LEARNER VOICE AND LEADERSHIP: A STUDY OF A LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NAMIBIA

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By

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Declaration

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

Signature **Date**

Abstract

Numerous literature world-wide emphasises the significance of learner voice and leadership in schools. These concerns are not new to the education system of Namibia, because the education system is shaped by policy which encourages the voices of all stakeholders in the schools. The Education Act 16 of 2001 introduced the Learner Representative Council (LRC) as a legitimised body in secondary schools which represents learners in school level decision-making. Learner Representative Council members in secondary schools are allowed to sit in on School Board meetings and voice their concerns about issues at the school. The Act also involved parents, allowing them to air their views on behalf of their children, by becoming part of the School Board. Although this is what the Act 16 of 2001 introduced, recent researchers have urged for the need to develop learner voice and leadership in schools, as many schools have turned a blind eye to its significance. This is also what prompted me to conduct a study on the development of learner voice and leadership.

This research was conducted within the context of learner leadership at a primary school in the Otjozondjupa region, Namibia, focusing on the school's existing Learner Representative Council (LRC). The study explores the underlying reasons for the current problems in the LRC structure and beyond, opening up leadership opportunities, and promoting learner voice at the school.

Participants in the research were drawn from learners, teachers, heads of department, and the principal. As a qualitative case study in the interpretive paradigm, the study employed a range of data collection strategies – questionnaires, interviews, focus group interviews, observation and Change Laboratory (CL) workshops – to gather data to answer key research questions: How is the LRC currently involved in the leadership of the school? What are the factors inhibiting the development of learner leadership in the school? What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC? How can learner voice and leadership be developed through Change Laboratory (CL) workshops?

The research was underpinned by the second generation of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as an analytical framework. CHAT had the potential to bring problems and challenges

into focus, which was then used to open up expansive learning in the CL workshops. Data collected from the participants was surfaced as mirror data in these workshops.

The study showed that the LRC was not active in their leadership roles and that they were not given enough opportunities to function freely in their roles. These learners were under a traditional system of leadership, whereby teachers had all the control and say in the learners' leadership roles. The development of learner leadership was only recognised through the leadership training camp. Many factors that inhibited the development of learner voice and leadership also emerged in the study. Lastly, the notion of developing learner voice was also not understood by some teachers, which showed in their contradicting views. This study recommends that learner leadership should be developed, starting at an early age in the primary school. It also recommends that learners, however young, should be given a platform to contribute to the decision making at their schools.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my mother and stepfather who enrolled me in school and supported me throughout my entire life. With the little that you had, you made sure that we had the best education and the time has come for you to reap from what you have sowed. Thank you for your love and support.

To my children Tuundjakuje, Ngurimuje, Mundjambi and Ngarune, I believe that this is a great example to all of you, and my humble prayer is that one day you will follow in the same footsteps and go beyond what I have achieved. Work hard, be focused and let the sky be your limit!

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Acronyms

ACE - Advance Certificate in Education

B.Ed. Honours- Bachelor of Education Honours

BETD- Basic Education Teaching Diploma

CHAT- Cultural Historical Activity Theory

CLW- Change Laboratory Workshop

ELM - Education Leadership and Management

FGI- Focus Group Interview

GT- Guidance Teacher

HOD- Head of Department

I-Interview

LRC - Learner Representative Council

MBEC- Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture

MEC- Ministry of Education

NCSL- National College School of Leadership

O- Observation

Q- Questionnaire

TTA- Teacher Training Agency

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to develop learner voice and leadership in Learner Representative Council (LRC) members at a primary school in Namibia. I realised that learner leadership is a concept which is still under researched in Namibia, as most of the studies which have been done in the Namibian context looked at teachers and principals. Only two studies by Uushona (2012) and Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) have been carried out with learners as the focus, and their findings suggest an urgent need for upcoming research. Their call motivated me to look at learner leadership in a primary school, especially within the LRC. Drawing on my own experience as a teacher in public primary schools, I can say that although not required by policy, many primary schools do have LRCs, but often their leadership roles are not supported by all stakeholders and there is no real guidance as to what they should do. This causes learners to be invisible in their leadership roles. LRC members are sometimes restricted to certain duties and are often not given opportunities to come up with ideas. However, authors like Flutter (2006) affirm that "learners are inspired when they are put in the driving seat, and giving them control and responsibility helps them to discover creativity and skills such as problem solving" (p. 188). This was not the case in the case study school. As a result, this research aims to help teachers and learners to understand the significance of developing learner voice and leadership in primary schools in Namibia.

It is against this backdrop of information that I present the contextual background in this chapter, in order to look at the root of learner voice and leadership, and how it was viewed before Namibia's independence. Furthermore, this chapter looks at what motivated me to conduct this study, the purpose and potential value of the research, research goals and questions, methodology, the research design and the research outline. I will now discuss the contextual background.

1.2. Context and background of the study

Namibia went through many years of colonialism and apartheid under the South African government before it gained independence in March 1990. Before 1990, the right to freedom of expression and the right to be heard were restricted amongst the majority of learners in Namibia. There were limitations amongst the Namibian learners under the South African Bantu Education system. This system of education mandated compulsory education for whites only. Education for blacks was justified in terms of vocational value and for the most part its function was to prepare them for the specific jobs that the German and South African rule required (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 2).

After gaining independence in 1990, Namibia was faced with the immense task of reconstructing its education system. To help with the reconstruction and strengthening of the education system, the different ministries such as the Office of President, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture were initiated (Office of the President, 2004; Namibia, [MEC], 2005; Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBEC], 2002). In addition, the new government implemented the new policy of 'education for all'. The new laws and policies also brought freedom of expression and the right to be heard, as well as the right to education for the Namibian learners. The policy of education for all, established the four goals of education which are *accessibility*, *equitability*, *quality*, and *democracy* (Namibia. MEC, 1993, p. 32). The Education Act 16 of 2001 brought hope to learner leadership in Namibian schools. The Act states that the Learners' Representative Council must be instituted in every public secondary school. This was a good gesture towards recognising learners in their learning environment and advocating distributed leadership, because LRCs provide a voice and promote learner leadership in schools at management level. The LRC members are permitted to sit in on school board meetings and participate in decision-making which affects their learning environment (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). This policy is in line with Spillane (2006, p. 31) who points out that "when learners participate in decisions affecting their learning experience, they are likely to play a more active role in the provider's quality improvement process".

The new unified educational system of Namibia introduced decentralisation of responsibility and accountability of education and administration at grassroots level, and parents were also permitted to serve as school board members, which helped them raise their voice on issues that concerned them or their children in school (Namibia. MEC, 1993).The policy of education for all adds that they cannot expect citizens to contribute to the school environment, without allowing them to have a voice in the school management and its daily functions and hence it was important to include parents and learners to have responsibilities in the schools (Namibia.MEC, 1993).

Furthermore, the idea of developing learner voice and leadership in schools did not stop there, because literature such as Mitra and Gross (2009), Mitra (2006), Grant (2015) and Grant and Nekondo (2016) urge for learner leadership development in schools in their writings. Mitra and Gross (2009) look at the initiative of learner voice and they contend that learner voice "can broaden the scope of who has a voice in school and can even lead to student participation in developing school reform efforts" (p.538). In addition, Mitra (2006) affirms that "students' voice can go further to entail young people substantially participating in the change process by collaborating with adultsto address the problems in their schools and in the broader policy environment" (p.315).

Moreover, the notion of developing learner voice and leadership are not visible at the school where I teach and researchers like Uushona (2012) and Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) also saw the invisibility of learner leadership at the schools that they researched. Hence, this motivated me to conduct this research and *develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members*.

1.3 Motivation for the study

International authors like Astin and Astin (2000) believe that leadership is not necessarily about those holding formal positions in an organisation, but that everyone is a potential leader. This view is widely promoted in current leadership theory, finding expression in concepts such as distributed leadership, shared leadership and participative management. However, in my experience as a teacher, this is not borne by Namibian schools. As an educator for nine years at two state schools, I have observed little leadership opportunities generally, and more particularly within one significant structure in primary schools, namely the Learner Representative Council (LRC).Why

this should be the case, sparked my interest in conducting this study. Findings of other Namibian studies of this phenomenon provided additional motivation for a study of this kind.

In a study of the LRC in a Namibian school, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008, p.1) found that "the involvement of students in school affairs was seen by the regime as a political act and the attempts by student leaders to involve themselves in educational issues were often quashed". In another Namibian study, Uushona (2012) similarly found that learner leadership was not taken seriously at the case study school because of a lack of learner credibility.

Moreover, the lack of leadership opportunities for learners was a key factor in a project I conducted in 2014for the Education Leadership and Management (ELM) elective at the Rhodes University Bachelor of Education Honours (Bed Honours) programme. I established a learner leadership club whose purpose was to develop leadership qualities in learners and thus strengthen learner voice in the school (Mitra & Gross, 2009).As Grant (2015) puts it, "learner leadership clubs offered …a space of leadership from which learners could speak back concerning what they considered important about their learning" (p. 95). This change project within the ELM elective was informed by Mitra and Gross' (2009) "pyramid of student voice".

At the first level which is "being heard", I listened to learners to learn more about their experiences in school. Learners listed problems identified through a small survey conducted by other learners as co-researchers. At level two, "collaborating with adults", I collaborated with the learners to bring about changes and implement solutions. At the third level, "building capacity for leadership", learners were expected to begin questioning issues such as structural and cultural injustices in the school (Mitra & Gross, 2009). The club did not reach this level, and it ceased functioning when I moved to another school. This may have been an indication of limited leadership qualities in learners that would enable them to do things on their own, and a school system which saw this activity as an ad hoc activity, separate from the real work of the school. Mitra and Gross (2009) also argue that schools tend to fall short on preparing learners to develop and lead, and thus schools tend to teach learners to be passive participants in a democracy, rather than leaders.

In addition, Harris and Lambert (2003) similarly believe that leadership needs to be developed in learners before they are able to learn together as a team and construct meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. This suggests a view of leadership which is different from the traditional view of leadership, where it is the prerogative of those who hold formal management positions, leaning towards a view of leadership that is distributed. According to Grant (2008), distributed leadership is "an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise" (p. 87). Hence, leadership is not confined to people in authority, not something done 'to' others, but rather opportunities that everyone has access to. In a context where this view of leadership dominates, learner leadership would have a better chance of emerging. Mitra and Gross (2009) further emphasise the importance of 'voice', suggesting that learners' voices are often silenced in school contexts. Promoting learner voice will also promote opportunities to share decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). They further posit that promoting learner voice can help to resolve problems such as disengagement, indiscipline and poor academic results (*ibid.*). Fielding (2006) adds that teachers who engage learner voice will improve the relationship between teachers and learners, based on mutual trust and understanding. It is against this background and in light of my experience with the leadership club that this study set out to explore learner voice and leadership, to identify challenges and barriers, and to develop agency in those who are largely silent in schools.

