LEARNING TO LEAD: A CASE STUDY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AND HONOURS STUDENT RESEARCHERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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By

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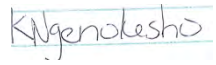
Declaration of Originality

I, **Katrina S. Ngenokesho,** hereby declare that this thesis is my work in my own words and it has not been submitted for any degree in any other university. Where I have drawn on the words and ideas of others, these have been acknowledged by using references according to the Rhodes University Education Department Guide of referencing.



February 2025

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Signature **Date**

Acknowledgement

"They are like trees growing beside a stream, trees that produce fruit in season and always have leaves. Those people succeed in everything they do." – Psalm 1:3. I am deeply grateful to God for His unwavering guidance, strength and blessings throughout my academic journey. This milestone would not have been possible without His grace. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the many individuals who have supported and inspired me along this journey:

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To my children, Petrus Kemanya, Hilma Ndinelago, Hendrina Ndilimeke and Trina Tangi Shivute, you are my constant inspiration and the driving force behind this accomplishment. This journey has been motivated by my desire to create a brighter future for you and to exemplify the values of perseverance and hard work.

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Dedication

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Abstract

Learner leadership development amongst primary school learners in the Southern African context is restricted. The Namibian Education Act No. 16 of 2001 made provision for leadership opportunities for secondary school learners through formalised structures such as the Learners' Representative Council (LRC) and the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 mandated that secondary school learners, who were members of the Representative Council for Learners, should be part of school governance through participation in school governing bodies. These policies were silent on learner leadership of primary school learners. During 2013 – 2019, Namibian and South African Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours Educational Leadership and Management students were involved in developing learner leadership through the establishment of after-school clubs mostly (86 out of 111) in secondary schools and minority (25 out of 111) in primary schools. Against this backdrop, this qualitative case study explored the leadership potential of primary school learners, examined the contribution of a leadership club intervention programme to their leadership development, and considered the leadership learning experienced by the student researchers as a result of their involvement in these clubs. The study was underpinned by democratic leadership and located within the interpretive paradigm. Data generated used document analysis; focus group and individual interviews with the student researchers. Data analysis used an abductive approach – a combination of inductive and deductive analysis. Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation and the Lundy (2007) model helped conceptualise learner participation in this study. In addition, the work of, Muijs and Harris (2007) assisted with the characterisation of teacher leadership of the student researchers. Findings revealed that primary school learners can lead in the 25 Namibian and South African primary school leadership clubs. The findings indicated that through intervention club participation various leadership skills were developed in learner leaders including teamwork, co-operation, problem-solving, decision-making, self-confidence, communication and listening responsibility and others. Using Lundy's (2007) model of participation the findings revealed that the primary school learners delivered meaningful participation through adult provision of voice, space, audience and influence in the "Learners Lead". Using Hart's (1992) ladder of children's involvement revealed that learner leaders developed leadership from non-participation to child-shared decision-making with adults and this was real democracy. The data further revealed factors constraining the leadership of primary school learners including a lack of national policy on learner leadership

development of primary school learners, the school's lack of a structured approach in fostering leadership qualities, societal norms and cultural values hindering leadership growth, time constraints and club members themselves. The data finally revealed leadership learning of the student researchers, skills and values developed such as communication, listening skills, self-confidence, autonomy, patience, trust, creativity and empathy. Furthermore, the student researchers were able to initiate and be involved in the school's decision-making and this made them become developed teacher leaders. The findings revealed that factors including teamwork, support from staff and management as well as shared leadership approach and teachers' expertise facilitated and fostered the development of teacher leadership during the "Learners Lead". The study offers valuable insights to inform educational policy and practice by highlighting the importance of developing learner leadership programmes in primary schools, particularly in under-researched contexts like Namibia and South Africa

Keywords: *Leadership, democratic leadership, distributed leadership, learner leadership, learner voice*

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List of Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ELM	Educational Leadership and Management
LRC	Learners' Representative Council
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

I have been a proud school principal of a primary school for 12 years and am keen on promoting primary school educational leadership in schools. Raudoniute and Beresford-Dey (2024) highlight “how promoting primary school leadership can lead to a greater sense of ownership and initiate positive change” (p. 2). Therefore, the focus of my study was particularly on learner leadership in primary schools. The purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the leadership development of these primary school learners. In addition, this study explored the possibility of leadership learning in the student researchers as a consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. To address the learner leadership of primary schools and the leadership learning of the student researcher, a document analysis of the examinable research report equivalent to the ELM Honours programme and an in-depth case study were conducted with student researchers in Namibia and South Africa.

Chapter One of this study aims to give the reader an orientation to the study. It begins with the background and context of the study of the Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours ELM service-learning initiative. It provides the problem statement and rationale for the study, drawing on the literature to get a sense of learner leadership in Namibia and South Africa. This leads to a discussion of the research questions, the study's purpose, and then the study's significance. Thereafter, the chapter looks at the conceptual framework of the study and the methodology applied to the study. Finally, a thesis outline that summarises the overall structure of this thesis will be provided.

1.2 Background to the Study

Learner leadership prevails when learners in schools are trusted and allowed to make decisions that pertain to the development of their respective schools (Flutter, 2006). Historically, this form of leadership was not taken seriously. In many countries worldwide, and on the African continent, learners do not have a voice in matters concerning their schooling (Grant & Kajee, 2020). Furthermore, Grant and Nekondo (2016) argue that "learner leadership is not common as a concept or a practice in the majority of schools in African countries such as Namibia and South Africa" (p. 26). South African learners were not recognised in terms of their voice and leadership in the schooling system as learner leadership development was minimal during the apartheid era in South Africa, and learners were not allowed to participate in school decision-making (Mncube, 2008). In this regard, Grant and Kajee (2020) explain that the constraints to learner leadership development had to do with the legacy of "patriarchy and cultural historical belief in Namibia" (p. 94). Adults did not trust learners to lead in schools; instead, they were treated as followers in school leadership (Grant & Kajee, 2020).

Mitra and Gross (2009) believe that learners should be given the opportunities to speak about what matters to them in schools and the kind of decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers. Similarly, Mati et al. (2016) claim that students should be involved at all decision-making levels to the extent that is possible and plausible. But the question remains – can primary school learners lead?

1.3 The Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours ELM Service-learning Initiative

The Faculty of Education at Rhodes University, Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) elective curriculum requires that post-graduate student researchers conduct a research study in which they have to establish and lead a leadership club intervention. The establishment of a structure in the form of a 'leadership club' provides learners with "opportunities to learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522). The leadership club intervention was offered during the second year of a two-year post-graduate qualification where students are required to work with learners on a change project of their choice over 10 months to develop learner leadership (Grant & Kajee, 2020). The student researchers were then required to write a research report

focusing on the leadership development of learners through leadership clubs as an exam equivalent of this curriculum (see, for example, the course outline in the Appendices).

A leadership intervention club is one of the platforms foreseen to give learners a voice and harness their leadership skills (Grant, 2015). In an intervention club, in this Rhodes case, the learners are involved in the problem they identify and try to work out solutions. Furthermore, Grant (2015) states that "intervention clubs offered a platform where learners could 'speak back' concerning what they considered as important to them" (p. 96). Clubs benefit learners in various ways, as they are practically involved and collaborate with others. Thus, Angus (2006) recommends that learners are involved in participatory activities as it helps in developing leadership skills such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving. Therefore, scholars feel that the introduction of an intervention club will help promote leadership development because learners are given a platform to make their contribution (Grant, 2015). This study tracked the student researchers' ELM elective at Rhodes University over seven years (2013–2019). There were 111 schools involved in total. The majority (86 out of 111) were secondary schools, while 25 were primary schools, which is the focus of my study. Against this backdrop, the 25 primary school research reports (the exam equivalent of this Honours programme) formed part of the document analysis and the student researchers who were the authors of the reports in the primary school context were interviewed. This data informed the study.

1.4 Problem Statement and Rationale for the Study

According to the Namibian Education Act No. 16 of 2001, "every state school offering secondary education must establish a body of learners to be known as the Learners' Representative Council (LRC) per the prescribed requirements, which must determine the composition and functions of such a council" (p. 29). Kandjengo and Shikalepo (2020) note that LRCs, composed of learner leaders, function as management bodies supporting overall school leadership. Though the Education Act of 16 of 2001 is believed to make provision for the learners to have a voice in schools, it restricts learner leadership to those who hold positions in the LRC. Grant and Kajee (2020) argue that the "Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 advocates to provide learner leadership through Learner Representative Council (LRC) body in secondary schools but it is silent on the matter of learner voice and leadership" (p. 88). Furthermore, the same Act 16 of 2001 does not make a provision for primary school learners

to lead. In a similar vein, the South African Schools Educational Act No.84 of 1996 only provided the opportunity for secondary learners to engage in leadership (Mncube, 2008).

During the 2020 Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours ELM course, South African and Namibian students were required to create learner leadership development intervention clubs at their respective schools as part of the curriculum of the ELM elective. I was one of the students during that time, and I established an intervention club with Grade 3 learners at the school where I taught. The purpose of establishing these clubs was to develop learners' leadership, specifically on the concept of learner voice and learner leadership. This means hearing and treating learners as people whose ideas matter (Grant, 2015). Unfortunately, in 2020, the established club failed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, nonetheless, my interest was triggered in conducting this research, which explored whether primary school learners could lead.

Table 1.1 below indicates an analysis of the student researcher reports capturing the learner leadership intervention for the period 2013–2019, offered in South Africa and Namibia during alternate years.

Table 1.1: Analysis of the student researcher reports for the period 2013–2019 offered in South Africa and Namibia, alternate years

Year	Number of reports done	Total number of primary reports done
2013	12	0
2014	32	3
2015	3	1
2016	23	7
2017	7	2
2018	18	10
2019	16	2
Total	**111**	**25**

In summary, 25 out of 111 schools were primary schools. These records reveal that primary school leadership is not well-researched, which ignited my interest in conducting this research study. My particular research focus is captured in the research questions, which follow.

1.5 Main Research Questions and Sub-questions

1. How did primary school learners experience and demonstrate leadership through their participation in the "Learners Lead" project?

a) What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead"?

b) What leadership knowledge and skills were developed in these primary school learners during their involvement in the after-school clubs?

c) How did learners participate during the "Learners Lead" project, and what does this reveal about the conceptualisation and level of their participation?

d) What were the constraints on these primary school learners' leadership?

2. What was the leadership learning of student researchers as a result of their involvement in the "Learner's Lead" project?

    a) What leadership skills and values are developed in student researchers?
    b) What are the factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership?

***** *"Learners Lead" is the name given to the leadership intervention project.*

1.6 Research Purpose

This research aimed to explore the extent to which primary school learners could lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the learner leadership development of these primary school learners. In addition, this study explored the possibility of leadership learning for the student researchers as a consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study findings are likely to benefit different stakeholders in the education sector. Firstly, the study findings will support the advancement of knowledge on primary school learner leadership, an underexplored area. Secondly, the study findings will contribute to improving

leadership practice; particularly primary school learner leadership through the development of policy at the national and school levels and the establishment of appropriate programmes that ease learner leadership development of primary school learners. Professionally, the study findings may help educational policymakers identify leadership knowledge, skills and qualities primary school learners need to develop, which could inform policy development. In addition, the establishment of learner leadership programmes will become a possible priority, which will trouble the terrain of the limited involvement of primary school learners in leadership development opportunities. Also, the study will benefit the student researchers through their reflections on their leadership development and their knowledge of learner leadership development and their own.

1.8 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Educational leadership and learner leadership are the main concepts used in this study. Learner leadership is a subset of distributed and democratic leadership, which is the theory that framed this study. The literature shows that there are several definitions of learner leadership. Uushona (2018) defines learner leadership as "a relational process involving interaction and forming of relationships with other students, peer leaders and other members of the school; it has the goal of helping students develop their leadership skills; it encompasses a variety of leadership styles; and it may develop through participation" (p. 21). Learner leadership is part of distributed leadership because as Nadeem (2024) argues, distributed leadership is "individuals engage in shared decision-making, collaborate on projects and engage in ongoing dialog, they contribute to the collective construction of leadership insights" (p. 2). It is through distributed leadership that learners are offered an opportunity to take part in the school leadership, for they interact and form relationships with others to participate in decision-making.

Democratic leadership is a "team-oriented, normative process in which members of the professional team take a substantive role in the decision-making process relating to the vision of the school and the initiatives designed to achieve its vision" (Liggett, 2022, p. 2). He further argues that everyone is allowed to participate, ideas are exchanged freely, and discussion is encouraged (Liggett, 2022). Learner leadership is seen as a subset of democratic leadership because, in this type of leadership, learners become part of the team, participate freely and become part of the decision-making. Chapter two of this thesis discusses the conceptual and theoretical tenets in detail.

1.9 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used in the study. The study took the form of qualitative research using an interpretive paradigm. Grant and Lincoln (2021) describe a qualitative approach "as research that is centrally focused on people and their lived experiences using their authentic social constructions while recognising that there is no single accepted reality that can be used for comparison, which renders judgments of goodness or righteousness invalid" (p. 4). In this study, this would be the lives of the primary school learners who developed leadership and the student researchers' leadership learning while involved in leadership development interventions.

A case study supported this study's interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach. Schoch (2020) explains a case study as "quantifying in terms of scope a case study as an in-depth investigation of a temporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 245). This means the nature of my research questions on learner leadership development and teacher leadership aimed to surface an in-depth understanding of learners' leadership development and the possible leadership learning encountered by the student researcher because of leading the learner leadership clubs.

This study used purposive sampling. It is purposive in the sense that I selected the sample documents (research reports) of primary school learner leadership development among studies that included secondary school learner leadership development. It is also purposive in the sense that I selected the participants in this study who were student researchers from Namibia and South Africa who wrote research reports in the primary school context under study. Therefore, as a researcher, I approached the authors of the 25 research reports (in the primary school context). The data generation methods for this study were document analysis, focus group interviews and individual interviews, and this meant that the interviews were the primary data while document analysis was secondary. The data in this study was analysed using a thematic and content data analysis technique. The document, focus group interview data and individual interviews were analysed both inductively and deductively. As a researcher, I made sure that anonymity and confidentiality were kept and that no details of individual previous researchers' confidential information would be exposed, such as names.

Lastly, the study was granted ethical approval by Rhodes University's Higher Degree Ethics Committee. I was granted gatekeepers' permission through an approval letter from Rhodes University and the ethical clearance to use the research report exam equivalent of the ELM Honours programme. All interview participants signed informed consent forms giving their voluntary consent. The next section outlines the chapters that formed the thesis.

1.10 Thesis Outline

Chapter One of this study aimed to give the reader an orientation to the study. It began with the background and context of the study of the Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours ELM service-learning initiative. It provides the problem statement and rationale for the study and later leads to a discussion of the research questions, the study's purpose, and the study's significance. The chapter thereafter looks at the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study as well as the methodology for the study. Finally, the thesis outline that summarises the overall structure of this thesis will be provided.

Chapter Two provides a literature review of the theoretical perspectives on learner leadership and highlights democratic leadership theory, which framed this study. In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of leadership in education to provide an understanding of the key concept used in my study. Secondly, I present leadership theories such as traditional views of leadership and distributed and democratic leadership, where contemporary views are located. Next, I explore the relationship between democratic leadership and Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation. Following that, the chapter discusses the main concept of the study, learner leadership, learner voice, learners' participation during the leadership development activities, learner leadership knowledge and skills and the significance and challenges of learner leadership. Finally, teacher leadership is examined, particularly as the student researchers in this study displayed characteristics of teacher leaders through their engagement in learner leadership interventions. In summary, this review will attempt to provide a critical analysis of the phenomenon of this study.

Chapter Three is the methodology chapter. The research methodology can be termed as the specific methods used to conduct research. The chapter will commence with the research questions and research purpose. It will then move to the description of the research paradigm and design, sampling methods and research participants as well as researcher positionality. Later, the chapter discusses the data generation methods, including document analysis, focus

group and individual interviews. Furthermore, it looks at data analysis and the discussion of the analytic framework to be used in this study, such as Hart's (1992) ladder of children participation, Lundy's model of children participation, and Muijs and Harris (2007) towards an understanding of teacher leadership. The chapter will conclude with the trustworthiness of the study and research ethics.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings generated from the research data. To remind the reader, I present the research questions and then provide a presentation and discussion of the findings organised according to the research questions. Data will be generated through an analysis of documents, the focus group and individual interviews.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter and summarises the research's key findings. The chapter shares the study challenges encountered, its knowledge contribution, policy development and practices, recommendations regarding learner leadership and teacher leadership for future research and practice, and some final reflections.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

> *The review of related literature involves the systematic identification, location and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem. It determines what has already been done in terms of the research topic under study and provides an understanding and insight needed to place the research topic within a logical framework.*
>
> (Gay et al., 2009, p. 80)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a written summary of the literature on the theoretical perspectives on learner leadership and highlights key tenets of democratic leadership theory that framed this study. In this chapter, I begin with a discussion on the concept of leadership to provide an understanding of the main concept under study. Secondly, I present leadership theories, situating traditional views of leadership alongside contemporary perspectives such as distributed and democratic leadership. Next, I explore the relationship between democratic leadership and Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation. This section then focuses on the central concept of the study: learner leadership as an active process that promotes learner voice. In addition, the chapter reviews learners' participation in leadership development activities, their leadership skills and attributes and the significance and challenges of learner leadership. Finally, the chapter examines teacher leadership, particularly as demonstrated by the student researchers in this study, who exhibited characteristics of teacher leaders through their involvement in learner leadership interventions. In summary, this review attempts to provide a critical analysis of the phenomenon of this study.

2.2 Understanding Leadership in Education

Leadership takes many forms, but this study focuses on its role within education, specifically examining learner leadership. Firstly, leadership is "the process of influencing a group toward achieving goals and directing an organization to be more cohesive and coherent. Leadership is a process that causes others to take action to achieve a common goal" (Marbun et al., 2023, p.

572). In a nutshell, Jawoosh et al. (2021) define leadership as "a process; includes influence others; happens within the context of a group; involves the attainment of certain goals and these goals are shared by the leaders and their followers" (pp. 110–111). This highlights that leadership is a process where individuals influence each other to achieve a shared goal, as observed in learner leadership development initiatives.

Furthermore, Uushona (2018) expands on this definition by positing that, leadership

> is the outcome of dynamic, collective activity, through the building of relationships and networks of influence – it is therefore as much bottom-up as top-down, with more unrestricted interactions where the person branded 'leader' behaves in a less hierarchical way than leaders traditionally have done. (p. 25)

Therefore, in a nutshell, leadership

> calls for the creation of an environment where new knowledge – collective learning – can be co-created and implemented rather than just as the implementation of a top leader plan hence the focus is on dynamic, interactive processes of influence and learning which will transform organizational structures, norms and work practices. (James, 2019, p. 29)

The descriptions above of leadership resemble the study phenomenon 'learner leadership' in which learners are fully involved at school, working as a team to achieve a set goal or objective. The next section focuses on traditional leadership theories.

2.3 Traditional Leadership Theories

2.3.1 Trait theories

Trait theory associates leadership with characteristics and personality traits. In support, Jawoosh et al. (2021) argue that "this theory presented in the early part of the 20th century where leadership traits were studied to determine what made certain groups of people become great leaders" (p. 112). This theory posits that leadership is an inborn trait. Dickson (2023) supports this view, arguing that "leaders are born with certain personalities and exceptional qualities that set them apart from the rest of the population" (p. 11). In addition, Deshwal and Ali (2020) describe that "the main focus of trait theory was the characteristics of a leader. It tried to find out various traits found in successful leaders" (p. 42). Arguing further, Dickson (2023) posits that "successful leaders were considered to have traits such as high levels of

energy, intelligence, honesty, self-confidence, self-discipline, social skills, appearance, knowledge, dominance, dependability, persistence, responsibility, self-motivation, desire for control, ambition, and cognitive abilities" (p. 11). He further clarified that certain organisations function more effectively only if their leaders fit certain personality traits (Dickson, 20203). Therefore, Hunt and Fedynich (2019) posit that the trait "model allowed for no room for an individual to have any hope of becoming a leader" (p. 22). Thus, Uushona (2018) indicates that "apart from observing the display of advantageous managerial traits of these leaders, none of those traits were superior" (p. 13). As a researcher, I argue that leadership is not inborn but is learned and that this study's phenomenon of learner leadership is learned. Moreover, this study worked from the premise that the above characteristic traits found in individuals were not inborn but learned through learner leadership club interventions. Thus, the learner leadership development intervention clubs led by student researchers did not align with the perspectives of trait theories of leadership but rather embraced tenets of a democratic leadership perspective.

In conclusion, trait theories have been criticised. For example, Jawoosh et al. (2021) mention that trait theory

> provides a reductionist and simplistic view of leadership which is considered one of the limitations of this theory. It imposed that this leadership has specific features which could one become a leader and considered these characteristics and behavioral inherent in the family and passed on genetically (p. 113).

In this regard, there was a need for the introduction of behavioural leadership theories.

2.3.2 Behavioural theory

Behavioural theory is defined by its name as leaders are identified by looking at their behaviour. This means behaviour theory is a leadership theory that focuses on how leaders behave and how those behaviours impact their team and the organisation. In contrast to trait theories, behavioural theory believes that great leaders are not born. In agreement, Maloş (2012) claims that with behavioural theory, "people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation" (p. 418). Supporting this notion, Uushona (2018), in the context of learner leadership development, suggests that according to behaviour theory "one could then argue that learners can also learn to become leaders through participation where teaching and

observation mostly occur" (p. 13) – this is the core value of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, Jawoosh et al. (2021) suggest that

> this theory can be the best determining factor for the success of leadership and how to guide followers' efforts towards achieving the goal through the use of appropriate behavior, which allows individuals to participate in decision-making and deal with the situation in the absence of leadership. (p. 114)

This study supports behavioural theory because it is through appropriate guided behaviours that learners in the learner leadership development club interventions became leaders. The next section looks at contingency theories which followed the behavioural theories. The contingency theory was needed after behavioural theory because it provides that for one to learn or practice leadership, there is a need for leadership context.

