and thus had different values. It would thus be difficult for this body of learners to find the shared vision, without all role players' input.

Contingency theories see the dependence of effective leadership on the organisational situation (Uushona, 2012, p. 14). As I went into the school, and looked at the way in which leadership was practised within this school, I found some contradictions. The fact that males are still seen as the dominant leaders in the school indicated to me that the school, like so many other schools and society at large, still holds on to traditional norms and that this would cause tension within any school, as discussed in Section 5.3.

The way in which learner leaders were seen, namely that their main function is to uphold discipline, is not benefiting the development of leaders. The situation in which learners are expected to uphold discipline, namely without a real system in place to aid these learners, further pointed to the fact that the organisational situation within schools is not benefiting the development of leaders. However, this really is a systemic failure, as the South African Schools Act makes no provision for some sort of punishment of learners who do not obey school rules. Corporal punishment was removed from schools, yet no solution was offered in its place. This means that the RCL, like so many teachers in the system, feel frustrated, because there really is nothing they can do to learners who do not behave at school.

In Section 2.4 of Chapter Two, I discussed distributed leadership an alternative to traditional conceptions. Distributed leadership can be applied in schools by encouraging learner voice in formal and informal activities, such as the RCL meeting which I observed. As discussed in Section 5.3, there are some contradictions which emerged as I analysed the data – one being

that the teacher in charge did not give learners on the council a chance to come to the meeting prepared by making an agenda known. Some other formal activities in which the RCL were involved was attending the SGB meetings, however again here the notion expressed of "*children are just children*" caused some contradictions as learners were asked to leave the meeting after a certain point on the agenda. Although learners may feel frustrated as they are not offered the opportunity to voice their concerns and really make a contribution to the leadership of their school, history has shown us that learners can and do take matters into their own hands, such as the destroying of buildings and boycotting lessons and school days. It is therefore easy to understand why adults do not want to give learners too much power.

I also discussed that what makes authentic leadership theories different from other leadership theories is its ethical and moral dimension. The argument here is that the only worthwhile leadership is that which makes a difference in people's lives – action which addresses inequity. From my study, the role players who were interviewed were not really able to say what the contribution was that the RCL was making to their school, and so if we apply the above statement, it can then not be seen as leadership which makes a difference in people's lives. Again, I have to raise the question – how many schools' leaders can really say what the contribution is that they make to their schools and do learners really understand the power they have to change things at their schools? I would like to point to the recent hair debacle which has made headlines in the country, where a black girl stood up for the rights of other black girls who were marginalised because of strict hair regulations. This one girl standing up had enough power to make teachers nationwide re-think the way in which they enforce hair regulations. This single example shows how acknowledging and claiming 'difference' can work towards social justice.

But there was little evidence of a striving for social justice in this case study. When investigating leadership practices at this school, I found that they still hold on to cultural beliefs when it comes to males being in leadership positions. The school has for example, never had a female principal. Again, it is a matter of society holding on to patriarchal views where males are seen as dominant to females and so this school is only mimicking what is witnessed in society. In order to be able to set right inequalities in schools, society needs to re-look at how they view leaders and what qualities they look for in a leader. The move towards social justice and how the current situation promotes social justice is discussed in more detail is Section 5.6 and 5.7.

5.4.2 The development of learner leadership

In Section 2.1, I referred to Whitehead's (2009, p. 847) argument that most leadership studies focus on adult leadership development with very few studies focussing on the development of learners as leaders. In my study school, one of the contradictions I surfaced was that parents and teachers overly focussed on adult leadership in this school, with not enough focus being placed on learner leadership. It was as if the adult role players did not see the RCL members as equal participants in decision-making at the school. Research shows that neglecting learners as leaders is really a systemic problem. Since learners are not adequately developed as leaders, they do not know how to react and voice their opinions. We are then faced with a situation where learners are frustrated and organise protests, such as the fees must fall campaign. Therefore, from literature it is clear that there is a tendency to focus on adult leadership and this could be the reason schools do not see the development of their learners as leaders as a priority. In turn learner leaders feel powerless – they do not know how to voice their opinions.

Bush (2007, p. 392) also emphasises the development of leaders when he perceives leadership to be about the development of people, and thus the development of the people within the organisation. To be able to distribute leadership, a leader's leadership capabilities must be built on and developed. Whitehead (2009, p. 856) says that authentic leadership "produces positive outcome[s]" and adds that it "should be a fundamental development concept in helping young people in the early stages of their leadership growth continuum". I argue for the development of learners as leaders to be made a priority from a young age and not only once a learner is selected as a leader, such as a member of the RCL. This would mean that by the time learners are elected onto the RCL, they will know what is expected of them as leaders in general, but especially as leaders in their particular school. In Section 5.3 contradictions were uncovered, because I could not identify leadership development which had taken place, and so learners were put into leadership positions, but no effort was made to grow them individually as leaders or as a group of leaders.

5.4.3 Adolescent leadership qualities

Chan (2000) and Schneider, Paul & Holcombe (1999) (see Section 2.1) state that not enough focus in leadership development is placed on the type of qualities needed in adolescent leaders. This was clear to me from my data, as the role players in the school were not able to say what qualities they thought a good leader should have and so it became evident to me that there was a need to draw on theories which incorporate the complex nature of schools as organisations, with the focus being on the complex nature of relationships within schools. Fellow learners do not know how to identify leaders and hence we could find the *wrong* kind of leader in a leadership position in schools, and perhaps even in our country's top leadership structures. The fact that no indication of qualities which make for a good leader are identified and put forward to learners means that learners who are voted onto the RCL are the popular kids at school, but not necessarily the best leaders. That in turn means that the decisions which are made by these leaders are often the popular decisions, and not necessarily the right decisions to improve the school as a whole.