1.4 Purpose and potential value of the research

This study intends to develop learner voice and leadership at a primary school in a small town of Otjozondjupa region. This study can also help teachers to understand the importance of developing learner voice and leadership in primary schools. The purpose of the study was *to develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members.*

1.5 Research goals and questions

The overall goal of the research was to transform the LRC members through developing and implementing activities, conducted with the LRC members and teachers. This broad goal may be further subdivided as follows:

- To develop leadership opportunities within LRC members;
- To encourage learner voice among the LRC members;
- To help teachers to understand the importance of involving learners in decision-making.

To achieve these goals the following questions need to be answered:

- How are the LRC currently involved in the leadership of the school?
- What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC of the school?
- What are the factors inhibiting the development of learner leadership in the school?
- How can learner voice and leadership be developed within the LRC structure?

1.6 Methodology and research design

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach by means of an interpretive paradigm. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (as cited in Rule & John, 2011) point out that the "qualitative researcher wants to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, or phenomena as they occur in the real world and therefore wants to study them in their natural settings" (p. 60). This linked well with the focus of my study, as I wanted to see how participants experience and perceive learner voice and leadership in their own setting. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm helped me to "gain new insight about a phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon, and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 136).The interpretive paradigm holds many truths and I gained an in-depth understanding on how learner voice and leadership is viewed by teachers as well as the learners in the school (*ibid.*).

A case study method was employed to frame the four questions in the study. Maree (2007) notes that a case study "opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless, like children or marginalised groups" (p. 75).This is another reason why I chose to use this approach because the aim of the study was to look at the voiceless, i.e. primary school learners, and enhance their voice in their learning environment.

Furthermore, the study was framed by the second generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. The aim of the second generation of CHAT is to analyse the different elements in the activity system. This method further unearthed the contradictions and tensions which inhibited the development of learner leadership. The contradictions and tensions were further modelled in Change Laboratory workshops and participants came up with solutions and the way forward. CHAT helped me to dig deeper and it provided some explanations on why learner voice and leadership were viewed a certain way.

For this study, a purposive sampling method was used to identify suitable research participants. The sample was composed of different stakeholders in the school who played a vital role in learner leadership development (see Chapter Three). In order to achieve the validity of the research, different tools such as questionnaires, focus group interview, and observation were used to collect data from the participants (Appendix A, B, C). Questionnaires were given to all LRC members and interviews were done with the principal, a head of department (HOD) and guidance teacher. The LRC were also observed in their meetings and daily activities. The data collected from participants' was analysed using different themes and categories. Maree (2007) describes coding as "the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units" (p. 105).

Ethical issues (Appendix D, E, F) were taken into consideration and before I started with the research I went to the principal whom I consider the gate keeper of the school and I asked for permission orally and in writing. I explained to him what the research was about and how it would benefit the LRC members at the school. After being given permission from the principal I gave learners consent letters to take to their parents. I explain the methodological process in a more in-depth manner in Chapter Three.

1.7 Research outline

This thesis consists of six chapters which are outlined below. Chapter One provides an overview of the research. In this chapter I presented the background of the research, motivation for the study,

purpose and potential value of the research, research goals and questions, methodology, and the research design and outline.

Chapter Two presents a review of literature which relates to the study. Here I looked at the broader view of what others have said or experienced about learner voice and leadership, my aim being to inform the reader of what learner voice and leadership is and its vital role in schools. I further discuss the traditional and contemporary views of leadership by tracing its origins. Finally, I discuss Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology which was used to conduct the research. This chapter presents descriptions of the different research methods and the data collection tools which were used with participants. Ethical issues and how data was analysed is discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the data gathered from interviews, questionnaires and observation. The data collected from participants is categorised in themes and presented.

Chapter Five presents the discussion of the main findings of the research. The data which is presented in Chapter Four is discussed in Chapter Five. I also discuss the different contradictions which emerged from that data, and then discuss the two Change Laboratory workshops which helped us to come up with solutions to the contradictions.

Chapter Six is the last chapter of the research and it presents the summary of the main findings of the study, the possible significance of the research, research limitations, recommendations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature on learner leadership in a primary school in Namibia. Learner leadership is a contemporary concept that needs to be unearthed and understood in schools. Although a great deal of research has been done abroad, very few studies have been done in Namibia. As Grant and Nekondo (2016) state, "research in this niche area is limited, and particularly so in African countries such as Namibia" (p.13). In this chapter, I first explore learner leadership, since one needs to comprehend the importance of it as it is the main focus of the study. Learner leadership will take us to the distinction between leadership and management as we need to clearly understand what leadership is and how it differs from management. These two concepts are interrelated and are used interchangeably and hence distinguishing between them will help avoid confusion when discussing promoting leadership roles in learners.

Next, I discuss the evolution of different leadership theories to understand their development as a backdrop to learner leadership. Distributed leadership theory is discussed because it moves leadership from an organisational to a social phenomenon which looks at the society and how it can contribute to the development of an organisation. I will discuss different social theories because although leadership is distributed in the organisation there are social issues such as race, class, power, and gender which need to be taken into consideration. Lastly, I will discuss the theoretical framework of the study. Cultural Historical Activity Theory was used as a framework to help me understand how learner leadership is being developed in LRC members within the cultural and social context of the school, to look at the historical influences, and unearth contradictions and tensions in order to promote learner voice and leadership.

2.2 Learner leadership

My study aims to explore the concept of learner voice and leadership. In this section I start by defining the concept and looking at the influences that prevent learner leadership in schools, in search for motivation towards enhancing learner leadership.

2.2.1 Defining learner leadership

According to Whitehead (2009) "many leadership studies are focusing primarily on adult interpersonal and organisation development and pay little attention to developing the right type of qualities of leadership needed by adolescents"(p.848). It is not surprising that there is no one clear definition of learner leadership. Many authors like Mitra and Gross (2009), Mitra (2006) and Fielding (2006) mainly talk about learner voice in their different studies, and I have come to realise that they mostly explain it rather than defining it. Jansen, Moosa, Van Niekerk and Muller (2014) explain that educators must empower learner leaders to be participants in a shared collective endeavour. In addition, Theron and Botha (as cited in Uushona, 2012) explain that "learner leadership is a system of pupils found in every school by means of which pupils take an active part in activities in a directive capacity" (p. 145).

These explanations might give us a better understanding of how we can define the concept of learner leadership. To understand learner leadership, one must also look at learner voice that gives drive to learner leadership.

2.2.2 Learner voice

In the past, learner leadership focused on student rights and activism (Mitra& Gross, 2009). Modern concepts of learner voice describe the many ways in which youth can gain opportunities to contribute to decisions in schools that shape their lives and those of their peers (Mitra& Gross, 2009). Mitra and Gross (2009) mention that 'student voice' differs from old traditional roles such as planning school activities such as school dances and sport events,and "the current conception of learner voice focuses instead on the role of the learner in the school based on reform initiatives, site based decision making, and changes in the classroom instruction and pedagogy" (Mitra, 2006,p.1).

By encouraging student voice opportunities in schools, Collinson (2006/7) mentions that greater success is possible when learners are empowered and they take on ownership within corporate decision-making. In addition, Mitra and Gross (2009) explain that promoting learner voice in schools can help to resolve problems such as disengagement, indiscipline and poor academic results. Partnering with learners to identify school problems and possible solutions reminds teachers that learners have unique ideas about their learning environment that adults cannot fully replicate (Mitra, 2006).In accordance with this, Fielding (2006) posits that teachers who engage with learner voice will improve relationships between teachers and learners based on mutual trust and understanding. Even though learner leadership is essential in schools, there are some schools that tend to teach learners to be passive participants in a democracy, rather than leaders (Mitra& Gross, 2009, p.523), and it is against this background that I consider the factors that prevent learner leadership in schools.

2.3 Factors preventing learner leadership in schools

2.3.1 Political, cultural and policy limitations

Political, cultural, and policy limitations have been the barriers of learner leadership in Namibian schools. In a study concerning this, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) finds that "the involvement of students in school affairs was seen by the regime as a political act and the attempts by student leaders to involve themselves in educational issues were often quashed" (p.1).Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) further adds that learners in our society are essentially viewed as children who should not have a voice in decision-making. Sithole (as cited in Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p.3) supports this argument and mentions that:

> On cultural and traditional grounds, elderly people do not discuss important matters in the presence of children, and to do that now would tarnish the respect which children must accord their elders, and bring about decay and morass in the traditional value system.

In Namibia, Education Act 16 of 2001 (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) came into existence and introduced the establishment of the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in

secondary schools. Sadly, this act looked at establishing LRCs in secondary schools only, while primary schools were left out. Even though primary schools were omitted, they copied the idea from secondary schools and LRCs were established in primary schools as well. This shows us how learners in primary schools are viewed and how the opportunities for learners to have a democratic voice in their educational process are shrinking (Mitra & Gross, 2009).In addition, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) further mentions the absence of a national policy document which outlines the roles and functions of the LRC. As a result, this might be the cause for learners not to be taken seriously in their leadership roles, as teachers do not have guidelines on what their roles are.

Looking at these, the failure and limitations of learner leadership appears to be three-fold: policy, political and cultural. To get a holistic picture of why learner leadership is not developed in schools in our country, I will now look at the limitations.

2.3.2 Learners are left out of decision-making

As a nation, we originate from different cultural backgrounds; therefore, there are different ways on how we perceive children in our society and especially those in schools. This might be the reason why we turn a blind eye to the cry for learner leadership in schools. Uushona (2012) mentions in his study that "children are generally portrayed as lacking moral standards, being out of control and lacking experience on which to draw for effective participation"(p.10). He further adds that in schools there are some decisions which school leadership considers too sensitive for learners' input.

Furthermore, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) points out a number of classical philosophers like Locke, Hobbes and Mill who believed that it was the parents' responsibility to think and make decisions on behalf of their children. They believed that children were immature and incompetent and needed to be under their parents' supervision until they shifted to adulthood. This thinking might be a stumbling block for developing learner leadership in schools, but current teachers in the new century need to shift from the old traditional ways and develop behaviours which will promote learner leadership in schools.