2.3.3 Contingency theory

The contingency theory is a leadership theory of context. In support, Dickson (2023) agrees that "theory emphasizes the significance of contextual factors that influence leadership processes" (p. 12). Expressing the same sentiment, Vasilescu (2019) suggests that "leaders' influence is contingent on particular variables related to the environment determining leadership styles" (p. 49). Maloş (2012) describes contingency theory as a "focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation" (p. 419). Therefore, I echo the same sentiment as Uushona (2018), who argues that "it is the quality of the school principal's followers, as a variable for organizational success, which accommodate the learners' views of leadership in the school" (p. 14). Therefore, learner leadership as part of the school context is supported by this study. After the contingency theory, the situational theory was developed.

2.3.4 Situational theory

This leadership theory is based on a situation. Marbun et al. (2023) indicate that "most current research has shifted from trait-based or traditional personality theories to situational theories, which state that leadership skills and leader characteristics determine leadership situations" (p. 574).

I believe that during learner leadership development interventions, the student researcher applied distributed and democratic leadership theories. These approaches were more suited to their contexts, as traditional leadership theories have proved challenging to implement in modern, dynamic educational environments. This view is supported by Baștea et al. (2023), who argue that "traditional hierarchical leadership models may find it difficult to appropriately adapt and deal with challenges in today's more complex and dynamic settings" (p. 116). Situational theory represents a modern approach that shapes the leadership frameworks underpinning this study, specifically distributed and democratic leadership theories. These theories align with the focus of this research and will be explored in the following sections under the contemporary perspective of educational leadership. The first contemporary theory to be discussed is distributed leadership, which emerged during the learner leadership development interventions.

2.4 Contemporary Leadership Theories

2.4.1 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is among the contemporary theories used in educational leadership. A distributed perspective is a focus on the leadership practice. This notion is advocated by Spillane et al. (2004), who define leadership practice as "both thinking and activity that emerges in the execution of leadership tasks in and through the interaction of leaders, followers and situation" (p. 11) (see Figure 2.1). Spillane (2006) echoes the same sentiment that leadership practice from a distributed perspective is a "product of jointed interactions of school leaders, followers and their situation such as tools and routines" (p. 3). He further defines distributed leadership as more than shared leadership (Spillane, 2006). Spillane et al. (2004) recognise that "leadership is not merely a function of what a school principal, or indeed any other individual or group of leaders, knows or does, rather, it is the actions that leaders participate in, in collaboration with others in specific situations around specific tasks" (p. 5). I echo the same sentiment as Spillane et al. (2004) that distributed leadership is a collaborative effort involving everyone in a school, including the teachers, parents and learners. This directly impacts teacher and learner leadership, which are central concepts in this study.

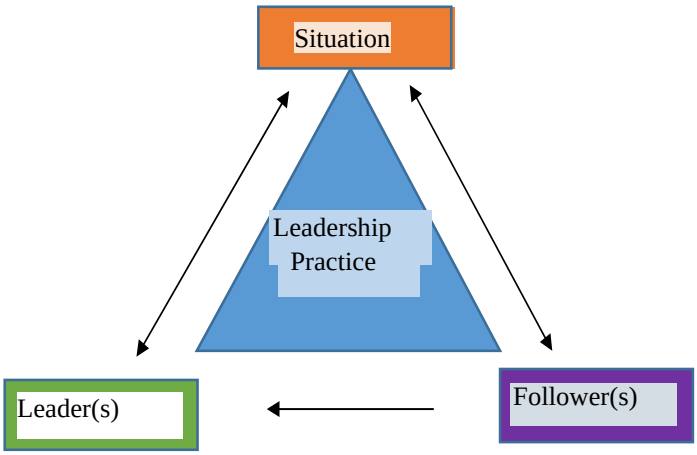

Figure 2.1: A model of leadership practice (adapted from Spillane et al., 2004, p. 11)

It is the leader (s), situation and followers that make up the distributed leadership practice. In this study, the learners (leaders) tried to develop leadership in the club interventions (situation) while the student teachers tried to develop teacher leadership (followers). Thus, learners and teachers participated in the leadership development activities in the learner leadership club interventions to acquire knowledge and understanding in order to take part in the leadership affairs of the school.

Distributed leadership is about sociocultural practice. In agreement, Thien (2022) defines distributed leadership "as a social distribution where a leader has decision-making power that is dispersed to all the school members who are then determined as a collaboration of leaders" (p. 45). Distributed leadership is not just about splitting up or sharing responsibilities. Timperley (2005) cautions that "distributed leadership is not the same as splitting task duties among persons who execute defined and discrete organizational roles, but rather it involves dynamic interactions between numerous leaders and followers" (p. 396). This is supported by Grant (2008), who states that distributed leadership is leadership involving expertise within the organisation rather than looking at people who hold formal positions. In this instance, experts are meant to address the specific situation in a school. This means if the situation of leadership practice in a school requires learners as experts, then learners should be included as such, and if it requires teachers, then they should be included as such. In this study, the situation where expertise was needed and required learners and teachers to lead was the learner leadership club interventions.

Distributive leadership involves relinquishing power to others, in this instance, the learners and teachers. Distributed leadership is said to open up opportunities for learner leadership and teacher leadership in an education system. After this exposure, it would not be the principal's responsibility to question learners and teachers to do school tasks, but it would be the learners and teachers themselves who identify problems and come up with solutions. In the next section, the study looks at the benefits of distributed leadership.

2.4.1.1 Benefits of distributed leadership

Distributed leadership offers some major benefits to a school organisation as follows. Firstly, distributed leadership promotes decision-making in a school organisation. In agreement, Baștea et al. (2023) noted that "enhanced decision-making: Distributed leadership allows for a wider range of perspectives and expertise to be considered in decision-making processes and by involving multiple individuals in leadership roles, organizations can tap into diverse knowledge and experiences, leading to more comprehensive and informed decisions" (p. 117). Similarly, Phillips et al. (2023) alluded that distribution of leadership roles "empowers teachers and staff, granting them agency in decision-making processes" (p. 2084).

Secondly, the distributed leadership approach encourages innovation and creativity at the school as an organisation. In support, Baștea et al. (2023) posit that "by involving more individuals in problem-solving and decision-making, different ideas and approaches are generated, promoting innovative solutions and practices" (p. 117). This means that if teachers and learners take part in school leadership, then they will embrace creativity and innovation. In addition, distributed leadership will enhance learning and innovation in a school organisation.

Moreover, Baștea et al. (2023) added other advantages to distributed leadership by highlighting the empowerment and engagement of team members. Distributed leadership empowers individuals, and this study supported teachers and learners engaging as team members in a school organisation to produce successful results at various organisational levels (Spillane et al., 2004). Distributed leadership allows individuals to develop their leadership skills (Bolden, 2011). In this study, the individuals who developed leadership skills in the leadership club interventions during "Learners Lead" were the learner leaders and student researchers who shared responsibilities and were accountable for achieving their goals. Distributed leadership has shortcomings to which my attention now turns.

2.4.1.2 Critique of distributive leadership

Apart from distributed leadership being advantageous, it has been critiqued. For example, Harris et al. (2013), cited in Baștea et al. (2023), "explored the potential negative consequences or challenges associated with distributed leadership, they highlighted issues such as role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, and power struggles that can arise when multiple individuals have leadership responsibilities" (p.118). Distributed leadership theory forms part of democratic theory as it is through sharing leadership that the learners, teachers and all other stakeholders in a school organisation can participate freely. Woods (2004) explains that "democracy adds to the emergent character of the distributed leadership the notion that everyone, by their human status, should play a part in democracy agency" (p. 258). In the next section, my attention turns to democratic leadership, one of the contemporary leadership theories that framed this study.

2.4.2 Democratic leadership: A contemporary socially just approach

Democratic leadership is a "team-oriented, normative process in which members of the professional team take a substantive role in the decision-making process relating to the vision of the school and the initiatives designed to achieve its vision" (Liggett, 2022, p. 2). He further argues that everyone is allowed to participate, ideas are exchanged freely, and discussion is encouraged (Liggett, 2022). According to Uushona (2018), the use of democratic leadership "in schools aims to develop real democracy through the active participation of educational stakeholders, be it in classrooms or the whole school's affairs in general" (p. 45). In equal measure, Rasheed (2021) states that this form of leadership is "the most popular style of leadership used by school administrators whereby learners are included in decision-making, which is the opposite of authoritarian decision-making" (p. 33). Similarly, Akudo (2020) posits that "under democratic leadership, the principal is expected to give teachers, students/ learners and other stakeholders of the school, the opportunity to participate in running the affairs of the school" (p. 297). In essence, "democratic leadership style fosters participation in policy-making by groups and leaders whereby decisions on organizational problems are made after discussing with almost everyone in the institution has been accosted" (Rasheed et al., 2021, p. 34).

Furthermore, Woods (2004) takes this definition further by identifying “democratic leadership as the right to meaningful participation and respect for and expectation towards everyone as ethical beings” (p. 4). Likewise, Starratt (2001) agrees that democratic leadership “is based on the philosophical tradition of Dewey’s pragmatism which cultivates an environment that supports participation, sharing of ideas and virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility and compassion” (p. 338). Drawing from Dewey, the democratic notion assists with “freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness-the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its work” (Dewey, 1903, p. 193). He argued further that the “freed mind of the child takes place until the emphasis changes to the conditions which make it necessary for the child to take an active share in the personal building up of his problems and to participate in the method of solving them” (Dewey, 1903, p. 201). This becomes possible if learners are allowed to “engage in their education and governance of their schools” (Woods, 2004, p. 6). In a similar vein, my study was underpinned by democratic leadership as it aligned with this notion and aimed to explore the development and understanding of learners’ participation in leadership in primary schools in Namibia and South Africa.

Although democratic leadership is advantageous, it has some drawbacks. Maloş (2012) argues that while team members are encouraged to engage freely in the collaborative process, this makes the decision take longer; this type of delay can affect the vision and mission of the team negatively. Finally, democratic leadership can lead to communication failure, and group members might be unskilled in the specific task (decision-making). However, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, and I argue that in the Namibian and South African context, this approach to leadership needs to be considered, especially in primary schools. The next section looks at the relationship between democratic leadership and Hart's (1992) ladder of children’s participation as an analytic tool for this study on learners’ level of participation.

2.4.3 Democratic leadership and Hart’s (1992) ladder of children’s participation

Democratic leadership, as discussed earlier, is one of the leadership theories that underpinned this study. This section discusses the relationship between democratic leadership and Hart’s (1992) ladder of children's participation. This is because democratic leadership is about free participation, and Hart’s (1992) ladder is about children's participation. Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation presents eight levels that start with manipulation and tokenism on the lower rungs and end on the higher rungs at full participation. Dewey (1903) argues that “a

society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which ensures flexible readjustment of its constitutions through the interaction of different forms of associated life is so far democratic" (p. 99). This means that democratic leadership advocates free participation to its members, and Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation aims at participation, both leading to democracy. As discussed earlier, Purwanto et al. (2020) cited Wahidin (2020), who describes the "democratic leadership style involves subordinates in the decision-making process" (p. 4). Similarly, Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation as an analytical tool will help to surface the level of participation, ranging from tokenism to learner-initiated and shared decisions with adults. In addition, Hart's (1992) ladder of child participation is designed as an eight-rung ladder to demonstrate that there is an increase in children's participation in decision-making as the ladder moves from the bottom to the top (Hart, 1992). Therefore, both democratic leadership and Hart's (1992) ladder aim to encourage children to take part in decision-making in the school. Thus, this study used Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation, an analytical tool to understand and unpack the level of learners' participation during leadership development. This model of children's participation was developed to distinguish meaningful involvement from "tokenism" or "decoration" (Lundy, 2007, p. 938). To strengthen this view of democratic leadership aligning with this notion, Silo (2011) argues that Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation uses a "metaphor of a ladder as a model in which he sets up more procedural democratic criteria for distinguishing participation from non-participation by describing different degrees of participation ranging from non-participation to several forms of real participation" (p. 68). She further explains how the model can assist children in developing leadership which is developed from token participation to genuine participation which is the situation in this study (Silo, 2011). I concur with Whitehead (2009), who calls for the adoption of authentic leadership and non-tokenistic leadership (bottom rungs on the ladder) because of the positive effect it has on society through the integration of others and the distribution of opportunities. Further details on this ladder as an analytical tool can be found in the methodology section of this thesis. My attention now turns to learner leadership, the main concept in this study.

2.5 Learner Leadership Reimagined: An Active Process and the Promotion of Learner's Voice

The concept of learner leadership is the main concept in this study. There are various definitions of learner leadership. Learner leadership is learners taking the lead in school affairs through

democratic participation and making decisions. In this regard, Uushona (2018) defines learner leadership as follows:

> A relational process involving interaction and forming of relationships with other students, peer leaders and other members of the school; it has the goal of helping students develop their leadership skills; it encompasses a variety of leadership styles; and it may develop through participation. (p. 21)

This study supports the notion that learner leadership is a process of democratic participation, forming relationships and learners developing leadership skills. Similarly, Wallin (2003) argues that "educators are encouraged to foster responsible student decision-making and student leadership to improve the quality of the school environment because the test of democratic practice in any institution should rest at least in part on the treatment of the least powerful" (p. 73).

Grant (2015) explains that "the development of leadership is a conscious and active process requiring modeling and teaching" (p. 105). Therefore, the "Learners Lead" initiative in this Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours ELM student researcher service-learning initiative, as captured in the course outline (see Appendix F), envisages learner leadership as follows:

> It is envisaged that the after-school clubs (Learners Lead) provide learners (and the PLCs provide teachers) with opportunities to:
>
> - develop their voice in a space in which they can 'be heard';
> - identify a focus area that matters to them;
> - plan and implement an intervention to address the focus area; and
> - develop their leadership and "learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522).

Finally, Grant (2015) describes "the development of authentic learner leadership as being critical if we hope to turn schools around; it calls on school leaders and teachers to draw on their own agency and develop strategies to invoke learner's voice" (p. 110). The next section looks at learner voice.

2.5.1 Learner voice

This study chooses to use the word “learners” instead of “students”. This is because the word “student” in our country (Namibia) is used to represent scholars at university/tertiary education, while the word “learner” is used to represent pupils at primary school and secondary schools. In the same vein, I will use “learner voice” instead of student voice which is mostly used in international literature.

Learner voice plays a major role in learner leadership. According to Shatilova (2014), citing Burchard (2008), “student voice is student participation in school governance for more accurate decisions and changes. Real changes are associated with meaningful impacts and transformations in our lives, but not with simplistic goals” (p. 16). In the scope of learner leadership, learner voice is described by Fielding (2004) as an “apparent desire to encourage young people to articulate their concerns and aspirations about a whole range of matters that has the potential to offer an important contribution to education” (p. 197). In the same vein, Mitra and Gross (2009) describe learner voice “as the many ways in which youth could actively participate in school decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers” (p. 523). In the spirit of learner leadership, it is alluded that learners need to be heard and motivated by adults for them to express their voice and bring change to the school organisation.

Furthermore, Grant (2015) describes learner voice below:

> Learner's voice explains the diversities of ways in which learners can share decision-making in schools. Learner voice is the medium through which learners are able to take part in the management of the affairs of their schools. Without giving learners a voice, the idea of learner leadership cannot be realized, and what cannot be realised do not exist in the first place. (p. 14)

Moreover, for Despres and Dube (2020), learner voice is “the process by which learners are listened to, consulted, included, take part, or take charge of the decision-making process or take action about their learning or their education in diverse contexts” (p. 3). Thus, Mitra and Gross's (2009) pyramid of learners' voices below (Figure 2.2) illustrates from the bottom rung that learners need to be heard, collaborate with adults and build capacity for learners.

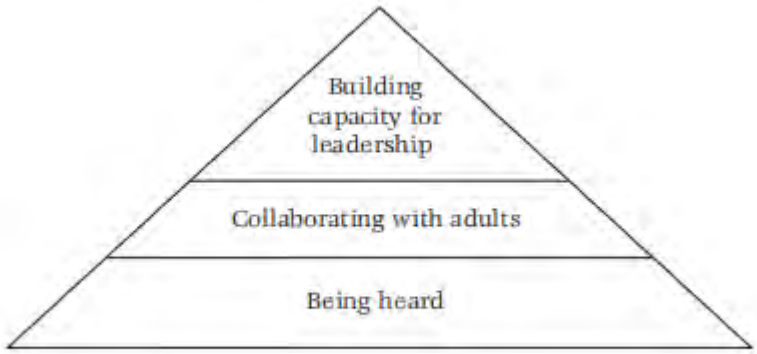

Figure 2.2: Pyramid of learners' voice (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 523)

Mitra and Gross (2009) define learner voice as the "opportunities learners have to speak about what matters to them in schools, the kinds of decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers" (p. 523). In addition, they further argue in their pyramid of learner voice that learners need to be heard, collaborate with adults and build leadership capacity (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Ideally, Smith (2006) shares that the learner voice "opens spaces of leadership from which young people can speak back regarding what they consider to be important and valuable for their learning" (p. 284). Therefore, adults must give learners a voice by engaging them in schooling "to genuinely listen to them and take cognizance of what they say" (Grant & Kajee, 2020, p. 88). They feel that "learner voice" provides a chance for learners to air their views about matters affecting them in school and the extent to which they are involved in school-level decision-making processes (Grant & Kajee, 2020).

This study argues that learner voice alone given to the learners is not enough. In support, Lundy's (2007) model of participation argues that the voice given to the children is not enough and encourages an approach that focuses on space, voice, audience and influence. This model of participation draws on the rights discourse regarding children. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) highlights the "right of a child who is capable of forming their views and expressing those views freely in all matters affecting them" (Lundy, 2007, p. 927). The article further articulates that the child must be provided with the opportunity to be heard and that the views of the child are to be given due weight depending on their age and maturity (Lundy, 2007). This means children need opportunities created by adults to express their views regarding school leadership. These were the opportunities created

by student researchers while running leadership club interventions to strengthen learner voice through learner participation during the leadership development activities, the next section to be discussed in this study.

2.5.2 Learner participation during the leadership development activities

Learner participation can be defined as young people sharing their views in decision-making. Likewise, "participation can be broadly described as the act of engaging with others; but in the context of children's rights, participation usually refers to the process of taking part in decision-making" (Duramy & Gal, 2020, p. 2). Learners must participate in school affairs to take responsibility for their development. I agree with Smyth and Smyth (2016) who argue that school offers opportunities for future independence when learners participate in its affairs to develop their democratic voice. Mitra and Gross (2009) believe that "learners should be part of the school management to make decisions. Participation in decision-making activities assists in the promotion of the development of leadership skills" (p. 523). According to MacCallum and Morcom (2019), "collaborative classroom, interaction, and social networks promote student/learner leadership" (p. 15) are some of the features of participation.

Lundy's (2007) model of participation provides a nuanced and explicit way of conceptualising participation in this study. The model focuses on four elements that must be considered if one encourages child participation.

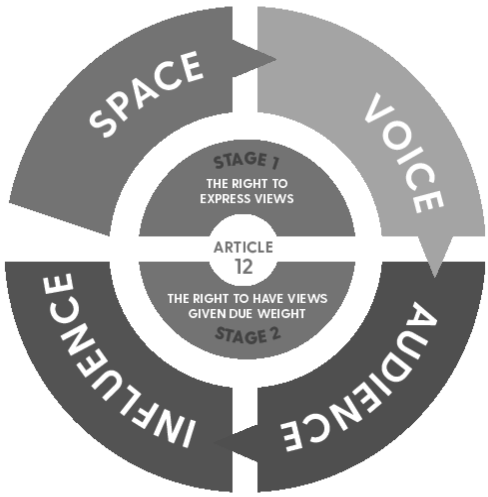

Figure 2.3: Lundy's (2007) model of participation adopted from Article 12 of the UNCRC (Lundy, 2007, p. 927)

Conclusively, Lundy's (2007) model of participation was used in this study to conceptualise learner participation in the "Learners Lead" initiative in this study. Firstly, she argues that learners need to be provided with 'space' by the adults, a conducive environment where learners will feel safe and secure to express their views. Secondly, for the learners to have a 'voice', adults in this study needed to support learners and they should have been able to freely express their views by providing them with enough information, which facilitated their participation in decision-making. Thirdly, Lundy highlights the importance of 'audience' – adults in the 'Learners Lead' project needed to make sure that the voice of the learners was listened to and taken into consideration. Lastly, influence in this model advocates that learners need adult influence for their voice to be taken seriously and given due weight. The next section looks at leadership knowledge and skills.

2.5.3 Learner leadership knowledge and skills

The literature alludes to the distinction between leadership knowledge and skills – this distinction is captured by various scholars. For example, Von Krogh et al. (2012) explain that leadership knowledge "is a continuous process through which individual boundaries are transcended and a new context, a new view of the world, and new knowledge are acquired" (p. 241). Pellegrini et al. (2020) added that leadership knowledge "occurs when leaders are perceived as actively engaged and committed to supporting knowledge and learning activities within the organization" (p. 2). In contrast, leadership skills are the skills used by organisation leaders to fulfil their goals and visions. In support, Ghazali and Rahman (2022) defined leadership skills "as one of the abilities that could be used by the leaders through their knowledge and competencies to achieve the desired goals and vision" (p. 50). Adding to that, Klargywu et al. (2012) agree that "skills are behaviors that can be learned and developed" (p. 40). Therefore, Ghazali and Rahman (2022) explain that "leadership skills can be developed through formal training towards the individuals who want to become a leader since leadership skills can also be assumed as the abilities that can be enhanced by the leaders" (p. 51). In summary, leadership knowledge is gained through learning, while leadership skills are gained through practice; thus, leadership skills are the application of leadership knowledge.