In Chapter Two I spoke about the difference between leadership and management. Gronn, as cited by Coleman (2005) offers some distinction as he sees leadership as a quality that does not come with status. During my data collection as discussed in Section 4.9.3, I saw that in this school many learners only wanted to be a member of the RCL because of the status that came with it and this caused some tension within the council as discussed in Section 5.3. However, the system sees leadership as a status symbol, as learners are often awarded special merits for being part of the RCL – for example universities give RCL members money off on their tuition fees. It is then no wonder that learners see the RCL as being about status. This might also mean that learners only want to be on the RCL for the status, and not because they really want to make a positive contribution to the way in which their schools are led. The fact that society also sees being elected to the RCL as an achievement and praises these learners at glamorous prize-giving ceremonies, means that this perception will continue to be prominent in schools. Therefore, I would like to suggest that we rethink the way in which we see our learner leaders at schools.

Coleman (2005) says that management is known as the skill of running an organisation, such as planning and co-ordinating. I have come to the conclusion that in many schools the RCL are really just managers and not leaders. I offer this conclusion after observing a meeting at

the study school, where the focus was on an event being planned and not on the overall improvement of the school. When turning the lens on leadership in our country my conclusion is that perhaps many learners in schools across the country have no real example of what a true leader is.

To add to this, role players at the study school listed some roles they thought the RCL should play, such as helping with discipline in the school during line duty, which is a managerial role and not a leadership role. However, discipline is a big problem in schools across the country with teachers' hands virtually being tied up as far as punishment is concerned and so it is no surprise that teachers expect of the RCL to assist in keeping discipline in schools. From this I concluded that learners on the RCL in schools do not really comprehend the role they have to play in schools, because they are too busy trying to keep fellow learners under control, and they are made to believe that discipline is part of their leadership responsibilities.

In Section 2.3 of Chapter Two, I spoke about the traditional views of leadership. Here, Gillies (2013, p. 49) points out a tension that exists – "on the one hand leadership is possessed, and is an internal quality or characteristic; on the other hand, it is exercised and is presented by behaviours and style". This tension was also evident to me while looking at my data. On the one hand there were learners on the council who had very strong leadership qualities (see Section 4.6.2) while others were only on the council for the status they received (see Section 4.9.3). These tensions however are common in organisations, because people are different and want different things. Gillies' (2013) notion really raises the old question: Are leaders born or made?

As discussed in Chapter One, although certain leadership qualities are inherent, more can be done to further develop leadership. Again I want to argue that there are not enough structures in place to develop learners as leaders and so the potential of many of these learners are never discovered. So many schools in our country therefore, do not produce the ground-breaking leaders our country so desperately needs.

On the other hand, Gillies (2013, p. 49) says that leadership is about what we do and how we do it. Here I saw some tension within the study group, as they had to divide functions up and one respondent said that she found it difficult to allow other learners on the council to do the tasks she wanted to do. This tension within the group could have a negative effect on the

school, but also on neighbouring schools. As social media are so prominent today, a small difference in opinion can be taken out of context and cause an uproar in the country. Again I want to point to the one girl in Pretoria who stood up for the rights of black girls in the country and the effect this has had, even in schools in the Eastern Cape.

In an attempt to resolve this tension, I turn to Gorton, Aston and Snowden, (Section 2.3) as cited in Tng (2009, p. 12). They discuss contingency theories, which came about after it was recognised that no set of universal qualities could characterise a successful leader. It is not about who leads, but about how one lead. Unfortunately, learners in this country do not have many great examples of leaders and so their leadership choices are often not based on following the wisest course.

5.4.4 Power as a commodity

In Chapter Two (Section 2.1) I further discussed how Whitehead (2009, p. 847) sees power as a commodity which can be shared. Personally, I feel that one of the biggest contradictions which was uncovered by this study is captured in this view of power. It plays out in the belief that learners had to be part of the SGB because that is what policy states, and not because of a belief that they had an important role to play in the governance of the school.

In Chapter Two I argued for Foucault's view of power, that knowledge is both created by power and creates it (for a full discussion of this refer back to Chapter 2, Section 2.1). The fact that the RCL did not attend a training camp, or receive any type of leadership development, indicated to me that this school does not value the type of leadership where knowledge is valued as a powerful asset to the organisation. Again, this stems from the belief that 'children are just children' as discussed in Section 5.3.10. Adults feel that learners have no real contribution to bring to the table and that they know more than learners do and so learners do not get a fair chance to give their knowledgeable opinion. Learners are in turn so conditioned to simply believe that adults know everything, that often these learners are too scared to voice their opinion and then feel that they are not really making any contribution to the way in which the school is being led.

Furthermore, in terms of Foucault's (1984) work, it is important to look at who holds power within an organisation. Traditionally in schools, the principal and teachers hold power in the

school, as they are conventionally in charge of the learning which takes place in the classroom. Again as Section 5.3 pointed out, there is a contradiction in terms of who holds power within the organisation. Referring to the paragraph about the teacher in charge who did not afford the learners an equal opportunity to come prepared to meetings and to know what was to be discussed during the meeting – there could be a number of reasons the teacher in charge acted in this way. Perhaps she might have wanted to get the meeting over with as soon as possible because of the heavy work load teachers have. It might also be that teachers are so used to being in control and taking up the leadership roles in the classroom and the school in general. Much emphasis is being placed on leadership during one's studies as a teacher and so many teachers don't even notice that they are taking over leadership situations. However, in doing so, teachers do not afford learners the opportunity to develop their own leadership abilities.

In his book Gillies (2013) makes a strong case for Foucault who he believes has come closest to putting his finger on the nature of power as a changing, dynamic ingredient of relationships, rather than as a commodity which can be handed out or shared. As a member of the RCL is chosen democratically by peers, this might suggest that as soon as a learner becomes a member of the RCL, he or she naturally gets handed some form of power, for example, the power to be able to lead and make decisions in the school. The fact that learners can however not access this power, emphasises the fact that the relationship which exists between members of the RCL and other role payers does not allow for learners to be in a position of power. The original conception of distributed leadership as a framework allows for the negotiation of power, but when distributed leadership is turned into the recipe, power becomes commodified. And because power is about the relationship between people, power can never be handed to someone, for example, simply by being elected onto the RCL – rather, it should be claimed.