2.3.3 Lack of training

Although the great man theory implies that leaders are not made but born, Coleman (2005) believes in the effectiveness of training. According to Rothwell (2002), "training is a short-term change effort intended to improve individual work performance by equipping people with knowledge, skills and attitudes they must possess to be successful in their work" (p.7). In addition, Uushona (2012) adds that training may be the main need for LRC support while it remains the best means for organisational empowerment. Moreover, Jansen et al. (2014) suggest that the lack of training, skills and experience in learner leaders "all lead to adoption of an autocratic style of leaders" (p.4).This is one reason why training is essential to LRC members in schools. Leadership training empowers learners, yet some schools might find it too costly to send their learners to leadership training camps. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) agrees that school C in her study found the leadership training too costly, as they had to pay for all 15 learners. Although I looked at the essentiality of training, in contrast, Rothwell (2002) mentions that training cannot solve every performance problem. As a result, this indicates to us that as teachers we need to seek for other motivations towards enhancing learner leadership and not rely on training only.

2.4 Leadership development opportunities for learners

Literature on leadership increasingly stresses the importance of finding ways for strengthening learner voice in schools. Smyth (as cited in Angus, 2006) argues that schools have become hostile environments, characterised by "an impersonal ethos of competition and performativity that has little place for attempts to understand and accommodate the everyday lived experiences and cultures of young people" (p.369). In this way, learners become alienated from schools and Smyth (as cited in Angus, 2006, p. 370) believes that teachers:

> need to reach out to such children, move to meet them rather than expecting them to adjust to the entrenched school and teacher paradigm, and attempt to engage them in relevant and interesting school experiences in which they can recognize themselves, their parents, and their neighbors.

In this sense, leadership opportunities take an important social role and establishing leadership clubs in school might be another motivation towards establishing learner leadership. Learner

leadership clubs develop leadership qualities in learners and thus strengthen learner voice in the school (Mitra & Gross, 2009).In addition, Grant (2015) adds that "learner leadership clubs offered … a space of leadership from which learners could speak back concerning what they considered important about their learning"(p.96). During the leadership club, the "pyramid of student voice" (Mitra & Gross, 2009) can give a clear direction on how to motivate learners' leadership in schools/clubs:

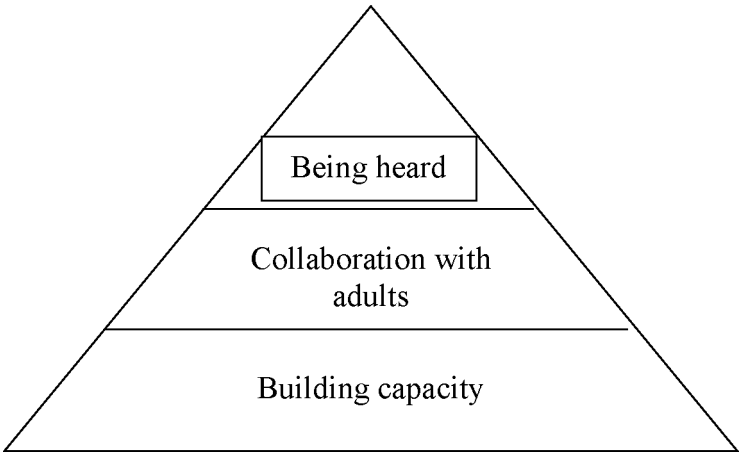

Figure 1.1: Pyramid of student voice (Mitra & Gross, 2009)

- At the first level which is "being heard" – teachers listen to learners to learn more about their experiences in school.
- Level two, "collaborating with adults" – teachers and learners work together to bring about changes and implement solutions.
- Level three, "building capacity" – learners are expected to question issues such as structural and cultural injustice (Mitra& Gross, 2009).They further add that involving learners can increase their attachment to school which correlates with improved academic outcomes.

Allowing learners to sit on the governing body of schools can be another motivating factor to learner leadership. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) mentions that learners should be given an opportunity as are other stakeholders and be allowed to participate unconditionally on the governing body of the school. After looking at learner leadership, I will now shift my focus to

leadership and management, as we need to understand and differentiate between the two concepts when we are developing leadership roles in learners.

2.5 Leadership and management

There are common agreed upon definitions of leadership and management and I found the need to look at their background and define the two concepts. I will then explain the distinction between the two, as they are interrelated and are used interchangeably.

2.5.1 The background of leadership and management as a field of study and practice

Everything has an origin and for something to be clear, we need to know and understand how it came into being. According to Bush (1999), Educational Management became a field of study in the 1960s in the United Kingdom. He further adds that the first course of Educational Management depended heavily on concepts and practice derived from industrial settings and from the United States. As a result, this field of study focused only on management in industry and management in other areas were neglected. According to Bush (2003), "the development of educational management as a distinct discipline has been chronicled" (p.9) by different authors. He further adds that all these theories were developed outside the educational context and then were applied in schools and colleges, which brought about mixed feelings. Fallen (as cited in Harris, 2003, p.15) suggests that "many of the new theories fail to provide robust examples and insight, which in turn can link to powerful concepts". In this regard Harris (2003) argues that more is needed to be done to develop a meaning action-based theory of leadership. It is because of these that a Teacher Training Agency (TTA) was established which took an interest in leadership and management, as well as pre-service training of teachers (Bush, 2003,p. 10).This was when educational leadership was introduced, and in 2002 a National College School for Leadership (NCSL) was established. The college was responsible for leadership development programmes (Bush, 2003). Establishing leadership colleges to develop leadership programmes was a stepping stone to developing leadership in schools.

However, these were analyses from developed countries such as America and United Kingdom and African countries such as South Africa and Namibia were not mentioned because there was a "lack of preparation for school leadership in developing countries" (Lumby, Crow & Pashiardis,as

cited in Moorosi & Bush 2011, p. 59). Developing countries drew from colonial history and they introduced school leadership but "there was still a need for effective school leadership in developing commonwealth countries which is raised in some commonwealth reports" (Pashiardis & Brauckmann,as cited in Moorosi & Bush, 2011, p. 60). I will now define leadership and management.

2.5.2 Defining educational leadership and educational management

Different authors have dissimilar perceptions defining the concepts leadership and management. The two concepts are different in function but are also interrelated and inseparable, meaning that one cannot survive on its own and needs the help of the other for its processes to be operational. In this view, Christie (2010) adds that exploring the meanings of the two concepts is useful in distinguishing between them, while at the same time acknowledging their interrelationships. Foster (1989) argues that although "leadership is a real phenomenon, one that does make a difference. But before the term can be utilised meaningfully, it is necessary to try to tease out the various ways in which it has been used and to try to come to an agreement on its essential aspects" (p.39).

In essence, leadership is defined as, "the ability to influence the actions of individuals or groups and it is associated with vision and the ability to articulate this vision through an organisation, the ability to direct change and being future orientated"(Bush, 2003, p.5). On that note, I discovered that leadership was more about an individual who has great influence on others' behaviour to bring about change in the organisation; this change can be either positive or negative depending on the intuition of the leader. To support my view, Harris and Muijs (2005) add that leadership is "the ability to encourage colleagues to change, to do things they would not ordinarily consider doing without the influence of the leader" (p. 438). To avoid unjust leadership practices, Foster (1989) mentions that critical assessment of current situations should be done to establish an awareness of the future possibilities.

As my study is set within the school context, I draw on Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosege & Ngcobo (2008) who say that "leadership in an educational context comprises the ability to understand emerging trends in education and to guide a school through various challenges by achieving a vision based on shared values"(p.6). In this sense, I can say that leadership is leading other

stakeholders in the organisation and encouraging them to achieve organisational success, and this also includes working towards the vision and mission and making sure that the working environment is conducive to everyone. In educational leadership, teachers, parents and learners work towards one goal and vision in the organisation.

On the other hand, Bush (2003) mentions that "management is a set of activities directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve organisational goals" (p. 1).Hamatwi (2015) also adds that educational "management has more to do with efficient execution of tasks by acting on an outlined routine, following a set structure and keeping the stability in the organisation" (p.12).However, Bush argues that "management studies are concerned with the internal operation of educational institutions, and also with their relationships with their environment, that is, the communities in which they are set, and with the governing bodies to which they are formally responsible"(p.1). This further enlightens us that managers in the school set-up, differ from the one in offices (private organisations), as the ones in schools need to engage and work with the internal and external community.

Concurring with this, Naidu et al. (2008) explain that "managers and leaders of the schools, like other employees in the public sectors, are bound by the need to ensure effective and efficient service delivery to their clientele (parents and learners) based on the values of the country" (p.5).They further argue "that if the primary goal is education, then the core business of education management is to focus on the effective delivery of teaching and learning" (Bush, as cited in Naidu et al., 2008). Even though I looked at the definitions of leadership and management, a clear distinction needed to be made between the two concepts as well.

2.5.3 Relationship between leadership and management

Distinguishing between leadership and management is difficult as the two terms are used interchangeably and sometimes are considered to mean the same thing. Moreover, Toor and Ofori (2008) mention that "interchange referring to the term 'leadership' and 'management' can engender functional complications and long-term confusion over the roles of leaders and managers"(p. 62). They further cite Kotter, who argues that blurring the difference between leadership and management will also cause difficulties in measuring, testing, hiring, developing

and promoting them. Subsequently, this confusion may hold back the programmes that build up managers and leaders which "suggest that organisations may face difficulties in their effort to develop the right talents for the right jobs" (Zaleznik, as cited in Toor & Ofori, 2008, p. 62).

As a result, Cuban (as cited in Bush, 2003, p.8) "provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management and he links leadership with change, while management is seen as a maintenance activity". He (*ibid.*) further stresses the importance of both dimensions of organisational activity:

> By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals... Leadership ... takes ... much ingenuity, energy and skill. Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements ... while managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses.

Lunenburg (2011) mentions that leaders advocate change and new approaches in the organisation while managers advocate the status quo. Therefore, leaders are rebellious in nature and they challenge the status quo of the organisation, while managers prefer to conform to the organisation norms, rules and hierarchy (Kumle, Kelly & Bennis, as cited in Toor & Ofori, 2008). Hearing the different distinctions of both concepts and how they have unfolded, I believe that leadership might have a great influence on my study as my study focuses on developing leadership in the Learner Representative Council (LRC) and leadership is about influencing others. Having explained leadership and management I will now shift my focus to the different leadership theories and how leadership development evolved. The shift will bring us to an understanding of how a contemporary view of leadership will inform my study.

2.6 Evolution of leadership theories

In this section I will discuss the views of literature on traditional theories by looking at its evolution, this is very important because traditional leadership theories gave birth to the contemporary theory of distributed leadership which is motivated by my study.