Through leadership participation in activities at school, students' leadership skills can be cultivated. Chen (2019) claims that leadership skills can be cultivated by encouraging students to participate in teamwork activities such as group work, group discussions, seminars,

presentations, group discussions and debates. Furthermore, Darma and Didik Notosudjono (2021) alluded that teamwork "is the activity of organizational members in collaborating well with each other and actively working, which contains elements of trust, honesty, mutual trust, support, and responsibility in carrying out tasks to achieve common goals" (p. 3830). Likewise, Alshammari and Sufta (2023) posit that working as a team "is the only way that saves time and effort. Further, it is important to exchange experiences and learn from each other" (p. 1379).

Communication and listening are vital leadership skills. Alshammari and Sufta (2023) mention that "one of the most important skills that effective leaders should develop is communication" (p. 1378). In agreement, Lawhon and Lawhon (2000) propose that "learners who have suitable communication skills are friendly and cooperative are more likely to promote leadership" (p. 106). Therefore, Singh (2023) posits that active listening can empower leaders to build trust and relationships in order to achieve the team's goals.

Self-confidence is an attitude about one's skills and abilities. Subramanyam (2013) defines "self-confidence as the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behavior" (p. 372). Self-confidence as a leadership skill helps learners in leadership positions to trust themselves and set realistic expectations and goals, communicate effectively and handle criticism. Saunders (2020) states that "the involvement of students/ learners in leadership positions has a positive impact on the development of leadership skills among students" (p. 40). The following section draws attention to the significance of learner leadership at schools.

2.5.4 Significance of learner leadership in schools

In this section, I discussed the significance of learner leadership in schools. The benefits of learner leadership include successful leadership skills, knowledge and attributes attained in learner leadership, such as co-operation and others. Also, learner leadership can lead to the learners' growth of principles and values of democratic citizens, and learner leadership opens up another platform for learners to develop their voices. Finally, this section focuses on how learner leadership enables success in the school organisation.

It is essential to note that the benefits of learner leadership include but are not limited to optimism, co-operation, building commitment, trust, and empowerment of the learners (James, 2021). This study advocates that if we instil learner leadership, schools will be led collectively. Similarly, Grant and Nekondo (2016) describe "the importance of developing learner

leadership particularly to instil in the learners the principles and values of a democratic citizen" (p. 15). In addition, learner leadership provides the learners with the opportunity to develop their voice in a platform where they can be heard, collaborate with adults, and build leadership capacity (Mitra & Gross, 2009). This indicates that if learners are given leadership opportunities in school, they can find solutions.

Learner leadership development enables success in the school organisation. When learners are given a voice, it could lead to academic improvements (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Mitra and Gross (2009) suggest some of the positive impacts of learner voice collaboration with adults, such as that "it can lead to curriculum and assessment development improvements, improve classroom practice, learners can attend classes more often and it also reduces indiscipline among learners" (p. 524). Lastly, Raudoniute and Beresford-Dey (2024) emphasise the significance of students' voices in "developing children's leadership skills, enhancing academic achievement and empowering students. Also, promoting primary school leadership can lead to a greater sense of ownership and initiate positive change" (p. 2). The next section looks at the challenges that hinder learner leadership development.

2.5.5 Challenges to learner leadership

This section discusses the challenges and factors that limit the development of learner leadership. One major limitation is the tendency to equate leadership solely with formal positions, restricting opportunities for learners to develop leadership skills outside designated roles. Another limiting factor is the influence of cultural and historical beliefs that shape perceptions of learner leadership, often discouraging students from assuming leadership responsibilities. Finally, educational policies that do not prioritise or adequately support learner leadership further hinder its development.

One major limitation of learner leadership is the tendency to equate leadership solely with formal positions. Various literature bases leadership on individuals rather than collectives. In support, Muijs and Harris (2003) stipulate that due to the "scarcity of literature on leadership as collective, leadership is taken as individual and links to status and positions" (p. 437). This takes place because there are assumptions that relate leadership to position. This is evident in Foster (1989), who argues that some hold the view that "leadership is a function of organization position, and a leader is the person of superior rank in an organization" (p. 43). From this perspective, leadership relates to a person, and the school principal is regarded as the only

leader at the school. Harris (2003) indicates that “the school structure does not change and principalship is taken as status, authority and position” (p. 437). This is taking place because historically, education leadership is understood as a position that the leader holds. It is defined as personally focused and position related. For example, Grant and Nekondo (2016) explain how leadership was traditionally understood as a “focused leadership, stand-alone leader and position based of which the school principal has been equated at the top of the management hierarchy” (p. 14). In contrast to the above-mentioned view, this study supports leadership as a collective and invites everyone, including learners, to take part in leadership.

Another limiting factor is the influence of cultural and historical beliefs that shape perceptions of learner leadership, often discouraging students from assuming leadership responsibilities. Grant and Kajee (2020) discuss some of the “constraints that hamper learner leadership development in Namibian schools as the cultural and historical beliefs system in Namibia, which includes the lack of trust of learners by adults to lead” (p. 94). As a school leader for almost 12 years now in Namibia, I can attest that traditionally in Namibia, minors in primary schools are not allowed to take part in decision-making. The educational policy and the interpretation thereof have resulted in “limited leadership development opportunities available to learners in Namibian schools” (Grant & Kajee, 2020). Responding to that, Mitra and Gross (2009) posited that “when learners feel their lives, experiences, aspirations and cultures are neglected by school and curriculum they develop hostility to the institution of schooling” (p. 279). Therefore, to avoid negative experiences among learners in schools, learner leadership development and learner leadership, particularly in a primary school context, are needed.

Finally, educational policies that do not prioritise or adequately support learner leadership further hinder its development. The lack of national policies on learner leadership of primary school learners in Namibia and South Africa guided the schools during “Learners Lead”. Schools lack a structured approach to fostering leadership qualities in students. Kandjengo and Shikalepo (2021) revealed that “the development of learner leadership was mainly confronted by the absence of policy directives in schools, which rendered ineffective development of learner leaders at schools” (p. 158).

The next discussion turns to teacher leadership. This discussion is important because the B.Ed. Honours student researchers (called student researchers) discussed in this study showed aspects of teacher leadership while involved in the learner leadership development initiative with the primary school learners.

2.6 Teacher Leadership

In this section, I briefly draw on the literature on teacher leadership. My rationale for highlighting this concept is that the student researchers displayed facets of teacher leaders, and my research interest also focused on the possible leadership development of these student researchers. The course outline (Appendix F) captures this possibility:

> Through this process, it is anticipated that the Honours students will:
>
> - learn about the ELM course content and apply it in a meaningful way
> - reflect on the leadership development of their learners
> - develop their own leadership capacity
> - engage as a researcher in data collection, analysis and interpretation
> - write up the findings of their research in an academic format.

2.6.1 Towards an understanding of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is about teacher leaders who work within and outside the classroom. Likewise, Kamaruzaman et al. (2020), citing Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), note that teacher leaders are "teachers who are leaders inside and outside the classroom, they identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders and encourage others towards improving teaching practice" (p. 17). Teacher leadership refers to the practice where educators take on roles and responsibilities beyond their traditional teaching duties to influence and guide their peers, improve school practices and contribute to the overall success of the educational environment. Likewise, teacher leadership is defined as the process that involves teachers influencing and collaborating with other colleagues to improve teaching practice and student performance (Aris, 2021). Teacher leadership is influence, initiative and the ability to inspire others towards common goals. Therefore, Warren (2021) emphasises that effective teacher

leadership is self-leadership – meaning that a teacher leader needs to influence themselves first before influencing others – it requires self-reflection, self-discovery and intentional influence over one's thoughts and actions.

Teacher leaders have roles and titles to play in a school. Teacher leaders "have been given titles such as coordinator, coach, specialist, lead teacher, department chair and mentor teacher, just to name a few it is this 'muddiness' that makes teacher leadership so intriguing to many educational stakeholders" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 135). To these varying titles, I argue that the student researchers were teacher leaders who ran the leadership club interventions, and who were "experienced professionals, studying on part-time bases while holding down full-time jobs in an educational institution such as schools" (Grant, 2015, p. 96). Furthermore, these student researchers led the clubs in their institutions (serving as researcher-interventionists) and reflected on it "to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222; Grant, 2015). Indeed, the body of knowledge on teacher leadership was relevant to my study.

Teacher leadership is concerned with providing a sense of direction and responsibility in and among the individuals being led. To substantiate the above, James (2021) purported that "teacher leadership is an act of guiding and directing the individuals in an appropriate manner towards the implementation of tasks and functions, providing solutions to problems, making effective decisions as well as creating amicable environmental conditions" (p. 15). Since teacher leadership as a concept is now understood, the next section looks at forms of teacher leadership by Muijs and Harris (2007).

2.6.2 Forms of teacher leadership: Insights from Muijs and Harris (2007)

The framework of teacher leadership proposed by Muijs and Harris (2007) was used in this study to evaluate teacher leadership development among the student researchers. This framework identifies three distinct categories of teacher leadership: developed teacher leadership, emergent teacher leadership and restricted teacher leadership.

According to Muijs and Harris (2007), in the developed teacher leadership category, "teachers are actively encouraged to take initiatives and participate in school decision-making processes" (p. 117). On the other hand, emergent teacher leadership is characterised by teachers leading

initiatives with support from the school management team; however, decision-making authority primarily resides with school management. Lastly, the restricted teacher leadership category reflects minimal teacher involvement and initiative in leadership activities. In this category, teachers are largely confined to their classrooms, with limited opportunities to contribute to school-wide decision-making. The subsequent section of the study examines the skills and values associated with teacher leadership.

2.6.3 Teacher leadership skills and values

This section presents the teacher leadership skills and values that teachers in leadership should have. Suryana et al. (2020) explained that leadership skills "are tools, behaviours, and abilities needed to succeed in motivating and directing others to do what must be done to achieve goals" (p. 382). One of the teacher leadership skills is listening and communication. Suryana et al. (2020) emphasise that listening "is a very important part of building relationships, gaining respect and trust from students, and developing strong collaborative relationships" (p. 383). Warren (2021) describes that "teacher leaders build positive relationship with students, listening to their needed mentoring them, and voicing out their problems" (p. 14). In addition, another important aspect of teacher leadership is that "one thing we've tried to do is to improve communication" (Muijs & Harris, 2007, p. 120). Finally, Federico and Francisco (2024) argue that teachers "need to be proficient communicators because good interpersonal relationships depend on it" (p. 485).

Furthermore, teacher leadership fosters reflection, self-confidence, autonomy, patience and trust. In agreement, Muijs and Harris (2007) argue that there are teacher leadership activities and that "such activities help to develop teachers' confidence and reflection on their practice" (p. 114). Therefore, Kara and Bozkurt (2022) assert that "teacher autonomy is influential in the emergence of teacher leadership behavior" (p. 302). Muijs and Harris (2007) add that "teacher leadership flourishes most in collaborative settings, and that therefore creating a culture of trust that allows collaboration to grow is crucial to the development of teacher leadership" (p.113). This is because trust is the essence of leadership, and it is impossible to lead without trust.

Finally, another teacher leadership skill is empathy. Suryana et al. (2020) revealed that "the teacher's task is not only to build cognitive students but more precisely to build a sense of empathy or concern among students" (p. 383) – the teacher leader's ability to understand and feel for another in a school context.

2.6.4 Factors promoting teacher leadership

This section discusses the factors that promote teacher leaders. One of the factors that promote teacher leadership is interpersonal relationships. An interpersonal relationship is a social connection or affiliation between two or more people. Therefore, "the success or otherwise of teacher leadership within a school can also be influenced by several interpersonal factors, such as relationships with other teachers and school management" (Muijs & Harris, 2007, p. 114). In fact, Shaked (2024) argues that it "requires the principal to be able to establish and maintain positive relationships with the teachers" (p. 241). In contrast, this study supports that it is a requirement of teachers themselves to establish and maintain positive relationships between themselves and with the principal.

The support from staff and management promotes teacher leadership. In support, Muijs and Harris (2007) posit that in a "developed teacher leadership support from school management at all levels (senior and departmental) is seen as another key factor in encouraging teacher leadership at the school" (p. 124). Likewise, Sawalhi and Sellami (2024) agree that "schools' principals and colleagues support and influence teacher leadership" (p. 782). In conclusion, "teacher leaders agree that support is key when they take initiative and they consider it necessary because it helps develop relationships based on trust and promotes positive professional attitudes, such as openness to feedback and continuous training" (Galdames-Calderón, 2023, p. 11).

The shared leadership approach promotes the development of teacher leadership. In support, Webber and Nickel (2022) highlight that "teacher leadership requires a school culture characterized by trust and respect, collective action and shared responsibility. Importantly, shared responsibility must be accompanied by safety for teacher leaders, particularly safety from some colleagues who may describe teacher leaders as aggressive and threatening" (p. 5). Therefore, shared leadership brings success to teacher leadership as Muijs and Harris (2007) argue that "a shared vision would seem to be a key component of successful teacher leadership"

(p. 123). As a researcher, I agree with Sawalhi and Sellami (2024) who posit that "societies that share decision-making with principals contribute in sharing responsibilities for schools' improvements and encourage educators to participate in large decision-making situations that develop the practice of teacher leadership" (p. 4). With a shared vision, the school leadership becomes a collective, and all educators participate in the decision-making.

Teachers' expertise is a prominent factor in fostering teacher leadership. In support, Warren (2021) explains that teacher leadership "is regarded as a pivotal instrument for school improvement, as it entails empowering educators to assume leadership roles within educational institutions, enabling them to harness their expertise" (p. 4). This study argues that educational leadership should be distributed – this is because no single leader possesses all the leadership skills. Therefore, as a researcher, I agree with Galdames-Calderón (2023) who argues the following:

> It recognizes that no single leader possesses all the knowledge and skills required to address the multifaceted challenges in schools. Instead, distributed leadership taps into the expertise and potential of various individuals, allowing for a more comprehensive and responsive approach to school improvement. (p. 4)

These sentiments argue that teachers should be granted an opportunity in school leadership to harness their expertise and be able to improve the school's performance. Finally, school culture promotes teacher leadership since "cultures are crafted by school principals and are strengthened by the positive professional relationships with peers" (Ghamrawi et al., 2024, p. 664). The next section looks at the benefits of teacher leadership.

2.6.5 Benefits of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership is beneficial since it attracts school improvement, effectiveness and development. In support, Muijs and Harris (2003) argue that teacher leadership is "powerful because it is premised upon the creation of the collegial norms in schools that evidence has shown contribute directly to school effectiveness, improvement, and development" (p. 444). Also, teacher leadership is beneficial as it "recognizes the potential in teachers that teacher leadership is a powerful idea because it recognizes that teachers' ability to lead has a significant influence on the quality of relationships and teaching within the school" (Muijs & Harris, 2003, pp. 444–445). Finally, teacher leadership reclaims school leadership from the individual and

gives it to the collective, from the singular to the plural, and offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action (Muijs & Harris, 2003).

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at leadership understanding and leadership theories and then delved into the theoretical framework, which is democratic leadership – the lens for viewing the study's phenomenon, learner leadership in primary school learners. Later, it looked at the relationship between democratic leadership and Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation. It also went into greater depth on the concepts of learner leadership and learner voice. The chapter further dwelt on learner participation during leadership development activities, the leadership skills and attributes regarding learner leadership and the significance of learner leadership in school and its constraints. The chapter concluded with a discussion on teacher leadership because the student researchers displayed facets of teacher leaders, and my research interest also focused on the possible leadership development of the student researchers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. Sahithi (2021) argues that the research methodology refers to the specific procedures of understanding how the solution to research problems can be obtained. In this chapter, I present the research questions and objectives, followed by a discussion of the research paradigm and design. Next, I outline the sampling methods and describe the research participants, also reflecting on the researcher's positionality. I then discuss the data generation methods. An overview of the data analysis approach is provided. The study's analytic framework is then introduced, featuring Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation, Lundy's (2007) model of participation, and Muijs and Harris's (2007) teacher leadership framework. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The main research questions and sub-questions are the following:

1. How do primary school learners experience and demonstrate leadership through their participation in the "Learners Lead" project?

   a) What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead"?

   b) What leadership knowledge and skills were developed in these primary school learners during their involvement in the after-school clubs?

   c) How did learners participate during the "Learners Lead" project, and what does this reveal about the conceptualisation and level of their participation?

   d) What were the constraints on these primary school learners' leadership?
2. To what extent did student researchers conceptualise leadership learning as a result of their involvement in the "Learner's Lead" project?
   a) What leadership skills and values are developed in student researchers?
   b) What are the factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership?

** "Learners Lead" is the name given to the leadership intervention project.*

The study sought to:

a. Explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the learner leadership development of these primary school learners.

b. Explore the possibility of leadership learning for the student researchers as the consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A paradigm describes the researcher's beliefs about what can be known about the world. A research paradigm "constitutes the researcher's worldview, abstract beliefs and principles that shape how he/she sees the world, and how she/he interprets and acts within that world" (Khatri, 2020, p. 1436). It directs the researcher in the investigation process, including selecting research problems, setting research questions, and determining the nature and types of reality, knowledge, methodology, and value of the research work (Khatri, 2020). Similarly, Khatri (2020) affirmed that "this worldview is the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought or set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data" (p. 1435). In summary, a paradigm defines "a researcher's philosophical orientation and exerts significant implications for every decision made in the research process, including the nature of reality, types, sources of knowledge, and choice of methodology and methods" (Khatri, 2020, p. 1435). The paradigm guided me during the research process as I interrogated the phenomenon of my study.

The research paradigm used in this study is interpretive, and the approach is qualitative in nature. This approach assisted me in gathering qualitative data, which informed the findings. I align with Bertram and Christiansen (2014) in asserting that this study addressed individual concerns and sought to comprehend the subjective nature of human experience, wherein reality is understood as socially constructed through interpretation. As an interpretivist, my research sought to "understand social behaviour and how individuals make meaning of their experiences" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 35). This included exploring the lived experiences of primary school learners developing leadership skills, and student researchers engaged in leadership development interventions. Consistent with the interpretivist perspective on social reality, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) argue that there exist "multiple realities, locally and specifically constructed, and that knowledge emerges through interpretation, with

consensus potentially achieved through dialogue" (p. 35). I found the interpretive and qualitative approaches suitable to help answer the research questions of this study. The next section looks at research design.

3.3 Research Design

The research design describes the nature and pattern that the research intends to follow. Orluwene and Ajala (2020) describe research design "as the conceptual blueprint, the road map, which is akin to the skeleton (backbone) that guides and shapes the conduct of the study" (p. 12). A case study supported the interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach adopted in this study.

Paparini et al. (2020) explain that "the overall approach of case study research is based on the in-depth exploration of complex phenomena in their natural, or 'real-life', settings" (p. 2). In addition, the case study is the study of the "case", the individual case being purposively chosen from the group since the researcher wants to find details of the phenomenon. In this instance, the researcher can triangulate using different research methods in a case study, such as interviews and others (Kumar, 2011). This means the nature of my research questions on learner leadership development and teacher leadership aimed to surface an in-depth understanding of learners' leadership development and the possible leadership learning encountered by the student researchers because of leading the learner leadership clubs. As a researcher, I triangulated using focus group interviews, individual interview methods and document analysis. The case study research method has advantages. For example, Mohammed and Doorm (2022) argue that the case study "has theoretical advancement" (p. 7253) and this was used to broaden the notion of learner leadership development and teacher leadership, the phenomenon under study. Thus, the case study allows an intensive examination of the case under investigation and the incorporation of different perspectives (Mohammed & Doorm, 2022). However, on the flip side, drawbacks can exist. Bennett (2004) mentions that one should be aware of "case selection biases and confirmation biases; potential indeterminacy as well as lack of representatives" (p. 35). Against this backdrop, a focus on the sampling is important.

3.4 Sampling Methods and Research Participants

Sampling is a strategy by which the researcher selects representative elements/subjects from the population. Turner (2020) defines sampling as "the selection of a subset of the population

of interest in a research study" (p. 8). Sampling from the population is often more practical and allows data to be collected faster and at a lower cost than attempting to reach every member of the population (Turner, 2020). There are several types of sampling, and this study opted to use purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants from the population. This is a type of sampling from the population which includes specific people who are believed to be more knowledgeable than others in the context under study (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling entails collecting data from carefully selected participants who have unique characteristics that may be critical in providing positive, in-depth responses to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maree, 2020). Chauvet (2019) describes purposive sampling as "where the investigator seeks individuals who meet a specific set of criteria to determine who should comprise the sample based on the purpose of the study; subjects are then selected based on these criteria" (pp. 74–75). It was purposive in the sense that I selected the sample documents (research reports) to be analysed regarding primary school learner leadership development. It was also purposive in that I selected the participants in this study who were ELM Bachelor of Education Honours student researchers – Namibian and South African scholars who wrote research reports in the primary school context under study. Therefore, as a researcher, I approached the authors of the 25 research reports (in the primary school context) to share their insights on the phenomenon of the study. The next section looked at my position as a researcher.

3.5 Researcher Positionality

In this section, I highlight my position concerning the research context and participants and the possible influence on the study. I agree with Fenge et al. (2019), who described positionality as an acknowledgement of the multiple roles and positions that researchers and research participants bring to the research process and how they relate to each other. They added that positionality is a deep reflection of the researcher declaring their relationship to the study participants (Fenge et al., 2019). This means positionality is relational – the relationship of the researcher to the study context in which they can be an insider or outsider, which can be described as fluid and shifting (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019). Drawing on the work of Gelir (2021), my professional and personal position in this study placed me as an outsider. I am a school principal; however, none of the student researchers worked in my school, and I had not

studied with that cohort of student researchers. This indicated that my position relating to the research participants and the research context did not affect the outcome and the results of this study (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020). However, being a school principal could affect the participants' responses, who were in a lesser position in the school leadership hierarchy. Also, the some participants worked in the same region as I, but we did not work at the same school. Therefore, I met and discussed the study with the participants to flatten the planes of any hierarchy that may exist and create a rapport. The next section looks at the types of data generation methods used in this study to obtain the appropriate data.