In my data discussion I listed all the constraining factors, as well as how learners felt about being a member of the RCL. Learners did not feel well equipped to take up their roles.

5.4.5 What the discourse tells us

As discussed in Chapter Three, discourse analysis has the potential to expose people's true feelings and attitudes by focusing on words and phrases they use. As cited on page 31,

looking at discourse is looking at history and seeing how the "truth" is produced through discourse (Foucault, 1984, p. 88). Although discourse analysis plays a relatively small role in this study, it does serve to underline what has already emerged in terms of the school's attitude to learner leadership. The phrase "children and just children", already referred to several times in this thesis, is one of the best examples of how discourse betrays deeply held attitudes and prejudices.

Teachers' and parents' lack of conviction in terms of crediting learners with the ability to take leadership is evident in many small and apparently insignificant items of discourse:

- a teacher admitting that "*perhaps*" learners do need leadership opportunities;

- parents insisting that learners need to be *"taught"* how to lead, and a teacher insisting that learners *"must learn leadership ..."* as if leadership were a set of skills which can be learned (in the same sense as power seen as a commodity) – this in the very same context where no leadership is in fact taking place;

- a teacher stressing the need for *"service",* by which she meant serve the school in small managerial tasks, rather than the more exalted notion of servant leadership;

- a teacher saying, in Afrikaans, *"hulle moet ook maar opleiding ontvang ..." – maar* in this context is difficult to translate, but suggests that providing training for learner leaders is a mere token gesture, not really necessary.

These examples serve to strengthen the overriding impression of a context in which there is limited understanding of leadership, and of learner leadership in particular.

5.4.6 The role of the learner leader

In my literature chapter I argued that I will, for the aim of this study, adopt the view of leadership as proposed by Dobosz and Beaty (1999) who see leadership as the ability to guide others in reaching a common goal. However, if I take this view of leadership and apply it to the study school and that which the data has uncovered, I would have to argue that this body of learners cannot really be seen as playing a leadership role, because data uncovered several

contradictions in the aims and goals of the organisation. The role players could not reach consensus on the leadership role the RCL should play in the school (see Section 5.3). I want to argue that in most schools today, the RCL as a body is *managing* rather than *leading*. Learners are only used to help with discipline and do other tasks and are not really being given the opportunity to make a contribution to their schools and the way in which it is led.

5.4.7 Conclusion

In this section I discussed how the literature discussion in Chapter Two is relevant to the contradictions which were surfaced by the data analysis in Section 5.3. I looked at the complexities of learner leadership, the development of learner leadership, adolescent leadership qualities, power as a commodity and the role of the learner leader.

In the section which now follows, I argue for a move towards social justice and discuss how the current situation promotes or fails to promote social justice.

5.5 Social justice

5.5.1 The promotion of social justice

In Section 2.5 I discussed social justice and "leadership for social justice" (Shields, 2004, p. 110) as a possible answer to the issues highlighted by the study. The driving force behind the South African Schools Act was – and continues to be – to transform the education system. This is why the Act provides for multi-stakeholder participation in management and governance which includes all role players, including learners, in the hope that schools can become centres of change. In my study I did find that role players are trying to incorporate learners more in decision-making; however, learners often do not get a say in issues which really matter; as soon as 'sensitive' issues get discussed by the SGB, learners are asked to leave the meeting. Furthermore, during meetings the teacher in charge of the RCL leads the meetings, with the RCL giving input only when asked.

I have at times suggested that it would be fair to assume that this is not only the case in the study school, but that in schools across the country, the multi-stakeholder participation in management and governance which is the aim of the SA Schools Act, is strived towards, but not really achieved. This causes tension amongst learners, as discussed in section 5.4, as they

feel frustrated and not able to contribute anything towards improving the leadership and management of their school. The frustration amongst learners and their feeling that they do not have a voice when it comes to the leadership of their schools, is not a new one, but something which stems back decades in this country.

In Section 2.5, O'Malley and Capper (2015, p. 291) are quoted as saying that schools "remain contested sites for social struggle" and that more needs to be done to benefit all learners. In the study school however, like most schools in the country, the RCL does not have a platform where they can communicate with fellow learners to find out what they want to change about the school. Therefore, even though data in Section 4.3.2 revealed that role players saw one of the roles of the RCL as having to be a communication channel between fellow learners and teachers, the SGB and parents, this school remains in a "social struggle" as the RCL does not have the platform to discuss issues with fellow learners.

Schools will always be seen as sites of social struggle, but that is not the issue I want to highlight here; I want to look at how the various elements access their 'voice' in the struggle. It is a matter of who is silenced, who is the loudest, and why. In the study school, learners were the ones silenced, and parents and teachers were able to access their 'voice', with the headmasters having the most say in the leadership of schools. Of course, there is the danger of an uprising being started when learners get together where they can encourage each other to stand up for things in the system that they are not happy with and this can cause disruptions in any school. Teachers are therefore, perhaps understandably so, against an open platform of communication between the RCL and fellow learners. Therefore, the move towards social justice in schools is evident in that role players realise that learners must have more say in school governance, yet role players are also reluctant to set up this platform of open communication, out of fear of a riot or other conflict arising from it. And so the move towards social justice is really only there in the sense of tokenism and not put into practice.

O'Malley and Capper (2015, p. 291) highlight the fact that one of the biggest problems with leadership theories that aim to bring social justice into leadership at school level is the fact that social justice is only recognised by the margins that it sets, instead of looking at the problem within its context. This research looked at leadership development of an RCL in the school context, as social justice as a leadership theory suggests one should do (refer to Section 5.4 for a discussion on how the lack of leadership development can cause tension

amongst learners on the RCL). Furthermore, the leadership style that is followed in this school strives to promote social justice, in that the role players realise that the RCL should play an equal part in decision-making in the school, yet in reality the RCL is still very marginalised when it comes to the amount of influence they have at meetings.