2.6.1 Traditional theories

During different eras leadership theories were developed in different stages according to how people viewed leadership in those years. These traditional leadership theories were developed at different times resulting from the ineffectiveness of the previous circumstances. In the same note, King (1990) similarly adds that "each new era represents a higher state of development in leadership thought process than the preceding era" (p. 44).During that time, leadership was mostly defined by traits, qualities and the behaviour of a leader (Horner, 1997). Looking at the context of the school, Bush (2003) further adds that by the 21st century, these theories had been developed and adapted to suit the school context. On the other hand, the use of leadership theories drawn from non-educational settings, caused concern due to the special characteristics of schools (Bush, 2003). Therefore, Baldridge (as cited in Bush, 2003, p.15) suggests careful evaluation and adaption of these theories before they are applied in schools:

> Traditional management theories cannot be applied to educational institutions without carefully considering whether they will work well in that unique academic setting. …We therefore must be extremely careful about attempts to manage or improve…education with modern management techniques borrowed from business, for example, such borrowing may make sense, but it must be approach very carefully.

In contrast, Bush (2003) further argues that in traditional theories, there are general principles that can be applied to all organisational settings. He points out that "schools have much in common with other organisations that bring people together for a purpose" (Handy, as cited in Bush, 2003, p. 13) and applying traditional theories in schools will help leaders to lead the schools. Now I will look at the empirical validity of leadership theories by firstly discussing the trait theory.

2.6.2 Trait theory

According to researchers, during the first era leadership theories were divided into the great man theory period and trait theory period. The great man theory was based on the idea that leaders are born and not made, and this may include members born from royal families. Moreover, King (1990) mentions that during this period, people believed that when personalities and behaviour were copied, strong leaders would emerge. This process became troubled when it became clear, that those successful leaders had different personalities and personalities were difficult to imitate (King, 1990).

As a result, "leadership theory was advanced only slightly in the trait period when attempts were made to remove the links with specific individuals and simply develop a number of general traits" (King, 1990, p. 46). In addition, Bernard (as cited in Horner, 1997, p. 270) states that in this era "leadership was explained by internal qualities with which a person is born". During this period, different characteristics were identified in people to classify them as good leaders. People were looked at to see if they portrayed these different characteristics, such as being hardworking, ambitious, self-confident and dependable, in order to determine whether they could become a great leader. In agreement, Bernard (as cited in King, 1990, p. 6) mentions that "personality, physical, mental characteristics were examined". The above findings made me realise that trait theory might still be operational in some schools. The selection process of LRC members is a case in point as even though the election process is done by learners randomly, teachers have the final say on who become LRC members, by looking at the different traits of elected learners. In support of the above, Nongubo (2004) points out that even though prefects are elected by learners, teachers have a great input and influence on the outcome.

Furthermore, the trait theory became ineffective when researchers realised that, even though much research was done to identify the different traits, there was no clear answer on which traits were consistently associated with great leadership (Horner, 1997). In addition, Horner (1997) further adds that one weakness of this theory was that it looked at the traits, "ignoring the situational and environmental factors that play a role in a leader's level of effectiveness" (p. 270). In this regard, a new theory was developed, and I will now shift my focus to behavioural theory.

2.6.3 Behavioural theory

Behavioural theory is based on the belief that leaders are made and not born and one can learn how to act like a leader. Furthermore, Van Seters and Field (1990) mention that the "behavioural era took a completely new direction emphasising what leaders do, as opposed to their traits and power" (p. 32). In addition, Bolden, Grosling, Martura and Dennison (2003) add that "behaviourist theories concentrate on what leaders actually do rather than on their qualities" (p. 6). They further point out that different behaviours are observed and categorised as leadership styles (Bolden et al., 2003). This theory instigates that learning can take place through observing others and teachings. On that note, Uushona (2012) argues that "learners can also learn to become leaders through

participation where teaching and observation mostly occurs" (p. 13). In support of his argument, Harris and Lambert (2003) allude that "everyone is born to lead the same way that everyone is born to learn" (p. 422).

Furthermore, King (1990) mentions that behavioural theory in that era was seen as a great advancement because "it could easily be implemented by practicing managers to improve their leadership effectiveness" (p. 46). This theory focuses on the behaviour of leaders while it analyses the differences in behaviour between effective and ineffectiveness of leaders (Yulk, as cited in King, 1990).On that note, it is clearly understood that behavioural theorists are more concerned with improving the behaviour of leaders and the productivity of an organisation. Yet, focusing on behaviour and productivity did not allow for constantly changing circumstances. Uushona (2012) explains that as "leader's actions cannot be consistent considering the ever-changing contexts and situations" there was a "need for an approach that is contingent upon emerging situations" (p. 13). That leads us to the development of contingency theory, discussed below.

2.6.4 Contingency theory

After the ineffectiveness of previous theories, a new era where a contingency approach was introduced, began. The contingency approach of leadership was introduced around 1960, and it was a "refinement of the situational viewpoint and focuses on identifying the situational variables which best predict the most appropriate or effective leadership style to fit the particular circumstances" (Bolden et el., 2003, p. 6). Contingency theory recommended matching leadership styles to the right situation and people, in order to achieve a goal. During this approach, researchers recognised that effective leadership cannot be achieved by leaders only, and that different variables are needed in this leadership style. King agrees (1990) that "leadership was not found in any of the pure unidimensional forms discussed previously but rather contained elements of them all" (p. 46).

However, during this leadership approach "the importance of the followers in leadership emerged and leadership was seen as an interaction between goals of the followers and the leaders" (Horner, 1997, p. 271). In addition, Horner (1997) further adds that the path goal theory during this approach helped leaders to help followers, to develop a behaviour that enabled them to achieve goals or desired outcomes. Consequently, by looking in the context of my study, I argue that learners are

very important in the learning environment and to the success of the school, and for the school to achieve its goals, teachers must work together with learners – by developing learner leadership in schools. On the other hand, even if this theory built on the trait and behavioural theory and recognised the importance of the participatory and interactive nature of leaders, "there was still little understanding of the nature of interaction" and a new theory of transformation was introduced, which I am going to discuss below (Van Setter & Field 1990, p. 35).

2.6.5 Transformational theory

Transformational leadership was developed in a new era and it focused on followers and their needs in order to develop them to reach their goals. In addition, Van Setter and Field (1990) mention that this "era looks very promising because it draws together many aspects of the previous era and blends them" (p.39) together. During this approach, leadership did not "rest only on the shoulder of one person but also on all who share the mission and vision" (Van Setter & Field, 1990, p. 38).In addition, Van Setter and Fielder (1990) further add that this transformational approach saw leadership as a development of collective actions. However, I argue with this statement because the transformational approach was about a leader transforming followers by enforcing his ideas on them in order to achieve goals and it did not always allow for collective actions through ideas. In support of this view, Foster (1989) mentions that "transformational leadership is the ability of an individual to envision a new social condition and to communicate this vision to followers" (p. 41).

The transformational approach was seen as a dramatic improvement on theories that came before and was seen as a way to transform the qualities and situations of followers in an organisation. However, collective decision-making was still needed to motivate collective actions, as most ideas were advocated by leaders. That is why perhaps, a new approach was needed in order to bring more democratic view and promote collective participation. In the following section I will present a contemporary view of leadership which will underpin my study, as it informs on collective ideas and participation in school leadership.

2.7 Contemporary views of leadership

Contemporary views of leadership gave opportunities to shift from old traditional ways of leadership to a more modern view of leadership which fosters distributed leadership. Traditional theories were all about what leaders can do or must have in order to influence effective leadership, while contemporary views promote collective ideas and participation in an organisation. Furthermore, this view separated itself from the traditional way of leadership that "dwell on people, structure, functions, routines and roles" and moved to a more collaborative culture by setting tasks that involved working together (Spillane, 2006, p. 5). On that note, contemporary theories support the idea of learner leadership in schools –whereby learners come up with ideas in order to contribute to the development of leadership in their schools. Contemporary leadership theory is one example of distributed leadership which I will discuss below.

2.7.1 Distributed leadership

2.7.1.1Definition of distributed leadership

According to Williams (2011), distributed leadership has existed since the mid-1960s although it has only gained fame during recent years. In addition, Harris (2004) further adds that "distributed leadership is currently in vogue and it has become a discourse increasingly used in school leadership" (p. 13). However, there are many definitions of distributed leadership, as many authors write it the way they perceive it. In agreement, Bennett et al. (as cited in Harris, 2004) "point out there seems to be little agreement as to the meaning of the term and interpretations and understandings vary" (p. 13).

Nevertheless, Hartley (2007) puts forward that distributed leadership is about sharing leadership entirely in an organisation. Drawing from the above ideas, distributed leadership can be defined as a social phenomenon where leadership is being dispersed throughout the school, from leaders to followers, to contribute to the development of school activities. In support of my view, Gronn, ascited in Muijs and Harris (2003), reveals that "every person in one way or another can demonstrate leadership" (p. 439). In this view, I therefore argue that providing learners' leadership opportunities will allow learners to demonstrate their different talents. Schools are large institutions with learners from varying cultural backgrounds, with expertise that could emerge

through leadership practices. However, although distributed leadership is about collective participation in schools or organisations, we must also take into account that not all shared activities are distributed, as Harris (2004) makes clear to us. After looking at the definitions of distributed leadership, I will now look at the significance of distributed leadership in schools.

2.7.1.2 Why distributed leadership?

In a Namibian study done by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), she mentions that the involvements of students in school affairs were often quashed. In a similar vein, Uushona (2008) further adds that learner leadership was not taken seriously at the school he looked at. This is an indication that leadership is not distributed in schools and learners are not contributing collectively to the decision-making at the school. In addition, drawing from countries which went through the same apartheid regime as Namibia, Williams (2011) mentions that before independence in South Africa, the "main purpose of the education system, which was characterised by hierarchical and authoritarian relations, was to restrict wider participation and to ensure political control by the top echelon of the education department" (p. 190). Similarly, Calitz and Shube, as cited in Williams (2011) further add that "leadership style in schools was rigid and domineering, with close and consistent control over teachers' activity" (p. 190). Women were also not allowed in the leadership structure of the schools, although they formed two-thirds of the number of teachers; they were ignored and underestimated (Williams, 2011). These were some of the reasons why there was a need for distributed leadership in schools. Distributed leadership brings new vision to school leadership as it contributes to collective participation in the organisation. It also helps school leaders to move away from hierarchical structures and the role of heroic leaders.

In essence, Spillane (2006) mentions the importance of distributed leadership and he says that it "is a tool that can enable change in leadership activity" (p. 5). Furthermore, distributed leadership is vital because it is a "shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school" (Grant 2008, p. 85). In distributed leadership, learners and teachers are not passive participants but they can come up with ideas that will contribute effectively to the school (Williams, 2011). Looking at the learner side, especially in the context of my study, distributed leadership will help the LRC members to work together in

a collaborative manner and it will enhance team work as well, as Hatcher (2005) puts it. Although distributed leadership is good in every organisation, we must remember that everything has two sides – bad and good – and having looked at its significance, I will now turn my focus to the challenges.