3.6 Data Generation Methods

This section discusses the data generation methods I used when collecting data to address the research purpose and to answer the research questions. In support, Mazhar et al. (2021) defined data collection "as the process of gathering, evaluating, and analysing precise understandings for research using typical authenticated methods" (p. 6). Therefore, Mazhar et al. (2021) described the importance of data collection as "lies in the fact that without gathering the particular information, the research could not be carried out" (p. 6). The data generation methods for this study were document analysis and interviews. The documents were the research reports of the written assessment outputs (exam equivalent) of the student researchers enrolled in the ELM elective. Interviews were conducted with the student researchers who established these learner leadership clubs and presented their study's findings in the format of research reports.

3.6.1 Document analysis

Document analysis systematically evaluates both printed and electronic materials (Bowen, 2009). This approach enables researchers to interpret documents to generate understanding and empirical insights efficiently. This study analysed 25 research reports authored by student researchers in an elective module focused on educational leadership, representing a substantial proportion of the cohort and sufficient scope for a master's-level thesis. Document analysis offered insights into learner leadership development, while interviews supplemented the data to enhance depth and address potential gaps.

Advantages of document analysis: Document analysis is cost-effective and efficient, as documents are readily available and unobtrusive, allowing researchers to work without disturbing participants (Cardno, 2019; Morgan, 2022). In this study, access to documents was facilitated by the research supervisor, minimising retrieval challenges.

Disadvantages of document analysis: Document analysis may present limitations if documents lack relevant or complete information (Morgan, 2022). To mitigate this, interviews were conducted to clarify and supplement findings from the documents, ensuring robust data generation.

3.6.2 Focus group interviews

According to Denscombe (2007), focus group interviews involve "interviewing a small group of people brought together by a researcher to explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and ideas about a topic" (p. 115). Similarly, Stewart (2018) describes a focus group as "a type of group discussion about a topic under the guidance of a trained moderator" (p. 687). In this study, 21 participants were divided into smaller focus groups comprising five and four members, respectively. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed of the study's ethical principles and collaboratively established ground rules. Each session lasted approximately two hours and followed a structured interview protocol. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Advantages of focus group interviews: Focus group interviews yield diverse opinions and prompt rich, qualitative data quickly (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). They also enable immediate clarification and provide a platform for participants to refine their views. These benefits were observed during this study as I obtained nuanced responses to probe for further information.

Disadvantages of focus group interviews: Scheduling focus groups can be challenging, as it is often difficult to find a convenient time for all participants (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). In addition, conducting interviews online posed connectivity challenges for some participants, necessitating occasional one-on-one interviews. Focus groups may also lead to groupthink or dominance by certain participants; to address this, I ensured a comfortable environment to encourage open, independent responses.

3.6.3 Individual interviews

An individual interview is a qualitative research method in which a researcher conducts a private, in-depth conversation with a single participant to gather detailed information about their experience, opinions, or behaviours. Likewise, Ryan et al. (2009) argue that individual interviews are a valuable qualitative research method for gaining in-depth insights into people's perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, Boateng (2018) added that an individual interview can provide rich data for non-sensitive topics; researchers are encouraged to use them in combination with other methods for more comprehensive results. Therefore, in this study, interviews were combined with an analysis of documents. Individual interviews were conducted with three student researchers whose schedules did not align with those of the other focus group participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

This section discusses how the data was analysed. Orluwene and Ajala (2020) describe that data analysis "is the process of organizing, structuring and incorporating meaning to the data collected. Data analysis is the process of using a systematic and logical approach to convert raw data into meaningful information for a better conclusion and authentic decision-making" (p. 45). This process of analysis in research is carried out through appropriate methods or techniques to produce good findings. I concur with Orluwene and Ajala (2020) that data analysed "using appropriate method helps to proffer answers to research questions" (p. 45).

The data in this study was analysed using thematic and content data analysis techniques. According to Mackieson et al. (2019) content analysis "refers to the process of organizing and quantifying the contents of the data into pre-determined categories relevant to the central research question(s) in a systematic, replicable, and objective manner" (p. 969). Likewise, Orluwene and Ajala (2020) agree that with content analysis, "ideas and views of different people are grouped through the use of coding with a similar technique" (p. 46).

On the other hand, Bowen (2009) defines thematic analysis as themes forming patterns within the data, becoming the categories for analysis. Mackieson et al. (2019) added that thematic analysis "moves beyond describing data to interpreting it, and thus requires relatively more involvement, including intellectual contribution, from the researcher" (p. 969). Expanding further, "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns

(themes) within data" (Shafi & Mallinson, 2023 cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The documents and interview data were analysed using both content and thematic data analysis techniques. Inductive analysis was adopted, which involves themes emerging from the data and codes that are not known from theory/literature (De Koker, 2019). One of the purposes of the inductive analysis approach (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) is that a "huge amount of data is turned into a short, clear version that answers the research questions and objectives and can be used to develop a model or a theory". This means the data from the documents and interviews were summarised inductively, forming themes. The next section looks at another type of analysis that was used in this study, abductive analysis.

As this study was socially constructed, I deemed it necessary to use a theoretical framework that allowed me, as a researcher, to explain observed behaviours, patterns, or relationships based on established knowledge using abductive analysis (Danermark et al., 2002). Abductive analysis is a process that involves a back-and-forth exchange between research evidence and theory. Therefore, abductive analysis is used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within the theory and the analytic tool (De Koker, 2019). As part of my study analysis, the following theories and analytical tools were used: the theory of democratic leadership, Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation and Lundy's (2007) model of participation, which was used in the analysis of question one of my study. Then, later, research questions on teacher leadership drew on the work of Muijs and Harris (2007) to characterise teacher leadership practices. My attention now turns to a discussion of the analytical frameworks.

3.8 Analytical Frameworks

This section explains the analytical tools used in this study as follows: Hart's ladder (1992) of children's participation, Lundy's model of participation and Muijs and Harris (2007) – Towards an understanding of teacher leadership.

3.8.1 Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation

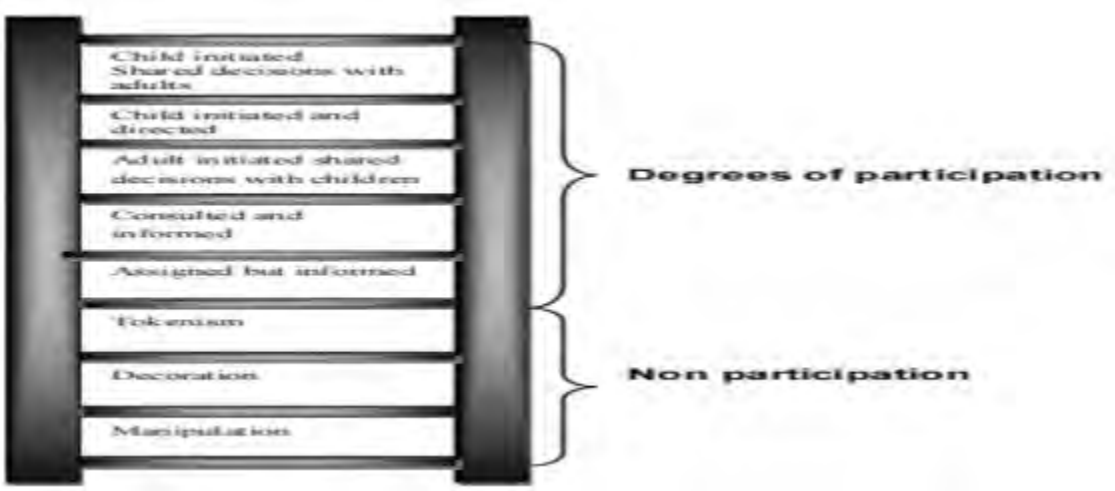

Figure 3.1: Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation (Source: Hart, 1992)

Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation provided a language to explain children's (learners') participation in this study. It served as an explanatory/analytical framework to illustrate learners' leadership development opportunities and learner participation. This ladder, as an analytical tool, is nuanced, unlike the work of Mitra and Gross (2009) on the 'Pyramid of learner voice', which was adopted by Grant and Kajee (2020) in a learner leadership study. This model captured the nuances and made explicit the levels of participation during leadership development activities – a sub-question under the main research question 1.

In summary, Hart's (1992) ladder of children's participation (see Figure 3.1) begins at the bottom with the least participatory learner's involvement 'non-participation', which consists of manipulation, decoration and tokenism. The next level of children's participation 'degree of participation' consists of assigned but informed, consulted and informed and adult-initiated and shared decisions with children. The next level is captured as a high level of participation – 'learner-initiated'. This serves as a language to describe the levels of children's participation.

I was aware that Hart's (1992) model of children's participation is criticised for its narrow representation of analysing child participation. Hart (2008) argues that "the ladder of participation addresses only a rather narrow range of ways that most children in the world participate in their communities" (p. 20). He further stressed that the model focuses on programmes or projects rather than on children's everyday informal participation in their

community and is largely limited to describing the varying roles adults play in children's participation (Hart, 2008).

The critique of the model further stresses that, in reality, the children can already participate with or without adult participation and this is "the kind of 'participation' that has been increasingly replaced by the segregated world of formal participation in project and programs with adults and it seems to go unrecognized by the writers on children participation" (Hart, 2008, p. 20).

Finally, "the main criticism of Hart's approach is that it used a linear model – and, in particular, a ladder – to present the eight levels of participation: this suggests the relationship between the levels is static and hierarchical, which belies the dynamic and porous relationship that can exist between the different levels" (Moules & O'Brien, 2012, p. 18). Against this backdrop, the Lundy model provided a nuanced lens for my analysis.

3.8.2 Lundy's model of participation

Lundy's (2007) model of participation provided a nuanced and explicit way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC, which focuses on the rights of children. The model focuses on four elements that need to be considered when encouraging child participation.

Space:

Children must be given the opportunity to express a view.

Voice:

Children must be facilitated to express their views.

Audience:

The view must be listened to.

Influence:

The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Figure 3.2: Lundy's (2007) model of participation adopted from Article 12 of the UNCRC (p. 927)

Conclusively, Lundy's (2007) model of participation was used in this study to conceptualise learners' participation in the "Learners Lead" initiative in this study. Firstly, she argues that learners need to be provided with 'space' by the adults, a conducive environment where learners will feel safe and secure to express their views. Secondly, for learners to have a 'voice', adults in this study needed to support learners and be able to freely express their views by providing them with enough information which facilitates their participation in decision-making. Thirdly, Lundy (2007) highlighted the importance of the 'audience' – adults in the 'Learners Lead' project needed to make sure that the voice of the learners was listened to and taken into consideration. Lastly, influence in this model advocated that learners need adult influence for their voice to be taken seriously and given due weight. My attention now turns to Muijs and Harris (2007), the analytical tool drawn upon to understand the teacher leadership development of the student researchers.

3.8.3 Muijs and Harris (2007): Towards an understanding of teacher leadership

This was the analytical tool I used to analyse research question two in my study. Muijs and Harris (2007) describe teacher leadership as teachers sharing in decision-making and taking initiative in the school. They provide a useful categorisation of teacher leadership premised on the nature of teacher leadership. This framework consists of three categories: developed teacher leadership, emergent teacher leadership, and restricted teacher leadership. In the developed teacher leadership category, all teachers are involved in the school's decision-making.

Meanwhile, in emergent teacher leadership, teachers tend to be consulted in decision-making limited to management members in the school and there is evidence of teachers leading initiatives supported by the school management team. The restricted teacher leadership category, as the name suggests, finds minimal involvement and initiative. The next section looked at the trustworthiness of the study.

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

In qualitative studies, the quality of the research is termed 'trustworthiness'. Trustworthiness of a study refers to "the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study" (Connelly, 2016, p. 435).Four different measures/criteria were used in this study to enhance trustworthiness. Firstly, ***credibility*** refers to the evidence of true value in the research (Stahl & King, 2020). This was ensured using triangulation, which means various methods of generating the data for my study – data was generated from 25 student researchers using interviews and a document analysis (research reports). Secondly, ***transferability*** refers to how well the study findings can be transferred to another context, setting, or situation (Connelly, 2016). Similarly, for Tümen (2020), transferability means the extent to which findings may be applicable in similar contexts. Accordingly, I generated data from student researchers whom I purposively selected based on their knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). Thirdly, ***confirmability*** is the degree to which the findings of a study are confirmed with the study participant responses and not shaped by the researcher's feelings, which can include bias, motivation or interest. To make sure the study findings were free from bias, I triangulated the data as mentioned earlier (Shin & Miller, 2022). Lastly, ***dependability*** refers "to the extent to which the researcher can account for variations in the study, or for how and why the findings of the study are different from those of previous studies" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2020, p. 212) and that the findings are "consistent and could be repeated" (Amankwaa, 2016, p. 121). Hence, I made sure that I obtained and reported sufficient data from document analysis and transcribed interviews.

3.10 Research Ethics

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) stated that "Ethics has to do with behaviour that is considered right or wrong" (p. 65). During the study, I applied the ethical principles involved in conducting research.

As a researcher, there are matters of ethics that I needed to consider while conducting this study, such as informed consent, voluntary participation, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, not harming participants and respect for the privacy of participants, among others. In regard to documents (research reports), as a researcher, I made sure that anonymity and confidentiality were kept and that no details of the individual's previous student researchers' confidential information would be exposed, such as their names. Likewise, Bowen (2009) argued that “it is necessary as a researcher to as well determine the authenticity, credibility, accuracy, and representativeness of the selected documents” (p. 33). Following ethical standards in the study, as a researcher, I made sure that informed consent was negotiated with the participants and understood. I also provided my participants with the necessary information regarding the study process so that they were fully informed – they also had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology employed in this case study, which focused on the leadership development of primary school learners participating in the "Learners Lead" initiative and the leadership growth of student researchers involved in the ELM elective. To strengthen findings, a triangulated approach was adopted, using interviews and document analysis. The chapter also explained the data analysis process, followed by discussions on trustworthiness and the ethical considerations that guided the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings generated from the research data. To remind the reader, I will present the research questions and then provide a presentation and discussion of the findings organised according to the research questions. Data was generated through focus group interviews, individual interviews and an analysis of documents, as shown in the methodology chapter of this thesis. This chapter is organised in response to the following research questions:

a) How did primary school learners experience and demonstrate leadership through their participation in the "Learners Lead" project?

   a) What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead"?

   b) What leadership knowledge and skills were developed in these primary school learners during their involvement in the after-school clubs?

   c) How did learners participate during the "Learners Lead" project, and what does this reveal about the conceptualisation and level of their participation?

   d) What were the constraints on these primary school learners' leadership?

b) What was the leadership learning of student researchers as a result of their involvement in the "Learner's Lead" project?

   a. What leadership skills and values were developed in student researchers?
   b. What are the factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership?

***** *"Learners Lead" is the name given to the leadership intervention project.*

4.2 Coding of Data Sources

In Table 4.1 below, I present the data using the coding system. Each code represents the participant and data generation method employed.

Table 4.1: Coding system for document analysis of the study

Code	**Explanation**
RR7 2014	Example: Research report 7 2014. Similarly, all research reports used in the study were recorded accordingly.

Table 4.2: Coding system of the focus group interview of the study

Data source	**Codes**
Focus Group Interview	**FGI 1; FGI 2; FGI 3; FGI 4; FGI 5**

Table 4.3: Coding system individual group interview of the study

Data source	**Codes**
Individual Interview	**II1; II2; II3**

The presentation and discussion of findings are structured according to my two main research questions and are captured by the various themes to which my attention now turns.

4.3 Intervention Projects during "Learners Lead"

This section addresses the question: What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead"?

During the "Learners Lead" initiative, 25 Namibian and South African student researchers from Rhodes University established learner leadership development clubs in primary schools. These clubs served as intervention spaces where the learners were guided to determine the focus areas of their activities. These learner-defined topics became the basis for engaging activities designed to nurture and develop leadership skills during their participation in the after-school clubs.

The focus areas of the "change initiatives determined by the club members were also interesting in their diversity" (Grant & Nekondo, p. 19). The focus areas are captured in the table below.

Table 4.4: School intervention projects the primary school learners were involved in during "Learners Lead"

CATEGORY	**FOCUS AREAS OF THE LEARNER LEADERSHIP CLUBS**	NO OF CLUBS N=25
ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (Total 9=36%)	Speaking, reading, writing and spelling Library access and functionality Academic performance (including homework)	5 3 1
LEARNER CONDUCT (Total 3=12%)	Teenage pregnancy Alcohol & drug abuse Anti-bullying	1 1 1
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT (Total 11=44%)	Littering campaign Tree planting & gardening Feeding scheme Hand wash Erecting a jungle gym theme playground	5 3 1 1 1
EXTRA-CURRICULAR (Total 2=8%)	Sport How leadership is understood across a range of stakeholders in our school community	1 1

The data presented reveals that a predominant focus was observed in the physical environment category among the top 44% of learner leadership clubs, comprising 11 out of 25 in the Namibian and South African case studies. Of these 11 clubs, five initiated projects centred on anti-littering campaigns, three focused on tree planting and gardening, while one project each addressed hand washing and the establishment of a jungle gym-themed playground. Following closely, English proficiency emerged as the next common category, encompassing 36% of the clubs (9 out of 25). Learner-led initiatives within this category targeted improvements in speaking, reading, writing and spelling skills, with five out of nine projects addressing these areas. Library access and functionality constituted another notable category, with three out of nine clubs initiating interventions in this realm. Academic performance, represented by a homework club, accounted for 4% (1 out of 25) of the clubs.

The third group of club categories centred on learner conduct, comprising 12% (3 out of 25) of the total. One club addressed teenage pregnancy, another tackled alcohol and drug abuse, and the third focused on an anti-bullying campaign. Lastly, extra-curricular activities constituted 8% (2 out of 25) of the initiated school interventions. These activities encompassed sports and fostering leadership understanding among stakeholders within the school community, with each category represented by one club initiative. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the percentages of the categories of school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead" as described above.

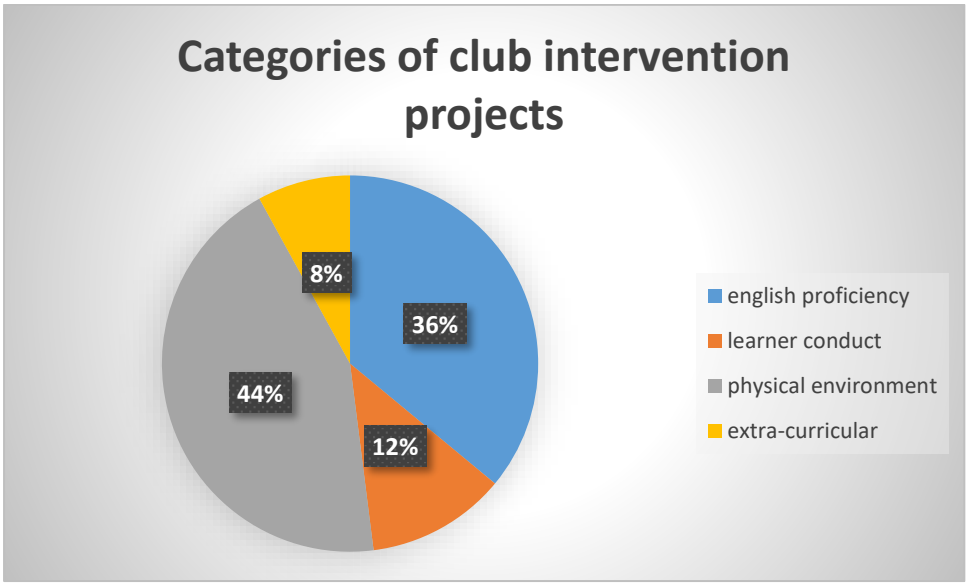

Figure 4.1: Categories of club intervention projects

4.4 Cultivated Knowledge and Skills among Learner Leaders during the Intervention Club

This section presents data answering my second research question which is about the leadership skills and knowledge that were developed in these primary school learners, if any, during their involvement in the after-school leadership clubs. The literature notes the distinction between leadership knowledge and skills (see Chapter Two), but the data analysed conflated leadership skills with leadership knowledge. Consequently, evidence of leadership knowledge was not found in the data.

Furthermore, leadership skills are important because they help leaders guide and motivate their teams and ensure that the club members and school achieve their goals. The leadership skills that emerged in the study findings were as follows: teamwork, problem-solving and co-operation; decision-making and confidence; communication and listening skills; perseverance, responsibility, commitment, respect and authentic leadership. A discussion of these now follows.

4.4.1 Nurturing leadership: Learner leaders cultivate teamwork and problem-solving skills through co-operation

The study findings revealed that 75% referred to teamwork as the most dominant leadership skill developed. It revealed that club members developed the ability to work as a team. Driskell et al. (2018) define teamwork "as the process through which team members collaborate to achieve task goals" (p. 1). In addition, Mercader (2021) further concurs that teamwork

> …is the ability to engage in the necessary actions to be carried out with a group or groups of people to reach the established goal with the least risk and the highest return in terms of time, cost and quality, feeling satisfaction, commitment and pride in belonging to the team". (p. 5)

Data from the research reports revealed the characteristics of teamwork adopted by primary school learners. Research data reflected: *"learners have learned that teamwork makes an effort; if you work together, you are going to reach your goals"* (RR17, 2017). Similarly, another data shared: *"learners have learned how to work with others and to be with others in a kind manner, being friendly and understanding others"* (RR5, 2016). The theory that framed this study, democratic leadership, advocates team-oriented processes to excel in an activity or organisation at large. Therefore, democratic leadership is a "team-oriented, normative process in which members of the professional team take a substantive role in the decision-making process relating to the vision of the school and the initiatives designed to achieve its vision" (Liggett, 2022, p. 2). Further data revealed in RR1 2015 that *"most learners acknowledged the fact that they felt that teamwork was crucial in all aspects of leadership regardless of the activity. Teamwork often needs individuals to think about the needs of others rather than themselves*". In this instance, the members of the team were the learner leaders who tried to work together and made decisions that related to the leadership club organisation and were able to reach the vision of their school. This was obvious since educators always say practice makes

perfect and this was leadership practice in teamwork: "*They learned to work together with others because it gets things done fast"* (RR12 2016).