Even though role players in schools across the country know that from the SASA it is expected of them to see learners as equal participants in school management, adults are still culturally inclined to see learners as just children, and to view them as less experienced with perhaps not much to contribute. It stands to reason then that every school needs to look at its leadership situation and judge what needs to be done to break down the traditional values many hold about children, in order to make them worthy participants when it comes to making decisions in our schools.

In Section 4.3.2, I discussed Shields' (2004) argument that transformative leadership could provide opportunities for learners to learn and lead in a school environment which is socially just and democratic. This school has provided no formal platform for the learners on the RCL to learn more about the leadership role which they are expected to play in the school. This might be because of time constraints. The academic year is so full and extra-mural activities take up a lot of time, and so it is understandable that it would be difficult to find the time to organise leadership development. However, I do feel that schools should see the positive contribution which learners could have on the school, and provide them with the necessary training, guidance and space to do so.

On the other hand, the election of the RCL was done democratically in the study school as would be the case in most schools in the country, as this is what is stipulated in the SASA. Therefore, on the surface it does seem that the RCL are involved in decision-making, but as mentioned before, they are marginalised in the amount of say they have. Adopting a transformative leadership orientation at all schools would help to create a space in which the RCL can be more democratically involved in decision-making which would in turn help to create a school which is more socially just. The fact that the RCL at the study school have avenues in which they can and are expected to participate in a democratic way, for example, at the RCL and SGB meetings, it would seem on the surface that they have a part to play in the decision-making at the school. Yet, even in these meetings the RCL are marginalised and

nearly excluded and as discussed in Section 5.4, this causes tension within the activity system and so this situation does not promote social justice.

The question therefore remains - *What can be and must be done to promote social justice through learner leadership?* We have to look back at why it is that learners in schools are marginalised, for example during meetings. Perhaps one reason here could be that adults do not think that learners have a worthy contribution to make to their schools, because they are inexperienced. The cultural perception of children seems to be the underlying cause of why schools struggle to promote social justice as a way to develop learner voice in schools.

For Shields (2004) (see Section 4.3.2) the key ingredients of transformative leadership are dialogue and relationships. Foucault, however, argues that power is a changing, dynamic ingredient of relationships, rather than a commodity which can be handed out or shared. Power resides in the situation, the context of the RCL. My research found that there were some great opportunities for dialogue between different role players, for example, the fact that the headmaster had an 'open door policy', that learners also felt comfortable enough to raise issues during an SGB meeting, and that the teacher in charge of the RCL did go around the room after the meeting to give all learners the opportunity to raise any issues they felt needed to be discussed. However, more needs to be done to create opportunities for dialogue between the RCL and fellow learners if any school wants to embrace transformative leadership as a form of social justice. Also, teachers and parents alike should learn to see learners and the relationship they have with them as important in improving the school. Again, this stems from the cultural belief that adults know best what is good for children, and so often what learners want and put forward when it comes to changes at their school, does not seem important.

I also found that there were good relationships between the RCL and teachers and the RCL and the principal and the RCL and members of the SGB. However, relationships within the council amongst its members needed to be worked on to promote social justice. Again, I want to emphasise here that differences in opinion amongst members of an organisation are very common, however, I do feel that if a leadership camp – in which each member of the organisation gets taught what his or her role within the council is – was held every year, there would be better relationships which would perhaps promote social justice at the school. Therefore, my suggestion is once again that the development and training of learners as

leaders is an important aspect for any school, and that in these sessions, learners will learn valuable lessons which they will use later in life. Some of these skills might include how to work together with people from different backgrounds and how to deal with tensions within an organisation. These are important if we want to see a change in the way in which we think about leadership in this country, and if we want to see a change in the way in which the country is being led.

With regards to distributed leadership, Lumby (2013) raises the important question of power in organisations, arguing that leadership thinking typically ignores the fact that power is present in every relationship (Gillies, 2013) and that it is not a "thing" that can be distributed, rather a relationship that needs to be negotiated (see Section 5.4.4). Looking at learner leadership in this school, it would be fair to say that the role players in the school do their best to negotiate power. For example, in a SGB meeting, it is the chairperson who usually holds the most power; in a teachers' meeting, it is the principal who holds the most power and in the RCL meeting, it is often the teacher in charge who holds the most power. This of course highlights the problem that the learners on the RCL often face – they do not really have power in any meeting or situation. Feeling that they do not have a voice in school governance at all, again might leave them frustrated and learner leaders are apt to conclude that the school is not being managed in a socially just way at all.

With reference to relationships within an organisation, contemporary approaches such as transformative leadership and distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) also emphasise the importance of leadership as a process – rather than a phenomenon – where relationships among leaders, followers and the context are crucial. This research project engaged in dialogue with the research participants, and in doing so, hoped to have strengthened the voice of the RCL. I hope to, by releasing the findings of this research project to the school, make the school more aware of social justice, and perhaps see this as a possible answer. But more than that, my hope is that other schools will draw from this research experience and that the research will make schools think about learner leadership development and the development of learner voice.

In this section I argued that more needs to be done to promote leadership for social justice. This might be an answer to the systemic problems in the study school – highlighted in the

contradictions which were discussed in Section 5.4 – but more so in schools across the country.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the findings from the data, by using CHAT as an analytical framework. I further pointed out contradictions which were surfaced during data collection and applied them to the framework. The main contradiction which surfaced was the cultural historical aspect, which proved to be the heart of this research. I also discussed causal mechanisms and aimed at giving some possible reasons for why things are the way they are.

Findings were then discussed by bringing them in line with what literature on the topic of leadership, and specifically learner leadership says about the findings. I then argued for a movement towards social justice and discussed how the current situation in learner leadership in schools, not limited to the study school, promotes, but also fails to promote social justice to a large extent.

What now follows is the final chapter of this research. Here I summarise the findings from the research and look at some suggestions to improve the current situation of learner leadership in this particular school, and hope that findings from this research can be applied to other schools for better learner leadership in schools.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the research, the 'destination' of the research journey. Here the reader can expect to find a short explanation of the findings, without fully repeating what has been explained in Chapter Five. The significance of this study and the contribution it hopes to make in research, particularly in the field of education, then follows.