2.7.1.3Challenges of distributed leadership

Distributed leadership allows opportunities for everyone in the organisation to exercise power, control and leadership. Although this means that everyone in the organisation from the top hierarchy to followers are given a platform for leadership, "achieving it is not easy" (Harris, 2002), as people have different interests in an organisation. In essence, Lumby (2013) mentions that despite the strong aspiration from leaders to distribute leadership in an organisation, some head teachers may hold back their power as they "feel that giving power to another decreases one's own" (p. 583). She further draws from Parson who interestingly says that power is like money and the more you have, the greater your agency (Lumby, 2013). In that vein, head teachers might also feel accountable for whatever goes wrong in the organisation, as some followers might be reluctant to perform their duties. In support of this view, Van der Mescht & Tyala (2008) argue that some head teachers hold back on the idea of distributed leadership, because they are afraid to fail as leaders and they feel that they are the ones who must give an answer if something goes wrong in the organisation.

Another challenge which might be a concern in distributed leadership, is the abuse of power by leaders when they are distributing roles to followers. Leaders might distribute leadership to their followers, only to take away the work given them, just to show they hold more power. In agreement Lumby (2013) "suggests that opportunities to contribute leadership are not equal and that distributed leadership remains silent on persistent structural barriers" (p. 581).Lumby (2013) further feels that roles cannot be imposed by management on followers, and she draws from Wesley who mentions that followers should decide for themselves on which roles to take and they must be supported by the school administration.

However, looking at the few challenges that might emerge from the management side, there are also challenges that might come from the teachers' side. According to Harris (2002), there is

sometimes conflict between the teachers, especially between those who do take up leadership roles and those who do not, and this can cause division amongst teachers. In addition, Barth (as cited by Harris, 2002) further adds that "colleagues can at times be hostile to distributed leadership because of factors such as inertia, over cautiousness and insecurity" (p. 13). As a result, I argue that if teachers are experiencing conflict and feeling hostile towards distributed leadership, this will hinder the distribution of leadership to learners in schools, as we know that leadership needs to flow from teachers to the learners. In conclusion, Harris (2002) further emphasises that "overcoming these difficulties will require a combination of strong interpersonal skills on the part of the teacher leader and a school culture that encourages change and leadership from teachers" as well as all followers in an organisation (p. 13).

2.7.1.4 Distributed leadership as a social practice

Hartley (2007) describes distributed leadership as a social movement, where communication is at the center of leadership practice (Harris, 2003, p. 56). In this regard, leadership might be distributed widely in schools, and the issue of social injustices in power, race, age, gender and culture, need to be taken into consideration. These issues may play a large role in how leadership is distributed in schools, and they might affect the flow of distributed leadership. In accord, Blackmore and Bush et al. (as cited in Lumby, 2013) explain that the "apparent openness of leadership to all with the expertise and capacity to contribute ignore accumulated research that leadership is unequally open to people, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity and other minority characteristics"(p.589).This means that there might be unequal distribution of leadership in learners, as there is little evidence to support the outcome of distributed leadership in schools (Lumby, 2013). She further states that for distributed leadership to flourish, there is a need for principals to modify their structures (Lumby, 2013). Moreover Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) mention that distributed leadership is a tool which brings change in leadership activity of an organisation because of its social practice and distribution of power to everyone in the organisation. The conceptual foundation of distributed leadership is Cultural Historical Activity Theory and therefore I will now discuss CHAT as a theoretical and analytical framework which underpins my study. Just as is the intention with distributed leadership, CHAT aims to change the leadership situation for LRC members at the case study school.

2.8 Theoretical framework

2.8.1 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Since the phenomenon in question in my study – leadership development of learners –is framed by strong cultural and historical circumstances, I used the second generation of CulturalHistorical Activity Theory (CHAT) and the expansive learning theory of Engeström.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory was introduced in 1920 by Vygotsky who was a Russian scholar of that time. This theory focuses on learning and development and it builds on the contradictions which emerge from different dialects in the activity system in order to bring change in a working environment (Mukute, 2010). CHAT is a method and theory that helps to understand how people from different backgrounds, with different perspectives, different ways of doing things, different cultures and beliefs, can interact and work collectively towards achieving the object, such as developing learner leadership within the structure of the LRC. I will now discuss the three generations of CHAT.

2.8.2 First generation CHAT

Although this study drew on the second generation of activity theory, I saw the need to discuss the first generation as it is where the existence of the second generation came from. The first generation of CHAT commenced in the 1920s and early 1930s and was drawn from Vygotsky's concept of mediation (Engeström, 2001) and it has a subject, object and artefacts. Vygotsky's mediated actions enabled human development through interaction with artefacts/tools within their social group and environment, to achieve the object (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Scribner (as cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) mentions that "in this interaction, individuals are not passive participants waiting for the environment to instigate meaning-making processes for them, but through their interaction, individuals make meaning of the world while they modify and create activities that trigger transformations of artefacts, tools, and people in their environment"(p. 16).Furthermore, Mukute (2010) adds that "Leontiev shifted the focus from mediation tools to the object in the triad and argued that activities are motivated by their object, resulting in the revealing of the object-oriented nature of learning and doing" (p. 91).This is shown in the first generation triangle below.

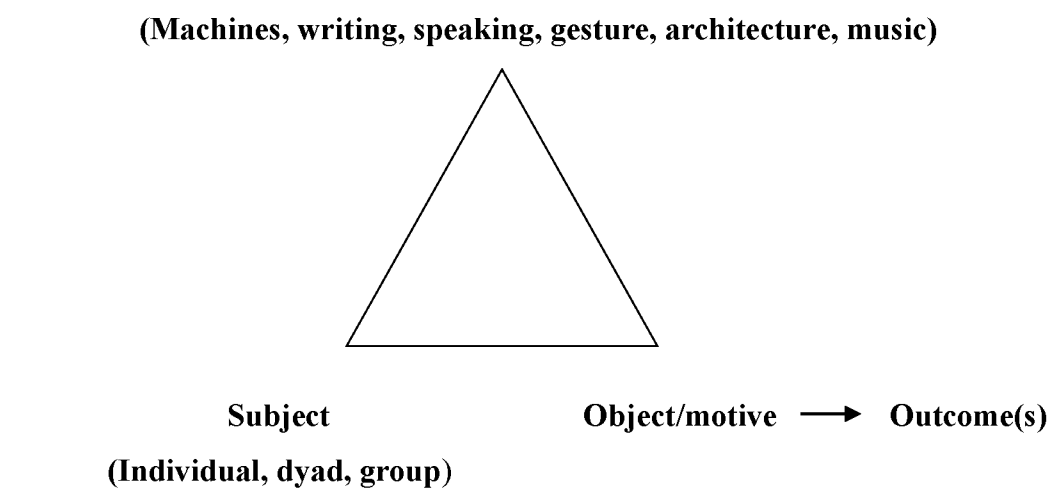

Figure 2.1: Vygotsky's first generation CHAT triangle (Adapted from Engeström ,1999***)***

Yamagata-Lynch (2010) explains the above elements and states that the *subject* is the individual or group of people, the *tool s*may be the social others and the artefacts and the *object* can be the goal of the activity. Sannino, Engeström and Lemos (2016) add that the *object* of the activity is the fundamental aim of the framework, because different kinds of activity are influenced by the object. The *tools* are the artefacts, the interaction with others and prior knowledge that helps the subject to achieve the object. Vygotsky also mentions two kinds of different tools which are psychological and physical tools. Vygotsky (as cited in Daniel, 2008) describes psychological tools as "devices for mastering mental processes and they can be used to direct the mind and behaviour" (pp. 5-7) of participants. The physical tools can be classified as classrooms, flip charts and white boards (to name a few).

However, the first generation activity introduced the concept of mediation; it focused only on subject, object and artefacts while ignoring other important elements of activity systems, such as rules, division of labour, and community. Engeström (2001) also supports this statement when he mentions that in the first generation "the unit of analysis remained individually focused" (p. 1370). Therefore, second generation activity was proposed by Engeström.

2.8.3 Second generation CHAT

The second generation was developed by Leontiev and is distinguished by its additional "unit of analysis from individual action to collective activity" (Sannino, 2011, p. 573). The second generationCHAT is a key framework for this study since it shifts the focus from individual development to its relationship with other components in the activity. The importance of second generation is to "represent the social/collective elements of community, rules and division of labour while emphasising the importance of analysing their interactions with each other" (Engeström, 1999, p. 2). This articulates the dialectical relation between my subject (LRC) and the different components (Roth, 2007) and it directed me towards the goal (object) of the research.

In the case of this study, the subject is the Learner Representative Council members. The object is to develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members and the tools were the flip charts, chalkboard and classroom used. To add to the elements in the first generation, the second generation introduces the rules which govern the school. These rules can be formal or informal rules that limit the action within the activity. In this study the rules are the internal school rules and the Education Act. The next element is the community and it includes all stakeholders "with which the subject identifies while participating in the activity" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p.23). In this study the community will be the teachers, learners and principal. The final element would be *division of labour* and these are the different activities or duties that learners (LRC) are involved in, to help develop learner leadership.

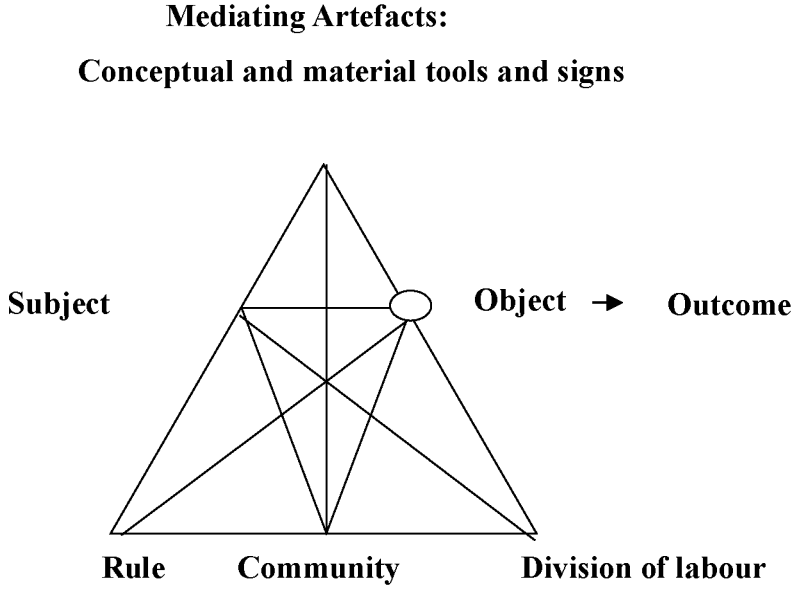

Figure 2.2: Second generation activity theory (adapted from Engeström, 1999)

The aim of analysing a single activity in the second generation was a limitation and Engeström saw the need to develop a third generation activity which brought different perspectives from different activity systems. The third generation was not utilised in this study because there was only one activity system which was the LRC members, yet the principles of the third generation activity theory had a great influence on this study. For a better understanding, I have therefore chosen to explain it below.