Members of the leadership development club collaborated and valued each other. This was evidenced in some reports: "*Learners acknowledge the teamwork and spirit demonstrated by club members since it was evident that learners valued each other's contributions towards the project"* (RR10 2016) and *"most of the learners work as a team and do not fight with others"* (RR12 2016). In agreement, Darma et al. (2021) state that teamwork "is the activity of organizational members in collaborating well with each other and actively working which contains elements of trust, honesty, mutual trust, support, and responsibility in carrying out tasks to achieve common goals" (p. 3830). This means that teamwork built relationships, evidenced by RR17 2018: *"The learner leadership skills developed through working with other learners from different grades whom they never knew"*. Working as a team is the only way to save time and effort. Further, it is important to exchange experiences and learn from each other, as noted by Alshammari and Sufta (2023).

Working in collaboration with other learners acquires co-operation and learners develop co-operation skills. For instance, RR17 2016 attested that "*co-operation was mentioned by most of the club members, 40% mentioned that they have learned how to co-operate with others, either club members or fellow learners*". In addition, "*working together and co-operation is essential at a school organisation as it makes work easy for everyone"* (RR16 2018). This means while learners worked together, they developed a sense of how to solve problems. This was evident in RR15 2016: *"I learnt how to work with different people until we reach an agreement and solve a problem".* RR3 2018 added: "*When people complain, I learned how to solve problems*". Further evidence in the quotation concurred: "I *observed this in several meetings that learners worked together as they come up with different solutions to solve the homework problem in the school"* (RR13 2014). The literature of Biswas and Rahman (2019) agrees that a "problem skill might be characterized as the capacity to handle different problems in conditions where feelings or sentiments are incorporated" (pp. 104–105).

4.4.2 Empowering self-confidence and decision-making: How learner leadership clubs develop future leaders

It was evident that the club members successfully achieved their intended goal of developing their leadership skills through their engagement in the intervention clubs. This section presents

the self-confidence and decision-making skills learners attained through engaging in intervention clubs.

Perets et al. (2023) argue that self-confidence "is a key element in becoming a leader" (p. 4). Self-confidence is one such skill as illustrated in the following data quotation: *"The club members were so confident in executing their planned activities to combat anti-bullying in the school and making sure that the school becomes a safe learning environment"* (RR17 2018). In addition, "the *learners in the club were confident to air their voice and do speeches to motivate the rest of the student body which they never used to do"* (FGI 1). In support of the above claim, Whitehead (2009) argues that "confidence is central to the development of learner voice and leadership. Confidence to speak can be developed in safe and supportive spaces such as learner leadership clubs and through involvement in school change initiatives when learners have a vested interest" (p. 23). Arguing further, another research report highlighted that *"learners' self-confidence has increased as a result of being in the leadership club"* (RR22 2016). Self-confidence was evident: "I *used to be afraid of talking in front of people because I was afraid that they would laugh at me when I said wrong things and now, I am not scared anymore, I was shy but not anymore"* (RR22 2016). This shows that "*the programme has improved the confidence of some participants be it in class or when addressing others to take on the initiative for hand washing"* (RR7 2018). In support, Flutter (2006) agrees that when learners are put in the driving seat and given control and responsibility, they discover creativity and life skills which bring about self-belief and confidence.

Apart from developing confidence, the research reports also highlighted that the learners developed the ability to make decisions. Hallo et al. (2020) define decision-making as a "cognitive process that generates alternatives and selects one of those alternatives in order to prepare a suitable action" (p. 3). As evident in the following quotation, *"learners learned to make decisions on their own and this gave them confidence in running the club and helping other learners with homework"* (RR13 2014). I agree with Rasheed (2021) who states that democratic leadership "is a form of leadership that is the most popular style of leadership used by school administrators whereby learners are included in decision-making which is the opposite of authoritarian decision-making" (p. 33). Therefore, Mitra and Gross (2009), posit that "youths are to be provided with opportunities to participate in the decision-making process that will shape their lives and that of their fellow learners" (p. 524). Evidence from the research report attests that primary school learners made decisions: *"It was nice to decide on what to do*

and nobody decided for us, we agreed to plant an orange tree" (RR10 2016). Collinson and Collinson (2008) explain that learners' involvement in the decision-making process increases aspirations for learners' ownership, allowing leadership to develop through them. In one of the research report student researchers testified that "*members of the leadership club got involved in decision-making at a lot of occasions during the club's intervention process"* (RR15 2016) and that *"the learners were leading by themselves do decisions on their own"* (FGI 1). In conclusion, Alshammari and Sufta (2023) claim that "letting learners participate in giving suggestions and making decisions have a direct benefit on their education" (p. 1378). As a school leader with vast experience in primary school leadership, I concur with Alshamari and Sufta's point of view that when learners take part in decisions there is a wide range of benefits, such as taking ownership of the school and their educational success. My attention now turns to communication and listening skills that learners attained through engaging in the intervention clubs.

4.4.3 Strengthening communication and listening skills: Insights from learner leaders in after-school leadership clubs

Communication and listening skills are closely connected as effective communication relies on active listening. A leader cannot truly listen without engaging in meaningful communication, as both are essential for understanding and responding to the needs of others. Alshammari and Sufta (2023) mention that "one of the most important skills that effective leaders should develop is communication" (p. 1378). According to the study findings, one of the skills that the learner leaders developed was how to communicate effectively with one another. One research report (RR17 2016) attested that *"the communication skill was developed through communicating with fellow learners during cleaning activities"*. There was consensus in the report (RR29 2014) which captured that "*communication skills were also developed amongst a few learners, which is a good thing the club did for these learner leaders".* Similarly, in RR12 2016, a quotation revealed that "*some learners indicated that they are now better at communicating with others and some learners indicated that they are now better at communicating with others".* This meant that "*the learners have learned how to communicate with others regardless of the differences"* (FGI 2). Sharing a similar sentiment, Lawhon and Lawhon (2000) propose that "learners who have suitable communication skills are friendly and cooperative are to promote leadership" (p. 106). This highlights an alignment between the data and the literature concerning the development of communication skills.

Listening through communication was promoted. Singh (2023) posits that active listening can empower leaders to build trust and relationships to achieve team goals. The evidence from the documents noted: *"I learned that when I'm speaking to other people, I don't have to be rude but rather sufficiently speak to them then they will listen to me*" (RR22 2016). Further evidence added: *"I learned that it is important to listen to others when speaking"* (RR22 2016). Another quotation attested that *"being a club member was great because it helped me to listen to the problem of others and resolved it to reach our goals"* (RR13 2014). In agreement with the data, Whitehead (2009) states that good leaders are those who demonstrate loyalty and have good listening skills. This means the ability to listen to other people's ideas is a vital leadership skill that is required by all leaders including learner leaders. Therefore *"to have good communication, one needs to be a good listener to answer accordingly"* (RR13 2018). Schlak (2021) agrees that "listening is a way that creates meaning and significance between those listening to each other" (p. 707). My attention now turns to perseverance as a skill that learners attained through engaging in the intervention clubs.

4.4.4 Building perseverance through responsibility and commitment: Insights from learners

The data revealed that the learners in the leadership club made continued efforts to achieve their goals despite several difficulties. This means that learners developed perseverance as evident in the following quotation:

> *Learners in the leadership club have indicated that they learned not to give up, but rather to continue striving forward sometimes we did not know what to do next because there was no one to help us when the teacher was not around but we still never gave up on our club until we reached our goals (RR22 2016).*

Agreeing with the data, Zan (2023) mentions that perseverance as a skill fuels our energy and effort to achieve set goals. Since they persevered, they developed a sense of responsibility. Cavagnaro and Zande (2021) describe being responsible as "the opportunity or ability to act independently and, most importantly, it signifies that the person who is acting is accountable for the action taken" (p. 143). The study reveals a sense of responsibility as participants noted the following: "*I learned to be responsible because if I did not keep accurate records, I would have to explain why things went wrong" (*RR15 2016). In addition: "*60% of learners indicated that being responsible is a crucial skill, stating that they have become accountable for*

everything they do" (RR 16 2016). In line with the above data, Flutter (2006, p. 188) suggests that "putting learners in driving seats and giving them responsibilities inspires them". This approach showed that *"the learners' leadership skills improve, and they demonstrate increased responsibility in their daily activities"* (FGI 1). Agreeing with the above sentiment, Mitra and Gross (2009) assert that "collaboration comes with an expectation of youth sharing the responsibility for the vision of the group, the planned activities, and the group process that facilitates the enactment of these activities" (p. 530).

Being responsible resulted in commitment as attested in the following quotation: "*Learners have learned that a true leader should show commitment and always be available to help others"* (RR13 2014). Widyaningrum et al. (2022) reinforce that "Commitment is a combination of motivation, condensation and measurement of the sense that a person has in order to carry out a task well without supervision and their desire, and enthusiasm to complete the task" (p. 4). The above literature is in line with the data as it revealed that *"through observation, club members showed commitment to doing their task by attending meetings, reminding me whenever we have a meeting, and calling me with their parents' phones to discuss certain matters that have to do with the club"* (RR5 2016). My focus now shifts to respect, another leadership skill that learners attained by being involved in leadership clubs.

4.4.5 Earning respect: An authentic way to leadership development

Learner leaders need to respect themselves and others. Respect was identified as the main attribute for a person to be able to lead. Attesting to this, one report noted: *"80% of learners in a study wrote that they respect others and the environment, unlike before they feel respected by other learners because when they tell them to pick up litter and water their gardens, they do it"* (RR16 2016). In addition, the data from RR1 2019 confirmed that *"I learn how to respect others and how to be a good person and a good leader".* Learner leaders developed respect – a valuable skill that will help overcome organisational barriers and promote well-being (Kumar & Dhiman, 2021). My attention turns to authentic leadership developed by learners.

Whitehead (2009) states that authentic leaders always seek improvement, are aware of those being led and look out for the welfare of others. The data show that learners developed an authentic leadership style as indicated in the following quotation *"Learners indicated that they are authentic leaders because they show love and care to other learners"* (RR15 2016). When authentic leadership character emerged in learners "*they developed an exemplary attitude just*

*showing the rest of the school that they are authentic leaders" (*RR29 2014). Other testimonies on leadership development were that *"I learned how to lead my peers in the right way, and I have developed some new skills"* (RR5 2018). Further evidence was: *"Participants pointed out that leadership was developed when they were encouraging other learners to use the reading corners and to improve their reading"* (RR1 2017). In agreement, Grant and Nekondo (2016) argue that "learner involvement in preliminary activities to get something running constitutes a good example of leadership because they brought about change in the school and through their collective action learners changed their school and made it better for themselves and their peers" (p. 22). In conclusion, the data revealed that *"learner leaders were authentic leader such that they were exemplary, influential, inspire and motivate, do the right thing and many others a good leader can do"* (RR2 2017).

4.5 Participation Conceptualised and Levels of Learners' Participation During "Learners Lead"

This section addresses the research question regarding how learners participated during the "Learners Lead" project, and what this revealed about the conceptualisation and levels of their participation. First, it explores the understanding of participation. Next, Lundy's (2007) model of participation, which emphasises space, voice, audience and influence, is used as an analytical framework to present the findings. Finally, the section examines the levels of learner participation according to Hart's ladder of children's participation.

4.5.1 How participation is understood

The data revealed that participation is understood as involvement, taking part (an action), engagement and contribution to something. In support of this, a student researcher defined participation "*as the action of taking part in something"* (FGI 1). The literature from Sairambay (2020) quoting Livingstone (2013) puts it simply that participation refers to "a process of taking part in something" (p. 121). The data revealed that participation *"is a process of getting involved into a discussion and it is the fact of taking part, as in some action or attempt"* (FGI 3). It was further evident in the data that participation *"is to engage yourself in an important discussion"* (FGI 4) and this was as a *"contribution to decision-making"* (II1). This indicated that the notion of participation involves taking part and being involved in decision-making. Being involved in decision-making is part of democratic leadership, the theory that framed this study. Uushona (2018) highlights that the use of democratic leadership in schools "aims to

develop real democracy through the active participation of educational stakeholders, be it in classrooms or the whole school's affairs in general" (p. 45).

Furthermore, the next quotation from the data added that *"participation was recognised during the "Learners Lead" in the sense that the learners were given a platform to air their voice and being able to take part in the decision-making of the school social context"* (FGI 3). In this regard, Castro-Zubizarreta and Calvo-Salvador (2024) argue that participation "from the societal perspective is that it is recognised as a right, providing the possibility for human beings to take part in different social contexts and to have their voice taken into account" (p. 644). Therefore, *"the whole initiative for these after-school leadership club initiatives was that to build and encourage the notion of free participation and democracy among primary school learners"* (II2) To emphasise these views, the literature explains participation as "a process of sharing decisions that affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is how a democracy is built" (Hart, 1992, p. 5). Therefore, there seems to be an alignment with the literature and the data about participation.

4.5.2 Learner's participation during leadership development

The evidence in the data revealed that there was a provision of learner participation during learner leadership development club interventions. To remind the reader, I did draw on the Lundy model of the involvement of children which will provide the language to explain children's (learner) participation in this section.

4.5.2.1 Voice: A catalyst for leadership development

Voice is the right to express a view freely (Lundy, 2007). Data revealed that learners were allowed to express themselves during leadership development activities. Attesting to this is a student researcher who explained that *"who was initiating those activities were the learners. They were the ones that were initiating their ideas and to identify which one they have to carry out while myself I was just a facilitator"* (FGI 4). Another participant alluded that

> *...many times, that I was not there we elected leaders, there was a leader among them, and this leader would now delegate whatever they have to do like we had a talent show, this talent show was organised among senior primary learners were everybody could showcase their talent, whether is storytelling, whether is what (II1).*

The literature emphasised that learners must be given direction from adults as it is usually complex in the beginning but motivation and persuasion from adults will transform them into active participants (Hart, 1992). Conclusively another student researcher highlighted how adults facilitated the learners to have a voice

> *At every meeting, they knew what we doing what needs to be done so they will pick up from whatever was left behind or whoever has the new idea will voice so they more or less initiated it at time they would need to remind themselves of previous decision because sometimes maybe they didn't take the action (II2).*

Therefore, according to Lundy's (2007) model of children's participation, voice alone is not enough for the child to participate; in addition to voice, there should be a space, audience and influence.

4.5.2.2 Space facilitates leadership development

Lundy (2007) emphasises the importance of providing a safe space for meaningful participation. The data revealed that children were given such space during their leadership development. In other words, learners were actively provided with an environment conducive to their growth. In line with the literature above, a student researcher noted: *"Initially, I was responsible for organising when we would meet to discuss leadership. However, as time went on, more of that responsibility was handed over to the learners"* (FGI 1). Another student researcher added that they provided learners with space by allowing them to take the lead: *"We would randomly draw a topic, and the learner would research it, present their findings and then lead a discussion. Towards the end, I wasn't even chairing the meetings—the learners were taking turns to do it"* (FGI 1).

This evidence shows that giving learners enough space to adapt to an environment where they can interact freely with one another helps them become more active participants. In this context, the space advocated by Lundy's (2007) model proved to be a key factor in promoting learner participation. Reinforcing this point, Castro-Zubizarreta and Calvo-Salvador (2024) argue that "children should be allowed space to express their views in safe and inclusive environments" (p. 645).

4.5.2.3 Audience: Encourages participation in leadership development

Lundy (2007) highlights the importance of 'audience' – adults in the 'Learners Lead' project who needed to make sure that the voice of the learners was listened to and considered. The data revealed that the learners were given an audience to listen to their voices. A student researcher confirmed this by mentioning that the learners during leadership club presentations were listened to:

> *In turn, the learners took presentations to their classes because each one was assigned a classroom. They had to be with this class every day in the morning while the teachers were busy with briefing and they became the leaders in their classes, so each one went to their class (FGI 1).*

Likewise, another participant added that the learners in the leadership club had their diaries to record in and reported back; in that way, they were being listened to: *"During meeting the whole club they had their diaries when they were taking records while they were taking notes of everything it happened so that they could also report back or to reflect on what they have learned throughout the whole process"* (FGI 2).

Another contribution from the data by a student researcher added the following:

> *The learners have been looking at ways to keep the school clean, making sure that they talk to other learners during morning assembly when it comes to cleaning the school. To make sure that they were listened to one thing that they came up with was awarding classes in the surroundings of the most cleaned. So, it was a weekly initiative for the class which was the cleanest to be awarded a certificate (FGI 4).*

The above data agrees with the literature that learners need an audience for their views to be heard (Carey et al., 2024). This is supported by Lundy (2007), who argues that children's views should be listened to. Agreeing with this, Carey et al. (2024) share that "facilitating the participation of children's voices, therefore, requires serious consideration by the student researchers [psychologist], especially taking the child's age, maturity, and understanding into account of growing importance is the application of the concept of 'due weight'" (n.p.).

4.5.2.4 Influence assists in the children's participation

According to Lundy (2007), children need to be influenced to strengthen their voice when participating. Influence in this model advocates that learners need adult influence for their voice to be taken seriously and given due weight. Their views should be acted upon, as appropriate. In agreement with the literature, document data revealed that a student researcher noted the following:

> *Learners draw out a topic they will pick it by just coincidence in like a draw and then you have to go and research about what this means and present something about it to the class then after the presentation they receive a formal response from the viewers (FGI 1).*

The data above revealed evidence that children were influenced by the teachers' formal responses and feedback they received, which were given due weight according to the children's age and maturity (Lundy, 2007). Another student researcher attested to this:

> *When I was meeting the whole club, they had their diaries when they were taking records while they were taking notes of everything that happened so that they could also report back or reflect on what they have learned throughout the whole process and after that, they received the feedback (FGI 3).*

Therefore, the above data aligns with the literature in the sense that the learners during the leadership club were influenced by the adults who provided formal feedback and responses.

4.5.3 Levels of children's participation

The provision of voice, space, audience and influence affirmed that learners' participation improved. Data revealed that the level of learner participation improved, as attested to by a student researcher:

> *In the beginning, I can say the participation was kind of poor. I'm saying it was kind of poor because they were still trying to find out what the club is all about and it wasn't easy. But when is get to the middle of the intervention process, they knew what they wanted to and things were running easy, not like at the beginning (FGI 4).*

Likewise, another student researcher added:

> *The learners at the beginning were very shy; they were not interested. When they were doing the introduction and trying to explain the whole process they were not interested. They were just talking with their friends, someone playing and so on. And then when we started and throughout, they just became strong to answer any question and to react to anything. The whole process they were just becoming active and active you know (FGI 3).*

It was revealed that participants were not willing to open up at the beginning, but later began to engage in discussions. The above evidence also indicated that engagement in the intervention clubs promoted participation, and learners were able to take part in the decision-making process – this is a requirement of democratic leadership. In agreement with the literature by Rasheed (2021) on democratic leadership, this form of leadership is "the most popular style of leadership used by school administrators whereby learners are included in decision-making which is the opposite of authoritarian decision-making" (p. 33).

Further data also revealed that the level of participation at the start was restricted and expanded gradually. A student researcher attested to this, in the sense that *"I was impressed by them and their participant was not the same it moved turn point A to C or D from the beginning their participation improved there was growth in the participation"* (FGI 1). Sharing the same sentiment, another student researcher agreed that *"learners developed participation, the growth of participation was increasing, from the beginning it was a bit low participation and toward the end there it was high"* (FGI 3). The above sentiments are supported by Hart's ladder of children's participation (Hart, 1992); the ladder begins at the bottom with the least participatory learner involvement and ends with a high level of participation, the 'learner-initiated' degree of participation comprising learner-initiated and directed, learner-initiated and shared decisions with adults. At the start of the club intervention project, learner participation was low, but their engagement steadily increased and improved by the end as the activities progressed.

4.6 Constraining Factors That Hindered Learner Leadership Development in the Schools

In response to the question on factors that hindered learner leadership development, the following factors were identified and discussed: policy limitations, societal norms and cultural

views, time constraints, lack of support and motivation from teachers, club members themselves and funds.

4.6.1 Policy limitations constrain learner leadership development

The absence of national policies on learner leadership for primary school learners in Namibia and South Africa constrains the development of leadership skills among young learners. Without guiding documents to follow, schools lack a structured approach to fostering leadership qualities in students. This observation aligns with findings from interviews conducted with the student researchers. One student researcher reiterated:

> *The education policymakers of our country are silent on the leadership of primary school learners, and this is the guideline for the schools to follow and be able to interpret the leadership and be able to start developing learners at an early stage (FGI 2).*

In addition, "*learner leadership of primary school learners is not included in the school educational curriculum as well as in the syllabus for it to be implemented"* (FGI 3). Therefore, "*understanding of what learners can do, people still don't know what power learner roles will come to leadership and the way they can influence the others. Compared to the way they can be influenced by the teachers"* (FGI 4).

The data concurs with the view expressed in the literature that Namibian political independence led to the implementation of the Namibian Education Act 16 of 2001 which made provision for accessible, equitable, qualitative, democratic education services. Most importantly, the act came to establish the LRC in schools. The establishment of the LRC was to promote the best interest and welfare of the school learners (Namibia. Ministry of Education, 2001) and allow them to make their voices heard, thus promoting learner leadership in schools. The Education Act 16 of 2001 states that "every state secondary school must establish a body of learners to be known as the Learners' Representative Council by the prescribed guidelines which must determine the composition and duties and functions of such a council" (2001, p. 35). The Education Act is however silent about learner leadership of primary school learners. Similarly, in South Africa, the Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 mandated 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 (RSA, 1996, chapter 2, no. 11). This policy is silent on learner leadership of primary school learners and leadership development in the

primary phase. The absence of clear policy directives and regulations also hinders the development of effective learner leadership (Shikalepo & Kandjengo, 2021). Therefore, these education policies make learners feel increasingly distanced from and even hostile to schooling as their voices are not being considered.