I am, as a researcher, not oblivious of the limitations of this research and so in Section 6.4 these are addressed. This research would be of little value if I did not make some recommendations for practice to see learner voice and learner leadership improve. I give some suggestions in Section 5.5 which I hope will not only benefit learner leadership practices at the study school, but schools across the country.

This chapter then offers the reader some suggestions for further research which I hope other researchers will take to heart before concluding.

6.2 Research goals

The aim of the study was to investigate the complex factors which influence learner leadership development in a Learner Representative Council in a public school in the Eastern Cape. The study focussed on organisational factors, with the goal being to identify how schools promote or inhibit learner leadership. It also explored the underlying reasons for these phenomena.

To address this goal, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- How is the notion of learner leadership viewed and understood by the RCL and the school?
- What skills and competencies are learner leaders required to acquire?
- What is the role that the learners on the council play in schools? How does the RCL function?

- How does the school view the RCL's role and function?
- What are the enabling and constraining factors in leadership development on the RCL?
- What are the underlying causes of attitudes towards learner leadership surfaced by the study?

6.3 Summary of research findings

Falk and Guenther (2006, p. 3) suggest that there may be a link between the qualitative methods a researcher uses and the reader's experience and so this might be the natural basis for generalisation. Therefore, even though as a researcher I cannot claim generalisability, the reader might generalise findings from this research to suit his/her own situation, provided the case has been richly described and the underlying causes have been plausibly put forward – something I feel I have accomplished in my study.

More importantly though, drawing on critical realism as underlabourer compels me to perform this final step in the data analysis process, that of retroduction (see page 27). If the researcher has been successful in identifying causal mechanisms that have given rise to current circumstances, it is possible to suggest broader relevance than might be expected in a case study. This is because the situation of the phenomenon in question – in this case learner leadership – is driven by *systemic* problems rather than contextualised ones. For that reason, in cases where there are similarities in social conditions and culture between the study school and other schools, the findings from this research may be helpful in addressing the situation of learner leadership beyond the confines of this case.

Hence this chapter presents a brief overview of the main findings, followed by the retroductive step of surfacing causal mechanisms of the current situation.

6.3.1 How is learner leadership viewed and understood by the RCL and the school?

One of the questions which arose from the data gathered was whether or not role players could define the difference between leadership and management, and whether or not learners on the RCL are in fact leading or only managing. Data found that all role players felt that the

main aim of the RCL was to help in handling discipline issues at the school. This is in fact rather a managerial task than a leadership role.

Role players also indicated that learner leaders at this school should be involved in taking decisions at this school, yet from data gathered (see Section 4.3.4), it was clear that teachers and role players were silencing learners and learners did not use their voice and exercise power in their relationships with other role players in the decision-making process. The reason for this as discussed in Chapter Five could be that adults felt threatened by learners due to historical events in South Africa, for example the Soweto uprisings. In turn learners felt frustrated as they do not have a voice and so even though they are involved in leadership roles at the school, they feel marginalised.

In my data chapter I made a distinction between learners on the RCL, teachers and parents when analysing the views on learner leadership. When looking at the notion of leadership, one of the greatest questions is always – are leaders born or made. This research has come to the conclusion based on data analysis that leaders are made and not born. This finding links up with earlier situational theories, where it is believed that the leader will step to the foreground and take up a leadership role based on the situation in which they find themselves; that every person will react differently in different situations, but also that a leader will develop as a leader in the differing situations. There is also a link here with distributed leadership as a theory, where the belief is that 'power' is distributed amongst different role players in a leadership situation and that leadership is developed when distributing leadership in any situation.

All learners on the council felt that they 'got something' from being on the council – such as learning communication skills – and that being on the RCL is the motivation for learners "*to always do the right thing*", as expressed by one learner leader. This indicated that they have developed as leaders on the council.

Also, all parents on the council felt that the RCL is working, with one of the reasons given for the importance of the RCL being that they can cross the communication bridge between different races. Parents felt that the RCL is the place where learners get taught to work together with people from all spheres of life and from different cultures. Again, the emphasis is on how learners get developed as leaders on the council. One parent were so positive about

the notion of learner leadership in this school that he said that learners should be allowed to make their own decisions with regards to the management of their school, yet in reality the learners do not get the opportunity to make decisions. This could perhaps indicate that the parent felt that the RCL learners are already born leaders, and that they can be trusted with the decision-making at the school. However, the fact that this is not happening indicates that perhaps more development of leadership abilities is necessary – thus inferring that leaders are made.

The answers of parents who were interviewed, also all indicated that leaders are made and not born, with some of the responses being: "*They must also learn leadership; it is something which has to be taught"* and "*I would love to see them develop more*".

6.3.2 What skills and competencies are learner leaders required to acquire?

Data indicated that the development of learners' leadership abilities should be one of the main functions of the council, yet at this school there was no evidence of the deliberate development of learner leadership, such as seminars or leadership camps. Furthermore, data revealed that the RCL should have the skills and competencies to give input into the activities offered by the school. Here, a learner did indicate that what she enjoys about being on the council is that she gets to have an input into what happens at the school.

A learner on the RCL is also expected to have good communication skills to be able to be the voice of fellow learners at platforms such as SGB meetings, yet communication skills are not deliberately developed on the council. However, L2 during the data gathering process, did indicate that she has learned communication skills by being on the council, but did not elaborate on how these were obtained.

Learners felt that members of the RCL should be strong academically, however, of the ten learners on the council, only two learners are in fact in the top five of their grade academically, which indicated that learners who vote for the RCL do not see academic achievement as an important factor when electing the RCL. It is also expected of learners on the council to follow the school rules at all times and to not be a disciplinary problem in class. And lastly, from the data it was also expected that learners on the RCL should be involved in their communities.

6.3.3 What role do learners on the RCL play in schools? How does the RCL function?

Role players also felt that the RCL should help in handling the discipline at the school, yet in Section 4.4.2, one of the respondents indicated that she did not feel that the school was functioning to the best of its ability, because learners in the school do not respect teachers enough to be disciplined by them. As discussed in Chapter Five, this contradiction might be the result of a systemic problem which arose when corporal punishment was removed in schools, with no replacement in its place and so teachers and members of the RCL feel frustrated because there is no punishment they can offer to learners who do not obey the school's rules.