2.8.4 Third generation CHAT

The third generation activity theory, which was developed by Engeström, is initiated when there is more than one activity system with a partially shared object. This generation centres its attention on the interaction between the main activity system and the neighbouring activity system with the shared object. The interaction between the activity systems allows them to come together to seek for solutions. The LRC members were the primary activity system and the teachers were used to develop the main activity system. Bringing these two activities systems together is called boundary-crossing, which the study did not achieve because of time constraints, therefore the learners and teachers only came together as separate groups.

The third generation activity system theory as proposed by Engeström, "intends to develop conceptual tools to understand dialogues of multiple perspectives and networks of interacting activity systems" (Daniels &Warmington, 2007, p. 378). They further mention that Engeström draws on the ideas of "dialogicality and multi-voicednessin order to move beyond the limitations of the second generation of activity theory, which was concerned with the analysis of single activity systems" (Daniels &Warmington, 2007, p.378).Dialogicality and multi-voicedness enlighten us that in the third generation, participants share different ideas and perspectives through dialogue, in order to come to one solution or to transform the subject. In the study the teachers supported the idea of developing learner leadership in LRC members and they voiced their different perspectives in order to come to a solution. The LRC members also came up with their different views on how they wanted to be treated or supported in their roles.

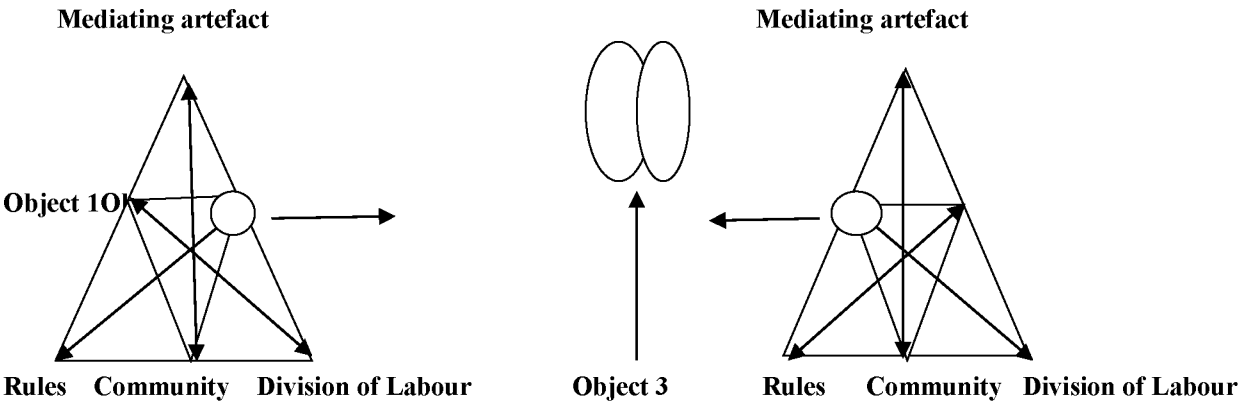

Figure 2.3: Two interacting activity systems (adapted after Engeström, 1999)

After looking at the three generations of CHAT, I will further discuss the five principles that summarise the third generation activity theory.

2.9 Basic principles of CHAT

In the third generation activity Engeström proposes that activity theory is summarised by the help of five principles (Daniels, 2008, p. 123) which I will discuss below.

- The first principle is that a **collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system**, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is the prime unit of analysis.
- The second principle is the **multi-voicedness** of activity systems. An activity system is always a nexus of multiple points of view, traditions and interest. The division of labour in an activity creates different positions for the participant; the participant carries their own diverse histories and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conversations. In this study, the different ideas and perspective of teachers as they were interacting, contributed to the action of learner leadership development within the LRC members.
- The third principle is the **historicity**. Activity systems take shape and are transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history. However, for us to understand the challenges of learner leadership development, we needed to look at the history of the school which contributed to the way teachers and learners perceive learner leadership.
- The fourth principle is the central role of **contradictions as sources of change and development.** Drawing from the work of Ilyenkov, Engeström emphasises the importance of contradiction in the activity system as a driving force of change and development (Daniels, 2008, p. 125).He further mentions that "contradictions are not the same as problem or conflicts but they are historically accumulating structural tension within and between activity systems". These contradictions can surface within or among the elements of the activity system or it can occur between the different activity systems (Daniels, 2008, p.125). In addition, Smith and Tushman (as cited in Engeström&Sannino, 2011) affirm that familiarising ourselves with the contradictions in the working environment and embracing them bring greater success. Smith and Tushman (as cited in Engeström and Sannino, 2011, p. 369) further explain surfacing of contradictions as:

> the act of organising creates distinctions of roles and responsibilities, which must be coordinated and integrated to achieve an overall goal. These distinctions result in contradictions within firms.

Only secondary contradictions were identified in this study, and secondary contradictions take place between the different elements of an activity system and they are the driving force behind

disturbances and innovations Engeström (as cited by Ellis, Edward & Smagorinsky, 2010). For example, these can take place between the object and rules or the community and division of labour in the activity system.

- The fifth principle proclaims the possibility **of expansive transformations in the activity systems**. Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and to deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. Expansive learning is an essential focus of Cultural Historical Activity Theory and it was the drive of this study.

I will now discuss the theory of expansive learning and its responsibility in the study.

2.10 Expansive learning

At this stage I will note that the importance of activity theory is intensified by the notion of expansive learning which underpins this study. Expansive learning is a process which helps the subject (LRC members) to obtain some knowledge or skills and provides changes in the way they behave (Engeström, 2011). Masilela (2017) mentions that in "expansive learning, learners learn what is not yet there; new knowledge and practices for newly emerging activities are collaboratively constructed and practiced" (p. 32).

Sannino et al., (2016) further adds that "the collective design effort is itself the core of an expansive learning process involving reconceptualisation and practical transformation of the object of the learners' activity" (p. 3). The transformation opportunity in expansive leaning is done through the expansive learning cycle, whereby individuals question the existing process by analysing its contradictions in order to model a new solution. Moreover, Engeström (2001, p. 137) mentions that:

> As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort.

To attain the expansive learning theory the seven stages of the expansive cycle should be applied through the process. Although the expansive cycle or process evolves in seven stages of the developmental work research, the study only engaged up to stage three due to a lack of time. Our first action was to ***question***, ***criticise*** **and** ***reject*** some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom. Here we questioned how learner leadership is developed within the LRC structure by looking at the existing knowledge and wisdom of the teachers and the learners at the school. The second action is that of ***analysing*** the situation. Analysis involves mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Analysis looks at the 'why' questions? At this stage we analyse the situation by asking why things are happening the way they are. This stage gave us an opportunity to dig deep and look at the underlying mechanism that contributes to the way learner leadership is being developed in the case study school. The third action was to **model** new solutions to the discovered problems with the participants.

This expansive learning process was done in a Change Laboratory workshop which I am going to discuss below.

2.11 Change Laboratory

Sannino (2008) explains that the Change Laboratory is "an interventionist method developed and used within the framework of activity theory to promote change in workplaces" (p. 237). She further adds (*ibid.*) that the core idea of the Change Laboratory is so that:

> educational and work practices can develop through collective, cognitive, and material re-conceptualisation of the object of the activity. The re-conceptualisation process is mainly mediated by videotaped material and the theoretical models used as stimuli for discussing and redesigning practices. Through the process of double stimulation, participants in the intervention phase work out contradictions of their own practices.

The Change Laboratory workshops involved the LRC members and teachers separately, in order to work towards resolutions of the contradictions. Only two Change Laboratory workshops were held – one with teachers and one with LRC members. Change Laboratory is "supported by a 3x3 set of surfaces for presenting the work activity that help the group to share and jointly process their observations and ideas" (Virkkunen& Newnham, 2013, p. 15).

The first part of the layout is the "mirror surface" and it is used to represent and examine experiences from work practices, particularly problem situations and disturbances, but also novel innovative solutions. The second part is the "model/vision surface" which is reserved for theoretical tools and conceptual analysis. Furthermore, "systemic roots of specific but recurring problems and disturbances are traced and conceptualised as inner contradictions of the activity system" (Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja & Poikela, n.d., p. 3). The expansive cycle is used during this stage in order for the teachers and learners to analyse the current problem and model solutions. The last part is reserved for ideas and intermediate cognitive tools which analyse problem situations and design new models for the work activity (Virkkunen& Newnham, 2013). During that part, the participants move between the experiential *mirror* and the theoretical *model vision* which creates intermediate ideas and partial solutions.

Moreover, Virkkunen and Newnham (2013, p. 19) discuss the process that takes place during the Change Laboratory by mentioning that it begins with the discussion of mirror data that demonstrates the situation of the current activity (LRC members).

1. **Mirror /Present:** After the collection of observations and comments, the discussion can move to identify the most important problems that need further investigation and possible solutions.
2. Ideas /Tools/ Present: In order to understand how the problem surfaced, the participants collect data and observations concerning changes that took place in the systemic structure of their activity and record them.
3. Mirror/Past: The collected data are analysed to identify the connection between the observed changes.
4. Ideas/Tools/Past: The past form of the activity can then be modelled by characterising the specific nature of the elements of the activity system at that time.

5. Model/Vision/Past: Furthermore, a model of the current activity system can then be constructed by identifying the elements of the activity in which major qualitative changes have taken place and those in which there has been relative little change. The relationships between changed and unchanged elements of the activity system are analysed to seek for possible contradictions

6. Model/ Present: To overcome the identified contradiction(s) the participants have to develop a vision of the future form of their activity

7. Model/ Vision / Future: and decide on a few new, key forms of actions and new tools with which they will begin to experimentally realise the vision.

8. Ideas/ Tools/ Future: Qualitative follow up data has to be collected from the first experiments to determine what aspects of the idea of the new form of the activity turned out to be feasible, and what further developments are needed to progress in the development of the activity. The last part is based on follow-up data.

9**.Mirror/Future:** in order to develop the vision and the practical tools.