4.6.2 Societal norms and cultural views restricted learner leadership development

In this section, I discuss how society's beliefs and cultural understanding of children as leaders during leadership development clubs restricted learner leadership. In the literature, Kandjengo and Shikalepo (2021) alluded that

> …cultural influences could also inhibit the development of learner leaders, in some cultures, when adults are discussing issues that need to be resolved, children are sent away. Some cultures consider it a taboo for children to be in the presence of adults when they are engaged in a discussion of important matters (p. 155).

Firstly, the idea was presented that children are understood as minors and cannot be accepted as leaders and later leadership was understood as a position.

4.6.2.1 Children as minors that cannot be trusted by adults to lead

In certain societies, children are labelled as minors, and they cannot be trusted to lead. In the literature, Aziz (2020) states that "it requires a concerted and intentional effort on the part of the adult community to place the youth's significance center stage. That would imply a power shift and require the adult community to relinquish control to the youth" (p. 6). In the research reports, the sets of data revealed that participants perceived children as children and therefore, they could not be trusted with leadership roles. Regarding this idea, "*some teachers and parents labelled children as* they *cannot lead each other's because they are of the same age and traditionally, for one to lead, one has to be older than the people he/she is leading"* (RR14 2018). In addition, RR12 2016's data revealed the following:

> *Both teachers and parents see primary school learners as young and they cannot lead themselves, sometimes teachers said we are too small to speak in front of people or tell others to keep quiet in class. Both teachers and parents do not believe in learners that they can lead, they undermine and label them as children.*

Similarly, in another report, another challenge was emphasised:

> *Since the club members were just Grade 3 learners, other learners could not have understood their leadership. These Grade 3 learners are too small to run a library … why can it not be given to the Grade 5 learners and up. The other learners believed that children are just children and they cannot be leaders (RR16 2018).*

In support, Rudduck and Flutter (2000) state that "there is a legacy of public perceptions of childhood that has made it difficult until recently, for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about things that affect them, both in and out of school" (p. 80). This can be because "the sharing of power with students can be perceived as threatening to teachers" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 537).

4.6.2.2 Leadership attached to position and authority restricted learner leadership

People still equate leadership roles with position and authority. Arguably, Warren (2021) disagrees:

> Leadership is not defined by formal authority or legitimate power. Formal authority is the kind of power that is derived from positions that leaders hold. Leaders do not rely on such power (although some hold respectable positions). Instead, they rely on informal authorities, which originates from the trust that people have placed in them and their judgment ability, moral principles and respect for their integrity and expertise. This is the kind of power that leaders use to influence their subordinates (p. 10).

Evidence from a research report highlighted this as captured below:

> *For effective leadership to take place in any given organisation, one must earn the right to lead others and develop ways of ensuring that school policies are followed and implemented accordingly. Especially learners need to be elected to serve in a body which exists in school such as prefects and class captains and they have to be guided by teachers (RR17 2018).*

Against this background, in most cases, school principals will do all they can to resist new forms of leadership because they fear they might lose their power and status in the schools, hence opting to sustain the current status quo (Williams, 2011).

4.6.3 Time constraints hampered the leadership development of learners

In this section, I address the challenges faced due to time constraints in the leadership development clubs in primary schools. Factors such as balancing other activities, the absence or lateness of the student researchers and learners' absenteeism and poor punctuality significantly impacted the completion of activities. These problems hindered the effective development of leadership skills among students.

4.6.3.1 Challenges in balancing activities within time-restricted leadership development

Time allocated for group participation in clubs was often limited due to concurrent extramural activities at schools, such as sports or other scheduled events, taking precedence over leadership development clubs. Research reports provided evidence that the allocated time was insufficient for completing all planned activities. One of the research reports indicated that "*most of the time we used to be busy with other subjects, I did not write anything in my journal because I hardly get time. Learners mostly have learning support sessions in the afternoon and this keeps them away from attending to club activities"* (RR16 2016). Also, evidenced in a research report, one student argued: *"I am not always permitted to leave class wherever I am needed at the kitchen"* (RR12 2016). Therefore, it was revealed that "*time is just not enough to do everything that we have to do, like sometimes we have to clean the classrooms before we come for the meeting*" (RR3 2018). Added to that data show *"some of the challenges faced by the learners in the LLC were caused by limiting factor such as time"* (RR12 2016). The data below highlights that those learners needed to pay attention to sports and prepare for exams. Arguably, *"some of the learners were involved in sporting activities which took place during the time we scheduled for the club activities"* (RR1 2017). Similarly, *"sports activities as well as exam schedules also limited times we met as the club"* (FGI 1). In another research report (RR2 2017) it further mentions that *"the extramural activities were another hindrance in the second and the third trimester as it prevented them from opening the club at times. All members of the homework club were in different sports, and they have practice or matches at times".*

4.6.3.2 Absence and lateness of student researchers impede learner leadership

A lack of time arose as the student researchers were often late for facilitated club activities, disrupting planned schedules and hindering the effectiveness of leadership development sessions. Data revealed that some club members shared that *"the club was very interesting but*

Ms in most cases is away for the meeting we are mostly on our own and other problem at it is club eats up my time for completing my homework" (RR15 2016). This was supported by the following statement*: "Our teacher is a head of department, and she always has work to do. Sometimes we even had meetings without her*" (RR18 2018). Similarly, RR22 2016, a student researcher noted: *"I have indicated that not being part of the school environment poses a challenge to me as well as to club members"* and *"lack of time resulted in meeting not to be conducted as often as requested some did not have enough time to attend all meetings because of other commitments or would show up late as a result".*

4.6.3.3 Learners' absenteeism and lateness hindered leadership development

Learners' absenteeism and lateness impeded the smooth progression of leadership activities, reducing the time available for skill-building exercises and collaborative projects in terms of the focus of the intervention. Data from a research report highlighted that *"the learners do sometimes not come to the meetings, and they also do not have a reason why they were not there"* (RR2 2019). Likewise, in another research report, the following observation was made: "*A student researcher tended to agree with all three members, as I have also observed and recorded that learners seem to be frequently absent from meetings and they also come late with no valid excuse*" (RR18 2018). In the same vein, the data from another research report claimed that "*absenteeism from the data collected most learners mentioned this as a challenge of being absent from club meetings"* (RR7 2016). In addition, *"Some club members constantly stayed out of the meetings. It is evident in the response to the question of what challenges hindered leadership development, was that absenteeism of club members" (*RR8 2018). Furthermore, a research report reported that "*some learner leaders were continuously absenting themselves from the meetings due to compulsory school commitments such as sport, spelling bee and many more"* (RR17 2018). In support, literature from Mitra and Gross (2009) states that "accountability movements are designed and implemented with little student input, and it is questionable to increase engagement of students" (p. 525). This means when the students came late or were absent, most of the decisions made during the leadership development were done in their absence, making it difficult to increase the student's engagement.

Lack of time affected punctuality and this restricted leadership development too. Data revealed that *"some learners come very late to the meetings, and this makes us not to finish our planned things*" (RR18 2018). In a different research report, it was alluded that *"the club rule stated*

that the meeting was every second Wednesday around 14h30 but some of the subjects will be ending late and would hurt the development of the learner's leadership" (RR13 2018).

Furthermore, lack of time hindered the completion of club activities. Findings in a research report pointed out the challenges they faced: *"Time to hold our meetings*" (RR2 2019). Another challenge shared was that *"time was also not enough to assist all the learners with homework" (*RR13 2014). Likewise, *"time to meet with the club members and plan the next activities were not on our side as the school had different activities to prepare for such as the school cultural festival, spelling bee competition, and many others*" (RR7 2018).

4.6.4 Lack of support and motivation from teachers hindered learner leadership development

Lack of support and motivation from teachers was also raised as a problem that restricted learner leadership development in the schools. The data indicated the following:

> *Most teachers were not being supportive towards learners' leaders in school. For example, during the interview, teachers mentioned that learners are not encouraged to partake in activities at school, most of the time they did not receive instructions from some teachers on how they will handle the process of leading those activities (RR14 2018).*

Therefore, "this requires teachers and school leaders to have courageous forms of leadership that fearlessly promote the importance of student (learner) voice concerning learning" (Smyth, 2006a, p. 282). This can be done since "school principals control both agenda and processes" (Phaswana, 2010, p. 107 citing Cockburn, 2006). He further suggests that "the school as a sphere of participation does not encourage young people to challenge structures of authority around them" (pp. 4– 6). Arguably "*some teachers were not supportive as they discouraged some learners to leave the club"* (RR16 2016). One of the research reports data revealed that

> *The teachers who were willing to assist the learners in my absence never supported them, this was revealed by most of the club members, one said we did not get help from most of the teachers, because they prefer working with the prefects not with us (RR17 2018).*

In addition, "*Some people do not listen to what we are telling them to do and only few teachers took our club seriously*" (RR17 2016). The data concurs with the view expressed in literature that "lack of support by teachers and the misconception of staff members regarding learner's capabilities and leadership roles may work against the notion of learner leadership development efforts in schools" (Kandjengo & Shikalepo, 2021, pp. 154–155).

4.6.5 Learners (club members) hindering their leadership development

In this section, I discuss how the leadership club members themselves restricted their leadership development through a lack of co-operation and commitment; club members' poor involvement, weak relationships and poor confidence hindered leadership development.

4.6.5.1 Lack of co-operation and commitment restricted leadership development

There was conflict among club members. In agreement, data pointed out that *"some club members like teasing others, some members do not talk to one another and boys like beating girls; people do not like one another and gossip too much" (RR16 2016).* Likewise, another research report indicates that *"other learners did not want to co-operate with them to carry out cleaning activities"* (RR17 2016). A similar argument was that *"some members of the club did not want to listen to other member's ideas*" (RR2 2017).

Club members did not adhere to club rules. It was revealed in one of the research reports that "*boys were always reluctant to do the work in class in doing so some of the boys were not obeying the rules of the club"* (RR2 2017). In a similar situation, another report revealed that "*the club members did not perform their duties as agreed, one learner responded others do not perform their duties as per the agreement this also contradicts with the rules; those learners are not obeying the rules"* (RR2 2019).

Furthermore, it was evident from the data that there was a lack of commitment from some club members. Attesting to this was evidence from some research reports that *"the club members were not attending meetings nor were they executing tasks given to them and some people were always not doing what they choose to do*" (RR18 2018). Similarly, in another research report, learners themselves indicated that "*some of us were not doing the homework given from the club*" (RR2 2016). In similar circumstances, another one reports that *"some club members do not come to club meetings and when we clean with other learners, they do not come either to*

help one of the learners mentioned that some club members don't even try to pick up papers or clean the school" (RR17 2016). And that "*there are some members that do not put more effort when it comes to working*" (RR3 2018). Finally, the data in a different research report revealed that:

> *Learners indicated that sometimes they are given more work, and they have to attend to the club activities they found it difficult to balance between their academic work and the extramural activity that we used to be given too much work like in mathematics (RR3 2018).*

4.6.5.2 Club members' poor involvement caused weak relationships

Club members themselves lack involvement while involved in leadership clubs. Data from a research report revealed that "*student researcher argues that some learners were lazy, and some members are always quiet they do not give ideas, so, they should leave the club"* (RR16 2016). However, Collinson and Collinson (2008) advise that true learner involvement is the need to create a trusting relationship among them. In this case, the learners' collaboration was weak and *"some children had work together, but they did not do their tasks"* (RR10 2016). This means that sometimes there was a weak relationship among learners. Similarly, *"there were weak relationships between the learners in the club to aid in the development of learner leadership"* (RR10 2016).

4.6.5.3 Lack of confidence impedes leadership development

Data revealed that some members of the intervention clubs lacked confidence. This was evident when a student researcher alluded that *"some learners showed little courage when taking on their roles to promote the hand wash campaign"* (FGI 1). This view corresponded with a research report indicating that there was a *"decrease in confidence among learners*, they *showed little confidence when expressing themselves in the class and around the school, unlike before"* (RR18 2018). Similarly, *"few learners lack courage and self-confidence"* (RR16 2018). The above-mentioned data agrees with Kandjengo and Shikalepo (2021) that "learners were not confident enough to stand on their own on what to do as per the mandate of the learner leadership structure" (p. 156). Therefore, the student researcher added: "*I believe that confidence plays a major role in the leadership development of an individual. Learners can contribute positively to the learning environment, given the opportunity to express themselves*

freely. They can bring about change which can lead to improved academic results and enhancing the school's environment" (II2).

4.6.5.4 Lack of funds: Restricts implementation of club activities

The club interventions were also hindered by the lack of funds. Money to buy seeds was a challenge as noted by RR2 2019. Lack of funds seemed to be a thorn in the flesh for most respondents. Similarly, RR8 2018 argued that the management had prioritised funding the already existing school activities instead of the leadership club initiative:

> *The management has prioritised the wall fence at the expense of other activities within the school, which is not fair" "Why does the management not give equal attention to all projects instead of prioritising one? The wall fence committee approached us and informed us we could not continue with erecting the playground until the wall fence was completed (RR8 2018).*

In support, another research report indicates the same complaints "*We do not make enough money to buy enough rubbish bags, and the school does not provide them always*" (RR29 2014). Similarly, others indicated that "*we do not have enough money to buy things always when the club runs out of rubbish bags and there are no plastic bags in the school, learners go to the old way of putting rubbish in boxes, which makes the school dirty again*" (RR3 2018). In support, Spillane et al. (2004) argue that "leadership activity is constituted in the interaction of multiple leaders (and followers) using particular tools and artefacts around a particular leadership task" (p. 16). Therefore, this was a problem because a leadership task was not funded. Despite these setbacks, valuable insights were gained and my attention now turns to understanding the leadership development of student researchers, which will be explored in the next section.

4.7 Leadership Learning of the Student Researchers Due to Their Involvement in the "Learner's Lead" Project

This section presents data for my second research question which was the leadership learning of the student researchers as the consequence of their involvement in the "Learner's Lead" project. In this section, I looked at leadership learning of the student researchers who displayed the characteristics of a teacher leader while facilitating the learner leadership development intervention clubs for primary school learners in Namibia and South Africa respectively. Teacher leadership has to do with teachers using leadership to improve the school's welfare.

Teacher leadership was discussed in Chapter Two but to remind the reader, Webber and Nickel (2022) clearly defined teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (p. 4). In addition, Galdames-Calderón (2023) defined a teacher leader "as an influential educator who not only excels in their classroom but also takes on additional responsibilities to inspire and support colleagues, contributing to the overall improvement of teaching and learning practices in the school" (p. 5). I posit that the student researchers were teacher leaders and influential educators because they tried to assist primary school learners in developing leadership. Individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted as the data sources to remind the reader. In this instance, the student researchers collaborated with learner leaders. Similar to the leadership development of learners, the student researchers developed their skills and values through leadership learning. This section will discuss the following aspects:

- Leadership learning of the student researchers: This includes the development of the student researchers' leadership skills and values.
- Factors enabling teacher leadership: Identifying elements that support and enhance teacher leadership.

4.7.1 Development of leadership skills and values in the student researchers

This section presents data for leadership learning of the student researchers. It includes leadership skills and values that the student researchers developed while involved in the after-school learner leadership club interventions. The student researchers need leadership skills to act as good teacher leaders. In support, Suryana et al. (2020) explained that leadership skills "are tools, behaviours, and abilities needed to succeed in motivating and directing others to do what must be done to achieve goals" (p. 382). The leadership skills and values that emerged from the study findings are discussed below.

4.7.1.1 Cultivation of communication and listening skills

The data revealed that the student researchers cultivated communication and listening leadership skills, some of the qualities of teacher leadership. In support, a student researcher agreed that "*while engaged in the learner leadership club I became a good listener, and I*

listened to every child in my club" (FGI 1). To support this sentiment, another student researcher added: "*I have learned that learners are also capable of doing leadership things because as a teacher I always listen to the learners that learners are capable of being leaders"* (FGI 3). Similarly, Suryana et al. (2020) emphasised that listening "is a very important part of building relationships, gaining respect and trust from students and developing strong collaborative relationships" (p. 383). Reinforcing the literature, data from another participant indicated that *"I have been a good listener to the club members, having time to listen to the minors and do what I can to help build relationships, and I think I have influenced some of my colleagues"* (FGI 1). This means that student researchers were able to develop listening skills as teacher leaders through engaging with learners/students. In support, Warren (2021) describes that "teacher leaders build positive relationships with students, listening to their needs, mentoring them and voicing out their problems. This helps create an inclusive learning environment that motivates students to learn" (p. 14).

Furthermore, data revealed that communication skills were developed as the student researchers engaged with the learners in the intervention clubs. Communication skills improved relationships. A student researcher agreed that "*as a teacher, I developed as a teacher leader because of good communication skills"* (II1). This data concurs with the views expressed in the literature that as teacher leaders, "one thing we've tried to do is to improve communication" (Muijs & Harris, 2007, p. 120). These comments highlighted that teacher leaders need communication skills due to its importance in leadership. Another student researcher added that *"the important skill is communication cause as a leader you should know how to communicate with other people a very good communication with your subordinate and you can transform the leadership into another level and one needs communicating in a right way"* (FGI 2). In agreement with the above argument, Federico and Francisco (2024) argue that teachers "need to be proficient communicators because good interpersonal relationships depend on it" (p. 485).

4.7.1.2 Fostering reflection: Student researchers developed self-confidence, autonomy, patience and trust

Data revealed that the student researchers developed self-confidence, autonomy, patience and trust during the "Learners Lead". It was evident that the student researchers developed confidence during the "Learners Lead" initiative. In support, a student researcher agreed that

"*as a teacher, I gained confidence in myself, they could just come to the office and say now, now we want these, and I could speak out and even at those motivational talk I was confident"* (II1). Regarding teacher leader's confidence, another student researcher agreed that *"being exposed to learner leadership development intervention club it boosts the confidence in the type of organisation skills that a leader need to possess, and I learn to lead"* (FGI 1). Furthermore, another participant stated: "*I develop leadership skills and become confident in reflecting on my journal book as a student researcher"* (II3). In support of the above data, Muijs and Harris (2007) agree about the activities done on teacher leadership as "such activities help to develop teachers' confidence and reflection on their practice" (p. 114). There is alignment with the literature and the data that the confidence developed in the student researchers made it possible for them to express themselves and reflect.

Data revealed autonomy skills developed by the student researchers. They learned *"things you've got to experience first-hand, things like autonomy coming out in me as a teacher leader and the participant"* (FGI 1). Another participant posited that *"positively from the intervention I just learned to give children a platform to express themselves and this show to myself a sense of autonomy approaching my back"* (FGI 1). In agreement, Kara and Bozkurt (2022) assert that "teacher autonomy is influential in the emergence of teacher leadership behaviour" (p. 302). This means that while the student researchers were acquiring teacher leader behaviours their autonomy was influenced – this provided them with freedom and empowered them as teachers to be able to take part in decision-making.

In addition, the data unveiled the acquisition of trust and patience skills through leadership development. One student researcher explained: *"I learned to trust that as much as they were children, they had a voice but basically that they were to decide on their own with me just guiding and not taking the decision on their behalf*" (II2). In agreement, Muijs and Harris (2007) note that "teacher leadership flourishes most in collaborative settings, and that therefore creating a culture of trust that allows collaboration to grow is crucial to the development of teacher leadership" (p. 113). The student researchers as teacher leaders were entrusted with an opportunity to lead the learner leadership development club intervention. One participant felt that *"once one is given an opportunity partake into leadership roles made you gain more experience than what other people expect and that is trust"* (FGI 2). Muijs and Harris (2007, p.119) share the same sentiment, in that "another element of the school's culture that is perceived to be a key factor in securing successful teacher leadership is trust".

Findings revealed that through this trust, they also learned to be patient. In support, FGI 2 noted: "*Because I was working with little children and most of them do not understand leadership in depth, I have learned to be patient"* (FGI 2). Another student researcher agreed that "*what I also learned from this young one you know the Grade 5 they are not matured yet, but I have learned someone can be passionate about something"* (II1).

4.7.1.3 Enhancing creativity and empathy during leadership development

Data revealed being creative and empathetic enabled teacher leadership. One of the student researcher participants agreed that *"I have learned that in leadership one has to be creative and innovative not to fail you have to come up with other new ideas that may help your institute"* (FGI 2). The student researchers as teacher leaders strengthened their creativity and encouraged learners to work harder: *"I influence the learners showing them a positive attitude toward whatever you are engaging with encourage them to work harder"* (FGI 2). Also, they showed empathy with their learners during leadership development: "*Another thing which I learned is empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others"* (II3). Another student researcher alluded:

> *Exactly what I learned is to empathise with somebody else in the intervention I learned a lot and one of the main things that I've learned is that once one is allowed to partake into leadership roles, they expect you to do more than what other people expect you to do" (FGI 2).*

Similarly, Suryana et al. (2020) revealed that "The teacher's task is not only to build cognitive students but more precisely to build a sense of empathy or concern among students" (p. 383).

4.7.2 Factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership

One of the aims of the study was to explore the leadership learning of the student researchers as the consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership development clubs – the "Learners Lead" project. Therefore, it was significant to explore the factors enabling teacher leadership development. There are several factors discussed in this section that enabled teacher leadership.