Other than the RCL being a communication link between fellow learners and other role players, role players also felt that they should have a say in the decision-making processes at their school. Furthermore, role players felt that fellow learners should be cared for and encouraged by the RCL.

Role players moreover felt that learners on the council should get from it the opportunity to be developed as leaders, but as discussed above there was no concrete evidence of the development of these learners as leaders at this school. This caused a contradiction within the activity system as discussed in Chapter Five. A possible reason for the fact that leadership development was not a priority at this school might have been the time constraints that most role players experienced.

6.3.4 How does the school view the RCL's role and function?

One of the key questions I wanted to answer during the data gathering process was how the school views the RCL's role and function. Some measurements of a successful school and particularly the role the RCL plays in it were suggested in Section 4.4.1, however, as a researcher I was interested in what the role players thought the contribution was that the RCL had made in their school.

Although all role players felt that the RCL has made a positive contribution to this school, with the exception of one respondent, they could not indicate to me what the positive

contributions were that the RCL had made. And so, as a researcher, the conclusion I reached was that the RCL was so busy with managerial duties, such as helping at sports events and discipline in lines, that very little attention was given to leadership duties, which would of course contribute to the overall improvement of the school. But furthermore, the lack of leadership and leadership development in the school made the RCL 'invisible' so that the RCL played no major role in the leadership structures of the school.

6.3.5 What are the enabling and constraining factors in leadership development on the RCL?

From the data I gathered, the factors which enabled the RCL to function optimally in this school included:

1) The support that the RCL receives from other role players;
2) Good communication between the RCL and other role players;
3) The development of leadership skills.

Role players indicated the following factors as having a constraining influence on the functioning of the RCL at the school:

1) Members of the council felt intimidated by adults during the decision-making process and so as learners the RCL did not feel that they could give an opinion during meetings, for example;
2) The lack of opportunities for members of the RCL to address fellow learners, to have a platform where they could voice their opinions, and to further develop themselves as leaders;
3) The personality type of the learner being elected onto the council. Here the emphasis was placed on a learner on the council who has an assertive personality who it was thought would perform better as a leader;
4) Negative attitudes from fellow learners;
5) Lack of communication;
6) Social factors such as home environment, teenage pregnancy and drugs;
7) The lack of discipline in general; and
8) A shortage of leadership development and the need thereof.

6.3.6 What are the underlying causes of attitudes towards learner leadership surfaced by the study?

The findings of this study revealed that the RCL is functioning in this school, but that little opportunity is provided for learner leadership development. One of the most significant challenges identified in this study was the traditional and conservative views of leadership by teachers and other role players in the management of the school.

The cultural background of members who are a part of the activity system plays a big role when it comes to the attitudes role players hold with regards to leadership. These cultural backgrounds are mostly shaped from a young age in the home environment in which a child grows up. Data revealed that a child's home environment played an important role in how he/she sees the notion of leadership as discussed in Section 4.9.1. Although no consensus could be reached about how great the influence is that the home environment has on how learners decides to fulfil their leadership duties, these differences in opinions were discussed. The conclusion was reached that there will always be differences of opinion; however, if dealt with correctly these differences can be used to benefit the activity system.

Throughout this research project – significantly in Chapter One and Chapter Two –emphasis was placed on how the notion of learner leadership has changed over time in South Africa. Parents listed some of the differences with regard to learner leadership in comparison to their own time at school. Two of these were that they felt that learners had a lot more responsibility these days and also believed that learners had more say in the way in which their school was governed. These opinions are relative to the individual parent's own experience while growing up, but also in their experience of working with the RCL. However, in Chapter Five where contradictions were discussed, we saw that this is in fact not the case and that perhaps from the outside it might look like learners have more say. This might be because the SASA expects learners to have a democratic right in the management of their school, but in reality this is not the case.

The notion of *'children are just children'* as discussed in Section 4.9.3, links up with the above summary of the role history plays in leadership perspectives. This study found that learners are still being marginalised and that learners are not afforded an opportunity to take decisions regarding their school on an equal basis with other role players. The result of this is

that learners feel frustrated and this frustration causes tension in the activity system. Again, this belief can be traced back to a time in South Africa's history where learners took matters into their own hands, and so parents and teachers do not treat learners with enough respect to afford them the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes at their schools.

These attitudes to learners may well stem from the fact that education in South Africa had been controlled by an apartheid government for such a long time. The National Party built its political and educational approach on Christian National Education (CNE), and fundamental pedagogics (Hoadley, 2011). Combined, these approaches held positions on the child as ultimately malleable, virtually a blank slate on which adults could write. Furthermore, children were seen as fundamentally sinful, and therefore always requiring teaching, disciplining and string guidance (Hoadley, 2011, p. 140). These philosophies were so entrenched in every aspect of church and school that it is feasible to suggest that their effects could still be evident more than two decades after the demise of apartheid.

A second equally pervasive causal mechanism may be identified in traditional, conservative attitudes to leadership. This was evident in many symptoms, one being the school's largely managerial view of what should be a creative and inspirational phenomenon. Another was the role that status was seen to play in learners' understanding of leadership. From data it was clear that learners on the council enjoyed a certain amount of status and were aware of it. This is again a systemic problem, reinforced by practices such as learners who were members of the RCL receiving a certain discount off their tertiary tuition. Other role players therefore also saw the election onto the RCL as a status symbol. This attitude flies in the face of current, post-heroic views of leadership, where individual status and glory are largely irrelevant.

6.4 Significance of this study

The findings from this research show that there is potential for further research on learner leadership structures and the notion of learner voice in South African schools. As a teacher who teaches many of the senior learners in the school (Grades 10 - 12) I often hear learners voicing their frustrations, yet I wonder to what extent these learners' voices and opinions are being heard. I wanted to better understand the structures which are in place for learners to give their input to the leadership and management of their school and to find out how other

role players view the contributions which these learners make on the council. I have now gained greater insight into the activity system of the RCL and how it operates in schools and what could be done to promote learner voice in schools.