2.12 The significance of CHAT to this study

CHAT provided the backbone of the theoretical framework of the study and it was significant because of its following features:

- Cultural Historical Activity Theory allows researchers to look back into cultural and historical aspects of a specific phenomenon and as a school that has been there for more than one hundred years, CHAT helped me to uproot some historical and cultural practices which hindered learner leadership development in the LRC.
- The relationship between different components in the second generation provided me with the tools to surface the contradictions between the different elements of the activity system, while their interaction in the workshops created an understanding of the dialogue from the different views of teachers and learners in order for us to come up with solutions. The dialogues gave clear insight on how teachers and learners felt about learner leadership development. In addition, Mukute (2010) adds that Cultural Historical Activity Theory provides methods for dealing with dialectics in order to achieve learning and knowledge

generation. The expansive learning processes allowed learners and teachers to work towards one goal which is developing learner leadership within the LRC.

2.13Conclusion

This chapter is a review of literature that informs my study. In this chapter I looked at broader views of what others have said about learner leadership in order to build my conceptual understanding. Different views from authors abroad, to some national authors, were entertained in this chapter. The following concepts were largely explored: learner leadership, leadership and management, leadership theories and distributed leadership.

Firstly, in the first section of this chapter, I started by defining what learner leadership is by looking at the importance and challenges of learner leadership. Learner leadership is at the root of my study and I found that it was vital for my readers to have a clear understanding of it.

In the second section I talked about leadership and management by defining the two concepts. To gain clarity, I looked at the distinctions between the concepts. In the third section I looked at the evolution of leadership theory starting from traditional theories to a contemporary view of leadership which encompasses distributed leadership theory. Learner leadership is born out of distributed leadership and I explored more on distributed leadership by looking at the definition, the importance, the challenges and how it is used as a social practice. Lastly CHAT was discussed as the framework of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is the practical paradigm, approach, and style used in the research as well as the methods of data collection and instruments used (Rule & John, 2011). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) refer to method as "a range of approaches used as a basis for interference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (p.47).Therefore, in this chapter I will explore the methodological approaches which were used to understand the development of learner leadership within the LRC structure, in a primary school in Namibia. Firstly, I shed light on the research goals and questions guiding this study. Secondly, the method and data collection tools are discussed, followed by the research paradigm, case study methods, research site, data collection process, data analysis, ethical issues, trustworthiness and validity, ethical issues, positionality, critique of the study, and the conclusion.

3.2 Research goals and questions

The overall goal of the research was to transform the LRC members through developing and implementing activities, conducted with the LRC and teachers. These broad goals may be further subdivided as follows:

- To develop leadership opportunities within LRC members;
- To encourage learner voice among the LRC members;
- To help teachers to understand the importance of involving learners in decision-making.

To achieve these goals the following questions need to be answered:

- How are the LRC members currently involved in the leadership of the school?

- What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC of the school?
- What are the factors inhibiting the development of learner leadership in the school?
- How can learner voice and leadership be developed within the LRC structure?

3.3 Research paradigm

Tomas Kuhn,a historian of science, as cited in Maxwell (2005, p. 36), explains paradigm as:

> a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology), assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition.

This study embraces a qualitative approach and is located within an interpretive paradigm. In addition, Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter, as cited in Rule and John (2011), point out that "qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, or phenomena as they occur in the real world and therefore want to study them in their natural settings" (p. 60). This method helped me to look at the reality of the participants and make sense of their experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to their views. It is also worth mentioning that reality is viewed differently by people in a social setting.

Furthermore, by using a qualitative research approach I "gain new insight about a phenomenon, develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon, and discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 136). The interpretive paradigm I used bears many truths, and I gained an in-depth understanding on how learner voice and leadership are viewed by teachers, as well as the learners in the case study school.

3.4 A case study approach

Stake (1995, p. xi) defines a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances". This is one reason why I chose the case study method because my study looked at a specific instance: the development of

learner voice and leadership in LRC members in a Namibian primary school. In addition, Cohen,Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 182) mention that a case study is used because:

> it is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case. It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions and events. It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case and the researcher is integrally involved in the case.

The aforementioned features played a fundamental role because they allowed me to be involved in the case and focus on specific events that I was researching. Additionally, they gave me further opportunity to bring together all that was happening in the case study school, in order to understand the situation of learner leadership development in LRC members. A case study helped me to get an in-depth analysis, in order to obtain rich and substantial data on learner voice and leadership development.

Furthermore, Maree (2007) interestingly notes that a case study "opens the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless, like children or marginalised groups" (p. 75). This view is in line with my study and it inspired me to use a qualitative case study approach because my aim was to look at the voiceless, i.e. primary school learners, and enhance their voice and leadership within their learning environment.

3.5 The site of the study

The real name of the school will not be disclosed, but for the purposes of the study it is referred to as Veino Primary School. The school is one of the oldest schools in Otjozondjupa and was opened by German missionaries. It is a state-owned school with an enrolment of 1231 learners, 39 teachers, four cleaners, and two secretaries. It accommodates learners from Pre-Primary to Grade 7. The school has 32 classrooms, but they are not enough for all learners to attend the morning session; hence Grade 3 learners attend the afternoon session. There is an office and a library where learners can borrow books.

Since the school is situated in a small town with limited job opportunities for parents, most learners come from a poor socio-economic background. Many of them stay in an informal settlement and

have to walk long distances to school on empty stomachs. As a result, the school has a feeding programme under the Ministry of Education to provide breakfast to learners during break time. A butchery in town donates meat to the school on a weekly basis. The management hierarchy consists of the School Management Team (SMT), the School Governing Board (SGB), the Principal, four Heads of Department (HODs), the Learner Representative Council (LRC) and various school committees.

3.6 Sampling

For this study I used purposive sampling to identify suitable research participants. In purposive sampling, participants are selected and chosen deliberately because of their "suitability in advancing the purpose of the research" (Rule & John, 2011 p. 64). Rule and John (2011) further mention that people are selected because of their significant knowledge, interest and experiences that would contribute to the study. The sample in this case consisted of 22 participants, which included all 14 LRC members (seven girls and seven boys), an additional five learners from the upper primary phase, as well as the principal, one head of department, and the LRC teacher mentor.

I chose the three teachers because I believed that they were in a position to understand the study well as most of them are in leadership and mentoring positions. These three teachers in their different levels of leadership were also purposely selected to compare their views and opinions about learner leadership development within the LRC structure. The entire LRC was selected because they were the main focus of the study (my primary participants) and I needed to understand how they viewed their positions and what they thought could be done to improve their leadership. The input of the additional five learners was also important because they played a key role in selecting the LRC. To ascertain their perception and understanding of learner leadership development, the data collection process was employed.

3.7 Data collection process

Data collection refers to the research instruments used in order to gather rich data for the study. Rule and John (2011) state that "the choice of data collection methods is determined more by

factors such as the purpose of the study, the key research questions, research ethics, and resource constraints, than by factors inherent to case study research as a form of equity" (p.61).The data was collected over a period of four months and in this study the following data collection tools were used: questionnaires, a focus group interview, individual interviews, observation, and Change Laboratory workshops.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

According to Rule and John (2011) "questionnaires are printed sets of field questions to which participants respond on their own (self-administered) or in the presence of the researcher" (p.66). In addition, Thomas (2009) asserts that a questionnaire is a written form of inquiring. Giving questionnaires to participants is a significant way of collecting data because "firstly, the responses from the respondent are normally standardised, secondly, questionnaires can be administered without the presence of the researcher" (Thomas, 2009, p. 377). Furthermore, a questionnaire is also an efficient technique when collecting data from a large number of people at the same time (Rule & John, 2011). In this study, 14 questionnaires (Appendix A) were given to the LRC members, and each questionnaire had six questions which they needed to answer. The questions were open-ended in order to allow them to elaborate more and give full answers.

The questionnaires explored leadership opportunities amongst these learners, and its purpose was to answer the following question: What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC members of the school? Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 404) state that:

> The absence of the researcher is helpful, in that it enables respondents to complete the questionnaire in private, to devote as much time as they wish to its completion, to be in familiar surroundings, and to avoid the potential threat or pressure to participate caused by the researcher's presence.

Despite this information, I chose to have the learners answer the questionnaires in my presence after school. This allowed me to explain the questions to the participants and avoid the disadvantage of a low return of questionnaires.

3.7.2 Face to face, individual interviews

Thomas (2009) affirms that "an interview is a discussion with someone in which you try to get information from them" (p.160). He further adds that interviews yield rich information about the people or the case you are researching. Similarly, Simons (2009) further adds that during an interview, participants can give rich information because they may reveal more than what is expected from them.

Three teachers were interviewed: two teachers who form part of the management team (principal and HOD) and one of the mentors who works directly with the LRC members (Appendix B). I opted to ask open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews so that the interviews could become conversations, allowing me to explore the participants "views, ideas, beliefs and attitudes" (Maree, 2007). Semi-structured interviews "allow people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised interviews permit, but still provide a greater structure for comparability" (p.123).The purpose of conducting this interview with teachers was to assess their perspectives on learner leadership. These interviews had the potential to identify barriers in learner voice and leadership development, as well as the potential to increase LRC members' participation. The three teachers were interviewed over the period of one month depending on their availability. All interviews lasted for 45 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded to help me recall what was said. They were all transcribed on the same day while the information was still fresh in my mind. All the interviews were successfully completed as I was guided by Rule and John (2011), who mention that for an interview to be successful the interviewer must explain the nature and the purpose of the interview, allow participants to ask questions before the interview and make sure that they still want to continue. I listened to participants without interrupting, probed for further information, and summarised their answers to confirm my understanding (Rule & John, 2011).

3.7.3 Focus group interview

May (2001) affirms that "group interviews constitute a valuable tool of investigation, allowing researchers to explore group norms and dynamics around issues and topics which they investigate" (p.125). Maree (2007, p. 90) adds that "in the focus group interviews, participants are able to build on each other's ideas and comments to provide an in-depth view not attainable from individual

interviews". He further adds that unexpected comments and new perspectives can be explored easily within the focus group and it can add value to one's study (Maree, 2007, p.90). The purpose of the focus group interview was to explore their views on learner leadership (Appendix B). Therefore, they needed to answer the question on how the LRC is currently involved in the leadership of the school. The question raised key issues which either promoted or inhibited the development of learner voice and leadership and it proved to be a valuable source of information. This also helped me to get a different perspective from the learners' side on how they view learner leadership within the LRC members. This focus group interview was done with five learners who do not form part of the LRC members, but I chose these learners because they contributed to selection process of LRC.

During the focus group interview I noticed that two learners were dominating the group by answering most of the questions. The other three learners were very quiet, and I needed to engage all the participants in the conversation by encouraging them to talk or by making jokes so that they could open up. In line with this view, Thomas (2009, p.169) mentions that "people behave differently in groups; particularly individuals may become more talkative and less talkative and some people may take the lead while others follow". Finally, they opened up and started to engage in the conversation and I got all the information I needed from them. The interview was successful in the end and it was recorded with an audio recorder.