4.7.2.1 Teamwork enabled teacher leadership

Teamwork enhanced teacher leadership learning during the leadership learning interventions. In agreement, a student researcher stated: "*I think I learned that and came up with teamwork, I learned basically to work as part of the team when leading a club because I was just facilitating"* (II2). Likewise, another student researcher shared the same sentiment "*I learned that I cannot only be the one to give instruction and do this, I can tell again so that we can work together as a team"* (FGI 3). Warren (2021) argues that "they collaborate and co-operate with other teachers and mentors in practice. This helps them learn from others, engage in introspection, and continuously improve their practice" (p. 13). Furthermore, another participant added: "*You can't just do everything on your own you should work as a team by that time but be able to work as a team to have effective learning taking place"* (FGI 3). Aris (2021) agrees that these "leaders and their colleagues are working together to improve the achievement of the students and the school as a whole" (p. 48). Similarly, another student researcher noted:

> *What I have shared the ideas that I have gained it's the one that I'm sharing with, the team whereby we work as a team then the ideas that I'm sharing is brought to whereby the teamwork and unity at the environment are respected and it's going positively" (FGI 2).*

In conclusion, the data revealed the following:

> *I try to foster a sense of teamwork and collaboration If we are given extended tasks that we must do certain activities that we must organise give each one an equal chance of contributing what they think should be done let's make decisions together and so on and I would like to think that our activities become successful because of that approach (FGI 1).*

The data concurs with the views expressed in the literature that "the success or otherwise of teacher leadership within a school can also be influenced by several interpersonal factors, such as relationships with other teachers and school management" (Muijs & Harris, 2007, p. 114). The relationship with other colleagues during club interventions led to doing professional work together with colleagues: *"We do co-planning and sometimes I invite that teacher a colleague to my class or go to her class when presenting topics and we influence each other in responsibilities"* (FGI 1).

4.7.2.2 Support from staff and management enabled teacher leadership development

Data revealed that management and colleague's support influenced teacher leadership. A student researcher expressed that other colleagues show support:

> *I can remember some of the colleagues they came to me also with their topics that they want their learner to demonstrate in front of others also those colleagues of mine, also came to me so that I could guide them on how to prepare their learners (FGI 3).*

Likewise, data demonstrated that *"participants said that the school principal does encourage us the teachers to have courage and strength to build leadership with our club"* (FGI 1). Teacher leaders need full support from the management of the school to develop strong leadership. In support, Muijs and Harris (2007) posit that in a "developed teacher leadership support from school management at all levels (senior and departmental) is seen as another key factor in encouraging teacher leadership at the school" (p. 124). Likewise, Sawalhi and Sellami (2024) agree that "schools' principals and colleagues support and influence teacher leadership" (p. 4). Therefore, the type of influence is that colleagues recognise teacher leaders as role models in leadership, such that *"colleagues see leadership quality in me for instance there is an important activity to happen at school they come to me for advice or give them a go-ahead"* (FGI 1). The main purpose of leadership support is to promote teacher leadership – this encourages all teachers to participate in the school's decision-making and this develops teacher leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Furthermore, the type of leadership support rendered may vary, for example, "Support also may include the application of parallel leadership, whereby teachers and principals collaborate to create a shared purpose" (Webber & Nickel, 2022, p. 5).

Similarly, findings pointed out that

> *…when I came to know that all with leadership, it has to come with the person that pushes and support the others to do the things while the specific person is also contributing to the rest of the group this is the types of leadership a democratic one which have led them through (FGI 2).*

In conclusion, the literature concurs with the research data that "teacher leaders agree that support is key when they take initiative and they consider it necessary because it helps develop relationships based on trust and promotes positive professional attitudes, such as openness to feedback and continuous training" (Galdames-Calderón, 2023, p. 11).

4.7.2.3 Aligning with a shared leadership approach facilitates the development of teacher leadership

Data revealed that leadership is not a one-man show but a shared responsibility. Literature highlights that "teacher leadership requires a school culture characterised by trust and respect, collective action and shared responsibility. Importantly, shared responsibility must be accompanied by safety for teacher leaders, particularly safety from some colleagues who may describe teacher leaders as aggressive and threatening" (Webber & Nickel, 2022, p. 5). Similar sentiments were expressed by one of the participants in a focus group interview:

> *Leadership is not a one-man show It's a distributed practice whereby one has to share responsibility looking at how as a teacher was sharing responsibilities with the learners in a group and they were doing it properly and effectively to meet leadership goal, and that shows that has to be to be distributed and shared among everyone and make decision together (FGI 2).*

Likewise, another student researcher in an interview highlighted that *"teachers at different points in the club had to take different roles of leadership so I learned how to distribute leadership as well and learning that leadership doesn't have to concentrate on one person because its shared"* (II2). Muijs and Harris (2007) argue that "a shared vision would seem to be a key component of successful teacher leadership" (p. 123). This means the school cannot be led by individuals only: *"Distributed leadership I learned that as a leader you cannot run a school alone so, therefore, a teacher and a learner need to be identified"* (FGI 4). In addition, Sawalhi and Sellami (2024) agree that "societies that share decision-making with principals contribute to sharing responsibilities for schools' improvements and encourage educators to participate in large decision-making situations that develop the practice of teacher leadership" (p. 4). This means once a teacher leader practices sharing responsibilities and making decisions within the intervention clubs with the learners then this develops their leadership practice – they can share decision-making with the principal and others for the benefit of the school. Muijs and Harris (2017) describe teacher leadership as teachers sharing in decision-making and taking initiatives in the school, specifically in learner leadership development clubs – this is the developed teacher leadership category.

4.7.2.4 Teachers' expertise as a prominent factor in fostering teacher leadership

A teacher as an expert can promote teacher leadership development. Data revealed that student researchers are experts in their schools. A student researcher affirmed the following:

> *Teachers as expertise so that they can lead in a different area let me say, for example, sports, if I'm not good at sports, then I'll get somebody good at sports from the teacher side and that person will help me and will also help me when it comes to leadership so like myself after learner leadership club I become an expert in establishing gardens at school (FGI 2).*

Therefore, Warren (2021) explains that teacher leadership "is regarded as a pivotal instrument for school improvement, as it entails empowering educators to assume leadership roles within educational institutions, enabling them to harness their expertise" (p. 4). Another participant shared a similar sentiment: "*Teachers are expert in terms of teaching and learning and others they can as well be allowed to assist in decision-making of the school to address all issue that got to do with the school"* (FGI 3). In addition, another student researcher added: *"Us teachers we expressed our expertise in taking through learners to develop learner leadership"* (II2). In agreement, Galdames-Calderón (2023) argues:

> It recognizes that no single leader possesses all the knowledge and skills required to address the multifaceted challenges in schools. Instead, distributed leadership taps into the expertise and potential of various individuals, allowing for a more comprehensive and responsive approach to school improvement (p. 4).

This means that student researchers expressed their expertise and became leaders, as one participant attested: *"Everybody can become leaders as you keep up the leadership skills intact and grow further"* (FGI 2).

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the research findings, guided by the core research questions. Through a detailed analysis of the collected data, I explored how the research findings aligned with existing literature and theories in this study. This analysis revealed the data patterns, highlighting implications for both theory and practice. The discussion has provided a nuanced understanding of the research subject, setting a foundation for the

upcoming chapter, which will summarise the findings, offer recommendations and present the overall conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented and analysed the data generated to address my research questions. This concluding chapter summarises the key findings (a detailed analysis is available in the previous chapter). In addition, I discuss the study's limitations and challenges, highlight its contributions to knowledge, and offer recommendations for learner and teacher leadership for future research and practical application. Before summarising the findings, I will revisit the research goals and questions to reorient the reader.

5.2 Research Goals and Questions

The research aimed to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the leadership development of these primary school learners. In addition, this study explored the possibility of leadership learning for the student researchers as a consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. To address the above-mentioned research goals, the following main questions and sub-questions guided the study:

1. How did primary school learners experience and demonstrate leadership through their participation in the “Learners Lead” project?

   a) What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during “Learners Lead”?

   b) What leadership knowledge and skills were developed in these primary school learners during their involvement in the after-school clubs?

   c) How did learners participate during the “Learners Lead” project, and what does this reveal about the conceptualisation and level of their participation?

   d) What were the constraints on these primary school learners’ leadership?

2. What was the leadership learning of student researchers as a result of their involvement in the "Learner's Lead" project?
    a) What leadership skills and values are developed in student researchers?
    b) What are the factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership?

** "Learners Lead" is the name given to the leadership intervention project.*

5.3 Summary of the Key Research Findings

In this section, I present a summary of the key findings of the study, organised under the following themes: school intervention projects during the "Learners Lead" initiative; knowledge and skills acquired by learners through "Learners Lead"; conceptualisation of participation and levels of learner involvement in leadership development; factors that constrained learner leadership development in schools; leadership skills and values cultivated in the student researchers; and, finally, factors that promoted teacher leadership development.

5.3.1 School intervention projects during the "Learners Lead" initiative

The first question was: **What school intervention projects were the primary school learners involved in during "Learners Lead"?** To address this question, the study findings revealed that 25 school intervention projects were introduced for primary school learners in Namibia and South Africa as part of the "Learners Lead" initiative. Each project identified specific focus areas in which learners engaged to develop their leadership skills. The findings further showed that the leadership development club interventions were distributed across the following focus areas: English proficiency (36%), learner conduct (12%), physical environment (44%) and extra-curricular activities (8%).

5.3.2 Knowledge and skills acquired by learners through "Learners Lead"

The second research question was: **What leadership knowledge and skills were developed in these primary school learners?** The findings indicated that there were various leadership skills developed – learner leaders developed voice and were able to lead. Raudoniute and Beresford-Dey (2024) shared the "importance of student voice in developing children's leadership skills, enhancing academic achievement and empowering students" (p. 2). The skills developed resonated with democratic leadership and there was no evidence of autocratic leadership.

Firstly, the learner leaders cultivated teamwork, co-operation and problem-solving. Democratic leadership, the theory that framed this study, promotes teamwork. Democratic leadership is a "team-oriented, normative process in which members of the professional team take a substantive role in the decision-making process relating to the vision of the school and the initiatives designed to achieve its vision" (Liggett, 2022, p. 2). The findings revealed that the learner leaders were able to work together, collaborate, and build relationships to reach their club goals such as doing homework, anti-bullying campaigns and others. When learner leaders worked together as a team, they also shared experiences and learnt from each other in their leadership clubs. The learner leaders cooperated with club members and schoolmates to solve school problems.

Regarding problem solving, the findings revealed that the learner leaders solved the problems in leadership clubs, which aligns with Dewey's (1903) emancipation of the mind, a democratic notion. He argued that the "freed mind of the child takes place until the emphasis changes to the conditions which make it necessary for the child to take an active share in the personal building up of his problems and to participate in the method of solving them" (Dewey, 1903, p. 201).

Secondly, the learner leaders' decision-making and self-confidence were developed. The study found that primary school learners were able to participate in club activities with confidence and that they presented speeches in public with confidence (Lundy, 2007). In support, Subramanyam (2013) defines "self-confidence as the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behavior" (p. 372). Further, study findings revealed that during club activities and beyond, the learners took part in decision-making, to the extent that they made decisions without teachers' assistance (Lundy, 2007). The study results indicated that the primary school learners made decisions for the benefit of themselves and their respective schools.

Thirdly, communication and listening skills were strengthened – learner leaders got better at communicating, which is called effective communication. Dorval et al. (2021) argue that "within the classroom settings, the educators and learner leaders should communicate efficiently with the students and allow them to express their viewpoints" (p. 21). Listening skills were developed, and learner leaders recognised that it was important to listen to others to solve problems when making decisions and reaching club goals.

Furthermore, the study findings revealed that learner leaders persevered, showing responsibility and commitment. Findings found that learner leaders in the clubs showed increasing leadership and became accountable in all their doings. Also, the learners showed commitment to their work and were always ready to assist others. The study found that the learners never gave up, even though club difficulties occurred. Finally, it was found that learners earned respect which promoted their well-being – they became authentic leaders. They learnt to lead by example influence each other, inspire and motivate. Thus, an authentic learner leader seeks school improvement and upgrades the welfare of others.

5.3.3 Learners' participation during the "Learners Lead"

The third question was: **How did learners participate during the "Learners Lead" project, and what does this reveal about the conceptualisation and level of their participation?** Study findings revealed that the establishment of a structure in the form of a 'leadership club' provided learners with "opportunities to learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522). Results indicated that participants conceptualised participation as collective rather than individual and there was evidence of learner participation in this study. Firstly, findings revealed the common meaning of the concept of learner participation such as involvement, engagement, taking part (actions), sharing decision-making and taking part in a social context to have their voice considered. Similarly, Duramy and Gal (2020) concur that "participation can be broadly described as the act of engaging with others; but in the context of children's rights, participation usually refers to the process of taking part in decision-making" (p. 2).

Regarding learner participation, the study results agree with Lundy (2007) who insisted that for children to deliver meaningful participation there should be voice, space, audience and influence. The study found that there was a provision from student researchers' learner participation during "Learners Lead". The learners were facilitated while initiating their activities to express their views freely. The safe space, time, and information to organise and present club activities were provided to the learner leaders during "Learners Lead" and this provided meaningful participation helping to clarify decision-making. In addition, giving learners enough space and support helped them adapt to an environment where they could interact freely with one another which helped them become more active participants. The provision of audience', adults in the 'Learners Lead' project made sure that the voices of the

learners were listened to and considered. Through presentations and reporting, the learners passed the information to the right people through a formal channel of communication. The children in the "Learner Lead" initiative were influenced to strengthen their voice regarding children's participation – they were provided with feedback and follow-up for their voice to be taken seriously and given due weight. This means their views were acted upon, as appropriate.

Lastly, study results revealed that the level of children's participation improved. This was on par with Hart's ladder of children's participation (Harts, 1992) in that the level of learner participation improved because the learner leaders were not willing to open up at the beginning but later, they started to engage in discussions. Equally, further findings revealed that the level of participation at the start was restricted and later expanded gradually. The study results indicated that learner leaders developed leadership starting from non-participation to child-shared decision-making with adults and this was real democracy. Therefore, Uushona (2018) argues that democratic leadership "in schools aims to develop real democracy through the active participation of educational stakeholders, be it in classrooms or the whole school's affairs in general" (p. 45).

5.3.4 Constraining factors that hinder learner leadership development in the school

The fourth question was: **What are the constraints of the leadership of these primary school learners?** The study found that there were constraining factors that inhibited the development of leadership skills in primary school learners during the "Learners Lead". Firstly, findings included the lack of national policies on learner leadership of primary school learners in Namibia and South Africa that guided the schools during "Learners Lead" which caused poor leadership development. Further findings revealed that schools lacked a structured approach to fostering leadership qualities in students. Kandjengo and Shikalepo (2021) reveal that "the development of learner leadership was mainly confronted by the absence of policy directives in schools, which rendered ineffective development of learner leaders at schools" (p. 158).

Secondly, findings indicated that societal norms and cultural views restricted leadership development – in society, children are labelled as minors and they cannot be trusted by adults to lead. Grant and Kajee (2020) discuss "some of the constraints that hamper learner leadership development in Namibian schools as the cultural and historical belief system in Namibia which includes the lack of trust of learners by adults to lead" (p. 94). In addition, people still equate

leadership roles with position and authority; this meant that participants in the study felt that the learner leaders in the "Learners Lead" initiative were first supposed to hold formal positions and authority such as on the LRC, and this restricted leadership. Similarly, Grant and Nekondo (2016) explain how leadership was traditionally understood as a "focused leadership, stand-alone leader and position based of which the school principal has been equated at the top of the management hierarchy" (p. 14).

Furthermore, time constraints in the study hampered the leadership development of learners. There was a challenge in balancing activities within time-restricted leadership development; the time allocated to club activities was minimal. The absence and lateness of student researchers impeded learner leadership. Furthermore, a lack of support and motivation from teachers at schools impeded learner leadership development as they were not willing to assist learners with club activities.

Finally, the learners (club members) themselves hindered their leadership development. A lack of co-operation and commitment restricted leadership development. Club members themselves were identified as having poor involvement and this caused weak relationships. Further, some of the learner leaders showed a lack of confidence impeding leadership development. Then later, a lack of funds restricted the implementation of club activities thus constraining the leadership development of primary school learners.

5.3.5 Development of leadership skills and values in student researchers

The fifth question was: **What leadership skills and values developed in B Ed. Honours student researchers?** The study found that the student researchers developed leadership skills and values while involved in the after-school learner leadership club interventions. Suryana et al. (2020) explain that leadership skills "are tools, behaviors, and abilities needed to succeed in motivating and directing others to do what must be done to achieve goals" (p. 382). Study results indicated that the student researchers worked within and beyond their classrooms while assisting their learners in developing the following leadership skills: communication, listening skills, self-confidence, autonomy, patience, trust, creativity and empathy.

Firstly, the student researchers cultivated communication and listening skills. Results indicated that the teachers listened while they were engaged with the learner leaders during the "Learners Lead" initiative. This means "if teachers listen to and engage with learners about their learning

conditions, an environment can be created where learners become active rather than passive players in the education endeavor" (Grant & Kajee, 2020, p. 361). This means the teachers were able to listen to the learner leaders to build relationships, motivate leadership growth and influence colleagues and others. The study findings agree with Webber and Nickel (2022) who clearly define teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence colleagues, principal, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievements" (p. 4). Listening also assisted in proper mentoring for the learners so they could air their voices appropriately (Lundy, 2007). The student researchers had good communication skills when interacting with the learners and subordinates, and this assisted in the promotion of this vital aspect of interpersonal relationships among learner leaders and fellow staff members. Suryana et al. (2020) emphasise that listening "is a very important part of building relationships, gaining respect and trust from students, and developing strong collaborative relationships" (p. 383).

Secondly, the student researchers fostered reflection and developed self-confidence, autonomy, patience and trust. Raudoniute and Beresford-Dey (2024) argue that reflection "helps to foster an awareness of progress and areas for improvement, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and student leadership cultivation" (p. 3). The student researchers reflected on all their doings in their journal books during the "Learners Lead" initiative. The student researchers gained confidence in reflecting and delivering talks on teachers' practices. Their autonomous behaviour motivated them to express themselves freely and participate in decision-making. Trust and patience allowed collaboration and leadership to flourish inside the leadership development clubs and outside with school management and colleagues. The student researchers gained their trust, and this helped them partake in any form of leadership decision-making at their schools. When colleagues realised the leadership club was a success, whenever a decision was to be made regarding learner leadership at the school then the student researchers were contacted for advice. Colleagues and management recognised the leadership qualities in the student researchers, relying on their advice to guide learners and staff members. Moreover, the student researchers enhanced their creativity and empathy during leadership development. They were able to be creative and come up with new ideas during the "Learners Lead" initiative and were able to empathise with their learners and colleagues at school.

Lastly, the findings indicated that the student researchers during the “Learners Lead” initiative and after were able to initiate and be involved in their school’s decision-making and this helped them develop as teacher leaders – they moved from not emergent or restricted teacher leaders to being involved and productive teacher leaders (Muijs & Harris, 2007).

5.3.6 Factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership

The sixth research question was: **What are the factors that promoted the development of teacher leadership?** The study found that teamwork, support from staff and management, a shared leadership approach, and teachers' expertise facilitated and fostered teacher leadership development during the “Learners Lead” initiative. The study found that teamwork enabled teacher leadership of student researchers. Teacher leaders collaborated and worked together to achieve club organisational goals and assist in delivering effective teaching and learning. Aris (2021) argues that “teacher leaders and their colleagues are working together to improve the achievement of the students and the school as a whole” (p. 48). In addition, support from staff and management enabled teacher leadership development. The student researchers gained the full support of staff members and management, which assisted in strong leadership development. This support promoted teacher leadership, encouraging all teachers to participate in the school decision-making and develop teacher leadership skills (Muijs & Harris, 2007).

Furthermore, aligning with a shared leadership approach facilitated the development of teacher leadership. The study recognised that teacher leadership is a shared responsibility and work in the clubs needed to be distributed so all members could make collective decisions. Baștea et al. (2023) agrees that “distributed leadership allows for a wider range of perspectives and expertise to be considered in decision-making processes and by involving multiple individuals in leadership roles, organizations can tap into diverse knowledge and experiences, leading to more comprehensive and informed decisions” (p. 117). The study found that leadership is not a one person show but should be distributed with shared responsibilities. The teacher researchers took on different roles because leadership should not be individual but collective.

Lastly, the study indicated that student researchers' expertise as teachers was a prominent factor in fostering teacher leadership. Teacher leaders, as educators, are more knowledgeable and experts in other fields such as culture, sport and leadership; therefore, this expertise makes them qualified to participate in school decision-making.

5.4 Study Challenges Encountered

- The first challenge I had in this study was the limited literature. There is a scarcity of studies focused on primary school leadership. Most of the research on leadership is based in secondary schools. This is because primary school learners are often seen as too young to develop leadership roles, which has led to few studies on the subject.
- The second challenge I had was that the documents provided to me had narrow data; fortunately, the student researchers could clarify limited information.
- The last challenge was that the student researchers took a long time to agree to take part in this study. Over time, I managed to convince them, which yielded richer results.

5.5 Knowledge Contribution, Policy Implications, and Practical Applications of the Study

The study findings are likely to benefit different stakeholders in the education sector. Firstly, the study findings will contribute to the academic body of knowledge on primary school learner leadership and teacher leadership, an under-researched area, especially in the Namibian/African context.

Also, the study will benefit the student researchers as their reflections on their leadership development and their knowledge of learner leadership development and their own will be invaluable in and outside the classroom. Lastly, the study findings may help educational policymakers identify leadership knowledge, skills and qualities that primary school learners need to develop leadership, which could inform policy development. In addition, the establishment of learner leadership programmes should become a priority, which will trouble the terrain of the limited involvement of primary school learners in leadership development opportunities.

5.6 Recommendations for Policy, Development Programmes and Curriculum

- In the absence of a national policy on learner leadership and the development of primary school learners, the regional director of each region should draw up a regional policy to guide, direct and facilitate the leadership development of primary school learners.
- The regional Continuous Professional Development programmes for school principals should include learner leadership development and teacher leadership training for them

to grasp the content of teacher leadership and learner leadership. These would help school principals learn more about distributed leadership, helping to reduce principal workload.