Perhaps the biggest contribution that this study makes is the fact that it combines CHAT and critical realism in leadership research. This is something which has rarely been done, and I could find only one example (Knott Craig, 2016). For this reason the model of research used in this thesis could be used as an example for other researchers who wish to use CHAT and critical realism in their research. I believe it presents challenges of a theoretical and methodological nature that could be taken up by other researchers.

My chief hope is that the findings from this research will guide role players at schools in South Africa to develop a platform where the RCL can better serve their fellow learners, and that schools will become environments where the importance of the learner as an equal participant in decision-making at schools will be realised.

6.5 Limitations of this study

A limitation of this study is that findings were generated from a single case study using a qualitative research framework. The research was for a Master's degree which meant that the sample size was limited as the researcher only conducted research involving a few people.

A second limitation is that the study was conducted at only one school in the Eastern Cape which suggests that findings cannot be generalised (Falk & Guenther, 2006), although I did argue earlier that there are some conditions in which case findings might be generalised (see Section 6.2). Therefore, although I cannot as the researcher claim generalisability, the reader may claim generalisability if there is a link with his/her experience.

Thirdly, my 'positionality' as a researcher as discussed in Chapter One suggests that there might have been bias on my part. There was also no guarantee that my involvement in the study school did not influence the responses from the research participants. Working against this threat I was careful to follow ethical procedures, including keeping respondents fully informed of the purpose of the study, guaranteeing the right to withdraw, and most importantly, working hard to ground my findings in sound data.

Furthermore, my research focused only on the perceptions of role players on the RCL's role in the school with the aim to promote learner voice; it did not explore teacher leadership in relation to the RCL, media influence on the RCL the way learners lead and how these learners have grown by the end of their RCL career. These limitations were also due to the necessarily limited scope of the study.

6.6 Recommendation for practice

This study revealed that while there is an RCL in place at the study school, the learners on the council themselves as well as other role players do not know what is expected of the RCL. Thus, there were contradictions within the activity system which prevented the subject from reaching its object. The study also found that learners in the school were really only fulfilling managerial tasks and not taking up a leadership role at the school.

My suggestion is that all role players should get together and discuss what it is they feel falls within the job description (rules) of the RCL. These rules should then be used to develop the objectives for the RCL. These rules should also be used by other role players to monitor the leadership activities in which the RCL partake. Role players at the school should also acknowledge these learners as equal participants when it comes to making decisions which have to be taken at this school.

The RCL plays an important role in the improvement of their school, and principals should ensure that a support mechanism is in place to create the best possible environment for these learners to lead their school. Also, although the South African Schools Act provides the framework for the setting up of a RCL council, the schools themselves should take the responsibility to stipulate conditions under which the council will function.

The RCL should also have meeting schedules, an action plan and aims and objectives agreed on by all role players. Leadership tasks should be distributed amongst all role players, but particular attention should be given to incorporate the RCL in more leadership tasks and not only to hand the members managerial tasks. Furthermore, an action plan should be put in place to develop these learners as leaders and to teach them skills such as group work, how to handle tension and how to address problems.

My suggestion is that leadership development seminars, camps, workshops or guest speakers that could aid in the development of leadership at this school, be made a priority. Also, I think that continuous leadership training from a young age, for all learners in the school, should be encouraged to ensure that learners who get chosen onto the RCL in their Grade 11 and 12 year are ready to take up the challenge of leading their school.
For this to happen, there needs to be a mind-set change from all role players and the South African society at large to accept learners as equal participants in school leadership, and to prioritise the training and development of leaders. Clearly there is no quick fix for this problem, but processes need to be in place to encourage debate, political and moral engagement,

I also recommend that schools should have a platform where all role players can come together and share their views and opinions. This could be specifically beneficial for members of the RCL if they were to be given the opportunity to meet with fellow learners. It is also suggested that members of the RCL should be involved in more of the decision-making processes at their schools.

In general, the change required is a cultural one. Any practices engaged upon need to become entrenched.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Learner leadership, learner voice and the RCL in schools are some of the many under-researched areas in South African schools. More vigorous research is needed to grow this body of research in educational leadership. It is for this reason that I suggest that future South African researchers and scholars conduct more comprehensive and large scale studies involving as many different schools in as many provinces as possible. A comprehensive study has the potential to unlock more information about learner leadership practises in schools which would strengthen learner voice, especially in the RCL of schools in general.

This study was conducted in one public combined school in the Eastern Cape. Future research might investigate the RCL in secondary and private schools to further explore learners as leaders at schools. It might also be possible to do a comparative study between

learner leadership structures in place in the different schools and how these strengthen learner voice.

6.8 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the notion of learner leadership and learner voice in schools. This study found that while all the structures are in place as stipulated by the South African Schools Act, RCLs are in fact not functioning as an extension of the schools' leadership structures. In fact they are merely fulfilling managerial duties, such as aiding teachers with discipline in the school and not really leading per se.

The shortcomings in learner leadership as uncovered by this study are a systemic problem where the historical remains from the past hinder the development of learner voice at schools.

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Appendix A: Letter from Supervisor

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
E-mail: education@ru.ac.za

22 February 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Monica Petro Strydom, student number 15S2694, is a registered Master's student in the Education Faculty of Rhodes University. She is investigating learner leadership in a public school in Grahamstown under my supervision.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your permission and support. Monica will need access to the principal, teachers, parents and learners of the school she has selected, and also to documents where this is possible. She plans to conduct several interviews and observations.

This is an important area for research in South Africa, where the notion of learner leadership, provided for by government policy, is a fairly recent phenomenon. Monica has the ability to pinpoint some of the serious problems that prevent the wholesome development of RCLs, and also to identity the system's strengths.

Thank you in anticipation for your support. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht

Supervisor

Appendix B: Letter of consent

Enquiries: M.P. Strydom
Email: strydom.monica@yahoo.com

12 Sandawana
West Beach Road
Port Alfred

Dear Mr/Ms ……..

Request for permission for your child to be part of a research study

My name is Monica Strydom, I am a Masters student at the Education department in the field of leadership and management at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. Part of my studies requires that I do a research project. My research topic is: **An investigation into the perception of learner leaders in a school in the Eastern Cape.** I hereby send out an invitation and request for permission for…… to participate in a research study which will be conducted at your child's school. Please take note that this is not an evaluation of your child's achievements or progress. I promise anonymity of your child throughout this study and your child will be free to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative repercussions for him/her.

It is against this background that I humbly request you and invite you to allow your child to partake in this research project. Please feel free to contact me should you wish to require any other information.

Regards

……
Monica Strydom (researcher)

Declaration

I, …….. (Full names of parent/guardian) hereby declare that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the study. I give permission for …….. (Learner's name and surname) to take part in this research project. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child at any time during the study.

…….
……
Signature: Parent/Guardian Date

Appendix C: Interviews

Interview questions to the chairperson of the SGB and parents with learners in the study school

1.) In your opinion what is the role of the RCL?
2.) In your experience, do you think that the learners on the RCL fulfil their role when it comes to the leadership and management of the school? Why/ Why not?
3.) In your opinion, what is the role that a child's home environment plays in the way in which he/she chooses to fulfil his/her leadership role?
4.) If you were to think back on your own school career, what would you say are the differences and similarities in the way in which learners lead and manage their schools? Have these roles changed in your opinion?
5.) What would you say are the enabling and constraining factors that learners on the RCL have to deal with?
6.) Do you think that learners are under more pressure today when it comes to the leadership roles they have to fulfil than 20/30 years ago? Why/ why not?
7.) How can learner involvement in the school's management structures be improved?
8.) Can you think of any contributions or achievements that the RCL have achieved that has led to the overall improvement of the school this year?
9.) Do you think that the RCL is working/ that they are necessary in the school? Why/ Why not?
10.) When you think of the RCL of your child's school, are you in general more positive or negative about the committee's role and function in the school? Please elaborate on this.

Interview questions to teachers at the study school

1.) In your opinion what is the function of the RCL?
2.) How do learners become part of the RCL?
3.) What is your experience of the RCL when you work with them?
4.) What do you think is the main role that the RCL fulfils in this school?
5.) In your experience, do you think that learners on the RCL fulfil their role of leadership and management in the school? Please motivate your answer.
6.) What would you say are the biggest constraining factors learners on the RCL face?
7.) How can learner involvement in the schools management structures be improved?
8.) As a teacher, how is your relationship with learners on the RCL?
9.) Can you think of any contributions or achievements that the RCL accomplished that lead to the overall improvement of the school thus far?
10.) Do you think that the RCL is working/ that they are important in the school? Why or why not?

Interview questions to learners on the RCL

1.) Please explain the role of the RCL to me?
2.) How frequently do meetings between the RCL and other role players, for example teachers, the SGB and parents take place?
3.) Which issues are discussed the most during meetings?
4.) What are some of the other issues you feel should be discussed but where the RCL are not currently being involved in and why do you feel that you should have a say in these matters?
5.) Which problems and constraints are you experiencing when you are fulfilling your role as a member of the RCL?
6.) Give suggestions as to how these problems can be addressed.
7.) Do you feel that you gain something from being on the RCL? Please elaborate on this.
8.) What motivates you and what do you enjoy most about being involved with the leadership and management of your school?
9.) Do you feel that the school functions to the best of its ability? Why or why not?

10.) What would you like to see change in the way in which the school is being managed and lead, if anything?

Appendix D: Observation Schedule

Activity	Person/s in charge	Person/s who speak most of the time	Person/s who do not say a lot	What is the aim of the activity?	Was the aim reached?

Appendix E: Questionnaire

Questionnaire administered to teachers and members of the RCL

The aim of this questionnaire is to aid in an investigation in how leadership is being promoted on the RCL and to identify the role that learners play on the RCL.

The research will focus on one combined school in the Makana municipality.

You are kindly requested to complete the following questionnaire by giving your honest opinion. Please do so by writing in the space provided. All information provided will only be used for this research project and will be treated as confidential.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 indicates that you strongly agree and 1 indicates that you do not agree at all, indicate to which degree you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key 5 – Strongly agree; 4 –Agree; 3 – Indecisive;

2 – Do not agree; 1 – Do not agree at all

Nr.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	The RCL is allowed to make their own decisions with regards to the functions which they want to organise.					
2	Learners on the RCL get adequate training in leadership.					
3	The communication channels between the RCL, fellow pupils, parents, teachers and the SGB function well.					
4	The RCL can talk to the principal or other role players at any time if they have suggestions.					
5	Learners should be able to give input into the daily school programme.					
6	In meetings between the RCL and other role players the RCL are being seen as equal participants.					
7	There are good relationships between the RCL, parents,					

	teachers and SGB members.					
8	The RCL should motivate and encourage fellow pupils.					
9	The RCL should always refer problems experienced by fellow learners to teachers.					
10	No decision in the school should be taken without the involvement of the RCL.					
11	A learner committee must be in control of extra-mural activities.					
12	Learners must be given the opportunity to have input in the type of cultural and sport activities offered by the school.					
13	The RCL must be allowed to punish fellow learners who do not partake in extra-mural activities or who come to practices or rehearsals late.					
14	The RCL is just as responsible for the overall discipline of the school as teachers are.					
15	A higher level of discipline and academic achievement is expected of a learner of the RCL than from other learners in the school.					
16	The RCL gets enough support from teachers and other role players who see them as equal participants in the leadership and management of the school.					
17	The development of learners as leaders is a high priority of the RCL.					
18	More can be done to develop learner leadership at this school.					
19	The RCL functions as an important body when it comes to big decisions which have to be taken at the school.					
20	The RCL makes a positive contribution in this school.					

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your contribution to and interest in this study is greatly appreciated.