- There is a need for tertiary education institutions to include teacher leadership and learner leadership in their curriculum, which is currently paid little attention to.
- School management teams, teachers, and learners should collaborate and draw up school policies that include teacher leadership and learner leadership in primary schools.
- The primary education curriculum should integrate leadership activities within the curriculum.

5.6.1 Recommendations for future research

Firstly, I recommend that future research replicate this study and do action research on primary school learners to determine if primary school learners can lead and how.

Secondly, in a possible future study, I recommend interviewing learner leaders who were developed during leadership club interventions to have first-hand information instead of secondary data from document analysis.

Lastly, if the "Learners Lead" initiative is implemented in the future, I recommend that the teacher leaders make proper contact with the schools for the learner leadership club interventions to be included in the school development plan. This is because findings reported that some of the hindrances to "Learners Lead" implementations were caused by clashes with other extramural activities that were planned for that specific time of the year in school calendars.

5.7 Final Reflections

Completing this thesis has been an exciting learning experience for me. I am proud of the growth I have achieved and excited to apply this knowledge to my future endeavours. Through this remarkable experience, I not only deepened my knowledge of learner leadership and teacher leadership but also developed a more critical approach to analyse the data and be able to conclude my study. While this study has come to an end learning continues!!

5.8 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead. In addition, this study explored the possibility of leadership learning for the student researchers as the consequence of their involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. The study found that leadership can be learned and that primary school learners can lead through the implementation of leadership development club intervention programmes as learner leaders in this study developed leadership skills such as teamwork, co-operation, problem-solving, decision-making, self-confidence, communication and listening, responsibility and others. Some factors hindered learner leadership development such as a lack of a national policy on learner leadership development of primary school learners, the school's lack of a structured approach to fostering leadership qualities, societal norms and cultural values that hindered leadership growth, time constraints and club members themselves hindering leadership development. Equally, the students' researcher leadership learning was enhanced as they involved themselves in this quality leadership learning initiative and the following leadership skills were developed: communication, listening skills, self-confidence, autonomy, patience, trust, creativity and empathy. Some factors assisted in teacher leadership development, such as teamwork, support from staff and management, shared leadership and the teacher as an expert.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Clearance

Rhodes University, Education Faculty
Research Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8393
Fax: +27 (0) 46 603 8028
email: e.rosenberg@ru.ac.za

https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/

18 May 2023

katrina ngenokesho

Education Department

g19n9582@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Mrs Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Re: CAN PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS LEAD? A SOUTHERN AFRICAN CASE STUDY

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2023-7126-7615

This letter confirms that your research ethics application has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (EF-REC). Your permission letter(s) where applicable have been received and you are free to proceed with your study.

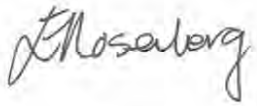
Approval is granted for 1 year. An annual progress report is required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the progress report is due.

Should any substantive change(s) be made during the research process, that may have ethical implications, you should notify the Education Faculty REC Chair via email. This includes changes in investigators. The REC Chair will advise as to whether a new application is necessary.

Do keep this clearance letter secure and accessible throughout your study and after its completion. It will be needed when a thesis is examined and when publications are submitted to journals.

Please also submit a brief report to the REC Chair on the completion of the research. This can be done via email. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully and whether any ethics-related matters arose that the committee should be aware of, in order to guide future studies.

Sincerely,



Prof Eureta Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Request to Use ELM Programme

From: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Cell: +264812605030

Po Box 1157

Ondangwa

To: Rhodes University

The registrar

Private Bag

Grahmntown

Date: 22 April 2023

Subject: Request for ethical clearance to use research report exam equivalent of ELM Honours Programme

My name is Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho, currently a registered MEd student (full thesis) Education Leadership and Management (ELM) (student number: 19N9582) at Rhodes University, in South Africa and a school principal based at Omeege Junior Primary School. I am requesting permission, after obtaining the provisional ethical clearance from the Education Department Higher Degrees Committee to have access to Educational Leadership Manangement Hounours exam equivalent reports ("Learners Lead") for seven years consecutively, (2013 – 2019). The focus of my study is at a primary school level. There are 25 reports that could be used as part of the document analysis for this study. My research topic is: *Can primary school learners lead? a Southern African case study***.** This research study aims to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the learner leadership development of these primary school learners. Furthermore, I also want to explore the possibility of leadership learning you may/ may not have experienced as a consequence of your involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. My project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Farhana Kajee from Rhodes University. Her email

is f.kajee@ru.ac.za. She and Professor Grant had obtained ethical clearance for this project and many publications emanate from this Honours project.

In summary, my project requires me to work with documents, the ELM research reports exam equivalent of the "Learners Lead" in 2013 – 2017. I intend to analyse these documents and explore to which extent the primary school learners can lead in these "Learner Lead" initiatives and if so, how? Therefore, I would need these documents to determine if the implementation of a leadership club intervention assisted learners to develop learner leadership. I promise to use these documents, as confidential, purposeful and anonymous. My supervisor has access to these reports and has anonymised them. I am aware of the challenge that I might face, due to the unevenness as these documents are exam equivalents and my supervisor has agreed to uphold confidentiality by removing names, marks, comments and so on.

My kind request is to seek permission to be able to utilize these documents and then further help is required with providing the contact details such as email addresses and cellphone numbers of these former ELM B Ed. Honours student researchers who conducted research in the primary school context so that an online focus group interview and individual interview can be conducted with them to establish their experiences and possible leadership development as a consequence of engaging with the leadership intervention as designed in this Honours curriculum. I humbly request the details of approximately 2-3 students who conducted research in the secondary school context so that I can pilot the data generation tools with them. My supervisor may be able to indicate the type of schooling contexts the students conducted their research in. It is my presumption that the research findings will make a credible contribution to the undermined area of primary school learner leadership in South Africa and Namibia.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact me at +264812605030 or kngenokesho8@yahoo.com.

Yours sincerely,

Student's name: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Email address: kngenokesho8@yahoo.com

Mobile number: +264812605030

Appendix C: Informed Consent – Focus Group Interview

From: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Cell: +264812605030

Po box 1157

Ondangwa

Date:

To: B Ed Honours student researchers

Subject: Invitation to participate in an educational research study

My name is Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho, currently a registered MEd student (full thesis) in Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) (Student number: 19N9582) at Rhodes University, in South Africa and a school principal at Omeege Junior Primary School, Oshana Region, Namibia. I am inviting you to participate in a study as you were a former Rhodes ELM B Ed. Honours student researchers who conducted their research in a primary school context. My research topic is: *Can primary school learners lead? a Southern African case study***.** This research study aims to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the learner leadership development of these primary school learners. Furthermore, I also want to explore the possibility of leadership learning you may/ may not have experienced as a consequence of your involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. My project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Farhana Kajee from Rhodes University. Her email is f.kajee@ru.ac.za.

If you are willing to contribute to this under-researched area as a past Honours student (Researcher- Interventionist) who led the leadership interventions at schools; you will need to

share your thoughts on your experiences. I intend to meet with you in groups for approximately one hour to share online. The sharing will take place in the format of a focus group interview.

I will uphold good research practice and ensure confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time. If you choose not to participate in the study, you will not be prejudiced in any way. I choose to do online interviews due to geographical disperse, costs and in response to being cautious with regard to COVID-19. It is my hope that the research findings will add to a body of knowledge on primary school learner leadership which is under-researched. Secondly, the study findings could contribute to improving practice; particularly primary school learner leadership through the development of policy and the establishment of programmes. Thirdly, the study findings might enable educational policymakers to identify leadership knowledge, skills, and qualities primary school learners should develop and possess for them to be able to lead which could feed into policy development. As the B Ed. Honours student reasearchers, through reflections, your own leadership development and knowledge of learner leadership development will come to the fore.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact me at +264812605030 or kngenokesho8@yahoo.com. This study has met the standards laid down by Rhodes University and has received ethical clearance. I have attached the provisional ethics clearance I obtained from Rhodes University approving this study. The Rhodes University Research Office can be contacted at ethics-commitee@ru.ac.za if any concerns arise during the data collection process.

Yours sincerely,

Student's name: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Email address: kngenokesho8@yahoo.com

Mobile number: +264812605030

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____ (participant name/pseudonym name can be used), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunities to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

Through this consent, I agree to be interviewed, for my session to be audio recorded, and for it to be analysed.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Informed Consent – Individual Interview

From: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Cell: +264812605030

Po box 1157

Ondangwa

Date:

To: B Ed. Honours students researchers

Subject: Invitation to participate in an educational research study

My name is Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho, currently a registered MEd student (full thesis) in Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) (Student number: 19N9582) at Rhodes University, in South Africa and a school principal at Omeege Junior Primary School, Oshana Region, Namibia. I am inviting you to participate in a study as you were a former Rhodes ELM Honours B Ed. student researcher who conducted their research in a primary school context. My research topic is: *Can primary school learners lead? a Southern African case study***.** This research study aims to explore the extent to which primary school learners can lead and to what extent the implementation of a leadership club intervention programme contributed to the learner leadership development of these primary school learners. Furthermore, I also want to explore the possibility of leadership learning you may/ may not have experienced as a consequence of your involvement in the learner leadership learning of primary school learners. My project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Farhana Kajee from Rhodes University. Her email is f.kajee@ru.ac.za.

If you are willing to contribute to this under-researched area as a past B Ed. Honours student researchers who led the leadership interventions at schools; you will need to share your

thoughts on your experiences. I intend to meet with you in individual for approximately one hour to share online. The sharing will take place in the format of a individual interview.

I will uphold good research practice and ensure confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time. If you choose not to participate in the study, you will not be prejudiced in any way. I choose to do individual interviews online or normal telephone call due to geographical disperse, costs. I hope that the research findings will add to a body of knowledge on primary school learner leadership which is under-researched. Secondly, the study findings could contribute to improving practice; particularly primary school learner leadership through the development of policy and the establishment of programmes. Thirdly, the study findings might enable educational policymakers to identify leadership knowledge, skills, and qualities primary school learners should develop and possess for them to be able to lead which could feed into policy development. As the B Ed. Honours student researchers, through reflections, your leadership development and knowledge of learner leadership development will come to the fore.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact me at +264812605030 or kngenokesho8@yahoo.com. This study has met the standards laid down by Rhodes University and has received ethical clearance. I have attached the provisional ethics clearance I obtained from Rhodes University approving this study. The Rhodes University Research Office can be contacted at ethics-commitee@ru.ac.za if any concerns arise during the data collection process.

Yours sincerely,

Student's name: Katrina Shivute Ngenokesho

Email address: kngenokesho8@yahoo.com

Mobile number: +264812605030

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____ (participant name/pseudonym name can be used), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunities to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

Through this consent, I agree to be interviewed, for my session to be audio recorded, and for it to be analysed.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Group and Individual Interview Schedules

Focus group interview and individual interview: Possible questions with Honours student; researcher-interventionist

Questions will be modified as the need arises

1. Describe the school and learner leadership clubs and projects that you were involved in during the Honours ELM programme?
2. Was leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes learnt/ developed by the learners in your clubs? Explain what leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes were discussed. If you feel there was no leadership development amongst the learners in your club, please explain why might this be the case?
3. Describe how learners participated during the activities. What did they do? How did they do it? How and by whom was this initiated?
4. In your opinion what are the enablements and constraints of the leadership development of these primary school learners?
5. What were the positives you experienced as the Honours student as a consequence of your involvement in these after-school leadership clubs? Elaborate
6. Were there any challenges you experienced in running these leadership clubs? Explain
7. As an Honours student, did you learn anything about leadership from your involvement in this project? If so, elaborate- what was it?
8. As a teacher (Honours student), could you transfer any of this learning to your current practices? Explain fully- in what roles etc.
9. Do you think that the involvement in these clubs was beneficial to you as teacher and the educational community? Discuss
10. Were there any barriers to you developing as a leader while engaging in the learner leadership clubs? If so, what were these barriers? Did you try to overcome them? Explain
11. Any other comments

Appendix F: Course Outline

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION HONOURS

Educational Leadership and Management Elective

2019

Course Outline

Philosophy of the elective

> As *agents, talking and learning together, the goal is for the students to become active participants in the largely unfamiliar discourse community of ELM. They begin their journey as peripheral participants (after Wenger 1998) in the practice but through the interplay of learning processes (peer, self and lecturer initiated) they begin a trajectory*

(Grant, 2013, p.1254)

In our view learning involves participating in the various ELM debates and moving between different points in the community with the ultimate goal of moving towards a complete identity and the possibility of a plurality of full participations (Romer, 2002). This requires the acquisition of knowledge and technical competence required for the degree but it also demands the "emotional, social, political and cognitive experiences that together constitute such learning" (Jansen et al. 2004, p. 80). This philosophy underpins the pedagogical style and

assessment practices of the elective. It enables diverse student bodies to begin to participate in the learning community and as the students gain confidence their level of participation increases.

Module co-coordinator and lecturers

Dr Farhana Kajee (Coordinator and lecturer)

Email: f.kajee@ru.ac.za

Professor Callie Grant

Email: c.grant@ru.ac.za

The Education Department number is +27 (0)46-603 8383. This will get you through to the secretary who will transfer your call. The fax number is + 27 (0)46-622 8028.

OUTCOMES

Critical Cross-Field Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- identify, analyse, formulate, and solve convergent and divergent educational problems creatively and responsibly,
- work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community, and contribute to the group output/tasks pertaining to the educational field,
- manage and organise her or his activities and life responsibly and effectively, including her or his studies and career,
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information,
- communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and / or language skills in the modes of oral and / or written presentation in often extensive pieces of sustained discourse,

- use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health and well-being of others, in community, national and global contexts,
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation, and by acknowledging their responsibilities to those in the local and broader community.

Specific Outcomes

On completion of the elective students should be able to:

- demonstrate an analytic and critical understanding of the concepts of educational leadership and management,
- understand theoretical perspectives through which educational leadership and management may be applied for the purposes of education/school effectiveness, improvement and change,
- design and apply a leadership-based intervention,
- reflect critically on the implementation of the intervention,
- identify a related research problem and formulate appropriate research questions thereby deepening their expertise and developing research capacity in the methodology and techniques of ELM,
- engage at a high level theoretically and display intellectual independence and
- critically apply acquired information, understanding and skills to own practice.

In terms of outcomes the critical cross field outcomes are catered for in the electives specific outcomes which comply with the South African Qualifications Authority (2012).

The design of the Bachelor of Education Honours (ELM elective)

The Bachelor of Education Honours ELM elective is designed as a service-learning initiative, i.e. a teaching and learning strategy which links the academic learning of the Honours students with a community service experience (CHE, 2006; Hart, 2006). As a credit-bearing educational experience, it requires students to participate in an organised service activity in their institution over a ten month period and reflect on it in such a way as "to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222). The purpose of the intervention is leadership development, either of learners or teachers. It requires "a multifaceted approach, which includes techniques that range from formal academic processes to experiential development, or what is described as leadership development within the context of work" (Whitehead, 2009, p. 856). Through designing and implementing the intervention (either learner leadership clubs or professional learning communities), Honours students promote their own academic learning through researching the intervention and are able to write a research report on the experience. Framed by Cultural- historical activity theory (Engestrom, 2015) and guided by the activity theoretical concept of a formative intervention, the research question which guides this study is the following: How does the implementation of an intervention (learner leadership club/ PLC) contribute to leadership development of learners/ teachers?

It is envisaged that the after-school clubs provide learners (and the PLCs provide teachers) with opportunities to:

- develop their voice in a space in which they can 'be heard'
- identify a focus area that matters to them
- plan and implement an intervention to address the focus area

- develop their leadership and "learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522).

Through this process, it is anticipated that the Honours students will:

- learn about the ELM course content and apply it in a meaningful way
- reflect on the leadership development of their learners
- develop their own leadership capacity
- engage as a researcher in data collection, analysis and interpretation
- write up the findings of their research in an academic format

Teaching Approach

General principles and expectations

We expect 100% attendance of this elective. Since the elective is not 'lectured' in the traditional sense there are no 'notes' and very few handouts. The elective is based entirely on an intervention and the research thereof. Thus the sessions are highly interactive and involve discussion of academic readings, report backs, guided discussions, lecturer presentations, informal student inputs and formal student presentations. If you miss a session you miss an experience which cannot be 'relived'. Learning is an exciting experience: but you need to be there to experience it. You need to 'live' it.

We also expect that you will come to the sessions prepared, which usually means you need to have done the set readings which will be provided during the contact sessions or emailed to you. Similarly you can expect us to come to the sessions prepared and we don't mind being told when you think we're failing in this regard.

Assessment

How is this module assessed?

The ***course work component*** of the elective consists of ***five written assignments***. Of the five written assignments, at least three will be summatively assessed. The others will be formatively assessed. The assignments that are summatively assessed will be marked as a %, given equal weighting and together constitute 50% of the final elective result.

The ***exam equivalent component*** of the elective consists of a ***formal student presentation (30% of exam mark - midyear)*** and the ***written submission of a research report (70% of exam result – end of year).*** This exam result constitutes 50% of the final elective result.

Students are required to keep a ***personal journal*** in which they reflect on the implementation of the intervention and its associated successes and challenges. This is a dialogical space in which the lecturer engages with the student on their reflective insights of the intervention and their role as teacher leader in the process. They are also encouraged to reflect on their involvement in the elective and use the journal to assist them in the learning process. The Journal becomes a very useful data source in the research. The rationale for keeping a journal in a profession such as educational leadership and management could be further justified due to the complex nature of the field. This field requires complex knowledge where the theoretical, practical, personal and the wider socio-political context are integrated. Journals are a way of encouraging professionals to develop the capacity and habit of recording and reflecting on their learning and their practice (Harland & Myhill, 1997). Structured journal questions are provided at each contact session. The ***journal*** fulfils the ***DP*** requirement of the elective.

The Assignment Process

Assignments will be handed out and discussed by the lecturers at the end of contact sessions. Due dates will be negotiated as each occurs. We encourage students to hand in drafts of an assignment so that feedback could be provided. A maximum of one draft per assignment will be checked. We would prefer these to be emailed to the lecturer concerned. Final assignments must be emailed to the lecturer. Assignments need to be typed, formatted in 1 ½ spacing and

accompanied by a cover page and a reference list of all texts referred to in the assignment. They also need to be carefully edited, spell-checked and preferably peer-assessed. Asking a 'critical friend' to read your assignment before handing in usually results in a much better product. Please ensure that you familiarise yourself with Rhodes University plagiarism policy. Each assignment will be accompanied by an assessment rubric which will help you to respond to the particular expectations of the task. Generally we are open to discussing assignment marks.

Academic support

Academic support is available through the formative feedback process. Feedback in the current assessment practice is viewed as a dialogue and this allows for a discussion between the student and lecturer which could take the form of personal face to face interaction or any other form that the student prefers. As a result, the student is provided with an opportunity to submit a draft and may then submit the assignments for summative purposes after being satisfied with the formative feedback and the development of the writing process. Further academic literacy support can be obtained from Dr Caroline Van der Mescht.

Evaluation of the course

During the course and at the end students are encouraged to provide feedback on various aspects of the elective. The feedback can take the form of students responding to questionnaires or by conducting a focus group interview, depending on what is being discussed and the level of feedback required. After feedback has been obtained from students they are provided with a summary of the feedback received. This is to keep all contributing parties informed on changes to be implemented as a result of suggestions put forward; to provide reasons as to why some changes are not possible and lastly to advise which suggestions will be implemented the following year as a direct result of their input. Feedback received from our students makes an invaluable contribution to our practice.

Proposed plan for Honours ELM contact sessions – 2019, Grahamstown

As reflective practitioners this plan could be changed to enhance the learning experience

January *21-25 January*	**March** *25- 29 March*	**May** *13- 17 May*	**June** *17-21 June*	**September** *23- 27 September*
Overarching Research Question: How does the implementation of an intervention (learner leadership clubs/ PLC's) contribute to learner leadership development/ leadership development of teachers?				
Overview of elective Planning intervention Choosing the focus Developing the instruments for 1st phase	Reflect on 1st phase of implementation Plan next phase	Reflect on 2nd phase of implementation Plan next phase	Reflect on 3rd phase of implementation FORMAL SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS Plan final phase	Reflect on 4th phase of implementation Critique of intervention
Research focus: Initial research questions – hearing the voices	*Research focus:* How to write a literature review	*Research focus:* Designing a research project	*Research focus:* Collecting & analysing data	*Research focus:* What is the argument you are making?

		Collecting and analysing data	Presentation & discussion of findings	Presentation & discussion of findings
Readings: CHAT readings Generic ELM readings Introduction to Learner leadership Teacher leadership and PLC readings	*Readings:* CHAT readings Distributed leadership further readings on Learner leadership, Teacher leadership and PLC's. Developing an academic argument and writing a literature review	*Readings:* Theory, Methodology, Data collection methods and analysis	*Readings:* Interpreting the case & presenting the data, thematic content analysis; writing a journal article (developing the argument)	*Readings:* Dependent on needs of students
Written work focus: Background & context of the study. Introducing the format of the report	*Written work focus:* Literature review	*Written work focus:* Methodology and data analysis	*Written work focus:* Data presentation and discussion of findings	*Written work focus:* Data presentation and discussion of findings

Library support

The readings we have provided simply scratch the surface of this broad field. You need to read more widely, both books and journals. Evidence that you have read more widely than the readings handed out will make for richer class discussions, and be rewarded in assignments. You can also access the library electronically from anywhere in the world, to place books on order, to renew books or to browse the huge electronic databases we have access to. The library link may be accessed from the Rhodes University web page. You need to set up a pin though, so please ask any of the librarians for help on this one. Your faculty assistant is Ayanda Qomfo and you can contact her any time during office hours for assistance or send her an email a.qomfo@ru.ac.za

We wish you well as you embark on your academic journey – and don't hesitate to ask for guidance if you need to!

Reading List

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LLC.