3.7.4 Observation

Another data collection method I used was observation. Cohen et al. (2000) mention that the unique aspect of observation as a research process, is that it offers the opportunity to gather live data from a naturally occurring social situation. At first, the whole idea of observation was to go with the LRC members to the training camp which took place in February every year. I wanted to use observation at that stage of my research, to observe the different leadership activities which LRC members were being taught at the camp and to see whether those principles were being put into practice at the school. However, this whole idea did not materialise because we could not find a relief teacher for my class for that week. Instead, I decided to observe the daily leadership activities of the LRC members to see how leadership was being developed in this LRC, through their daily activities. I observed them at their meeting (Appendix C), by looking at the first level

of the Mitra and Gross pyramid, which was 'being heard'. I looked at whether LRC members were coming up with suggestions at the meeting and whether their suggestions were taken into account. Only one meeting took place during my data collection period and this meeting was held by the guidance teacher. I further observed them during cleaning campaigns and their daily roles. I only managed to observe them three times and I wrote everything down on the observation schedules. One advantage of observation is that it helped me to get a clear understanding of what was said in the interviews and questionnaires by relating it to how they really functioned.

3.7.5 Change Laboratory workshops (CLW)

Two Change Laboratory workshops, both led by me as the researcher-interventionist, were implemented over the period of one month, after collecting the initial data (a three-month period). These workshops were done after all data was collected and analysed. The LRC members were reminded about the workshops through their guidance teacher, while teachers were reminded in the staffroom by the principal. This was not compulsory; only teachers who were willing to attend, attended the workshop.

Figure 3.1: LRC members working in groups in the workshop

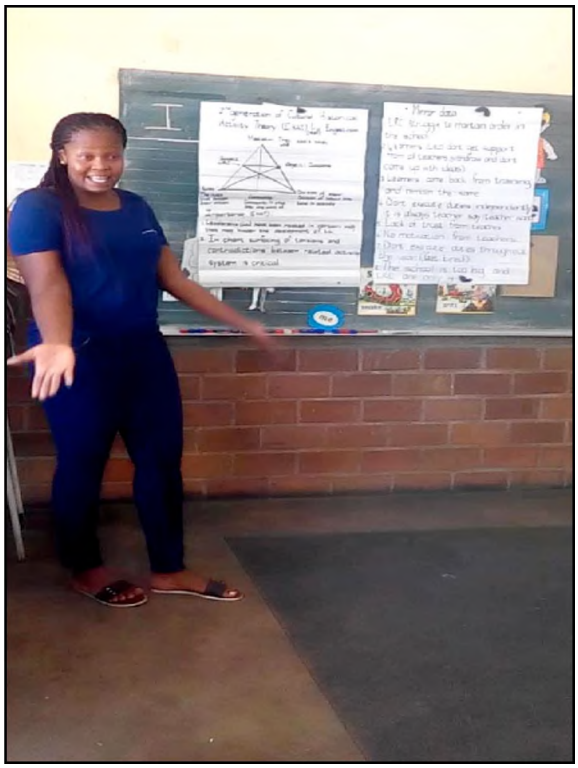

Figure 3.2: Workshop with the teachers

The theme of both workshops was to find solutions or ways of approaching the contradictions that arose in the earlier stages of the research. The first workshop involved the LRC members and their guidance teacher. Engeström and Sannino (2010) stress that the purpose of CL workshops is to question and perhaps reject what has been taken for granted. The workshops tried to find the root causes of the current situation of leadership development opportunities for learners, by looking at the experiences from the past. This was achieved through a presentation of a discussion of findings gathered so far, to be used as mirror data.

In the first workshop with the LRC members, as researcher-interventionist, I mirrored the contradiction which surfaced from the data back to the learners, in order for us to look for solutions. Engeström and Sannino (2011) mention "contradictions as significant factors behind the organisational change" (p. 368). After discussing all the contradictions, participants were divided into three groups and they wrote solutions for each contradiction on flip charts. The groups were given 30 minutes to write down the solutions, and then presented them to the whole group. This was done in order to come up with a way forward. These learners were primary school learners

and sometimes engaging them in discussions was difficult as they were too shy to respond. Working in groups therefore, allowed them to talk freely and come up with solutions in their groups, rather than just giving answers directly to me. I was aware of the challenge of conducting a serious discussion with 13-year-old learners, but the LRC members contributed sufficiently to the discussions on learner leadership development.

The second workshop involved the teachers and principal (see Figure3.2) and during this workshop, data was mirrored back to the teachers and contradictions were surfaced. After looking at the contradictions we searched for solutions and they were then recorded by my assistant teacher. In the first workshop, the guidance teacher assisted me with running the workshop, but with the teachers' workshop he was not available, so I asked one of the teachers who was a participant to assist me. This benefited my study in two ways: firstly, it enabled me to focus on the discussion and debate, noting important issues, helping me to keep the process going without being concerned with logistics; secondly, I felt that the presence of an objective observer during the workshops helped to normalise this activity, and prevented me from drawing unfounded conclusions. Both sessions were audio recorded. Meeting with the teachers was a considerable challenge because of their other commitments and we ended up rescheduling the workshop three times, until I was permitted by the principal to use one hour of school time. The workshop was subsequently held from 12:00 to 13:00 on a Friday.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is an approach that makes valid inferences from data by analysing data "through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 476). Data gathered was coded and placed into different themes or categories. Maree (2007) describes coding as "the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units" (p.105). Units in this sense, refer to statements which provide substantive answers to the research questions. The data from individual interviews, the focus group interview, workshops and questionnaires were analysed and transcribed immediately. I then read carefully through my data and used colour coding to show different themes. The themes that emerged were selected and placed into different categories.

I identified and analysed my subjects which were the LRC learners. I analysed them in relation to the object of study, rules, outcomes, artefacts, and the division of labour, as per the second generation of CHAT. I then identified the tensions and contradictions between the different elements that inhibited the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC structure.

3.9 Ethical issues

One of the most important ethical issues in research is the invasion of privacy. All individuals have the right to privacy and the right to decide when and to whom they will reveal personal information. According to Neuman (2003), we need to treat all participants with dignity, reduce discomfort, and protect the confidentiality of data. In addition, Simons (2009) adds that "ethics is how we behave or should behave in relation to the people with whom we interact, and this means establishing throughout the research process a relationship with participants that respects human dignity and integrity and in which people can trust" (p. 98). She further mentions that "trust is essential to good field relations, but it cannot be assumed; it has to be created in the process of conducting the research".

Bearing this in mind, I first wrote a letter to the principal to ask for permission to conduct my research at the school (Appendix D). The principal needed to notify the school board members and permission was granted after the first school board meeting for the term. I was asked to explain and clarify my study during the school board meeting, as well as to the staff members during the morning briefing. I explained the significance of the research and what changes it might bring within the leadership structure of the LRC. Their confidentiality and the anonymity of their identities were assured, as well as that data collected would be strictly used for the purpose of the research only. I further stated to them that their participation was voluntary, and they could decide to withdraw at any point if they so choose. The same meeting was held the next day with my learner participants and everything was explained to them as well. Consent letters were issued to learners as they were minors and their parents needed to give permission (Appendix E). Cohen et al. (2007) clearly state that "consent protects and respects the right of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research" (p. 52).

3.10 Trustworthiness and validity

As a researcher, I made sure that sufficient data was collected to illuminate key features of the activity system to enable me to generate reasonable explanations of what I found. The trustworthiness of what I discovered was tested through constructing worthwhile arguments and relating these to the relevant literature.

According to Olsen (2012, p.78), "validity means the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values"; in other words, to produce accurate results and to measure what is supposed to be measured. In order to ensure validity in my research, I did not rely on a single source of evidence to draw conclusions, bearing in mind that the research is qualitative and did not involve controls and measurement. To get rich data I embraced multiple methods in this case study. I used interviews, observation, a focus interview and laboratory workshops (Appendix, A, B, C) as different tools to seek out information and look for opportunities to answer my research questions. The use of several data sources strengthened my findings. Triangulation achieved a higher degree of validity and reliability and further legitimised personal views and interest (Sarantakos, 1998).

3.11 Positionality

The issue of power relations did not play a role amongst the teachers I interviewed, due to the fact that I am not in a management position. As an 'insider' researcher, the question of trust and openness became pertinent (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and I needed to be aware of this at all times. The only thing that I was concerned about was that participants may have given me "assumptions of similarity and therefore [failed] to explain their individual experience fully" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.58). To avoid that, I prepared my questions in a way that allowed them to give their own opinion rather than simply echoing the common position.

However, power relations were a factor when data was collected from learners, the LRC members, and the five learners from the focus group interview, because learners were intimidated by the fact that I was their teacher and they felt that they needed to please me. Therefore, as a researcher I

tried to create a relaxed atmosphere by providing refreshments and informally talking to them before the data collection began. I further explained that my position as researcher was different from that of their teacher. I also promised confidentiality of the data collected from them.

3.12 Limitation of the study

Flyvbjerg (2006) mentions that one cannot "generalise from a single case… and social science is about generalisation" (p. 219). In addition, Schofield, as cited in Bassey (2010), mentions that "generalisability depends upon the *fit* between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions studied" (p. 8). In accord with Bassey (2010), it was not my intention to generalise because schools have varied circumstances and the findings cannot apply to other primary schools; but there might be a few things which they have in common which they can draw on from the study.

In addition, Simons (2009) mentions the concern of "focus around the personal involvement and /or subjectivity of the researcher, the way in which inferences are drawn from the single case, and the validity and usefulness of findings to inform policy" (p. 24). To reduce subjectivity, I used different tools to collect my data (interviews, questionnaires, focus group interview, Change Laboratory). Also, I looked at the data through an unbiased lens in an attempt to allow the data to speak for itself. Data was also mirrored back to the participants in the workshops and this allowed them to see what they had said as the data and solutions were discussed together.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the different methodological approaches that I used to conduct this study, such as the research paradigm, research method, data collection processes, and how data was analysed. I further discussed the following topics: the research site, sampling, ethical issues, validity, positionality, and critique of the study. In addition, I want to note that as a novice researcher, the writing of this chapter enhanced my understanding about the different methodological approaches and it showed me how different tools are applied during the data collection process. In the next chapter I present the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data generated from individual interviews, observation, the focus group interview and questionnaires. The aim of the research is to develop learner voice and leadership within the structure of the LRC, in a primary school in Namibia. The data gathered answers the following questions:

- How are the LRC currently involved in the leadership of the school?
- What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC of the school?
- What are the factors inhibiting the development of learner leadership in the school?
- How can learner voice and leadership be developed within LRC structure?

The data is discussed under four different themes and sub-themes collected from the raw data. This shows us how participants perceived learner leadership development within the LRC structure according to their different views. I used an interpretive paradigm in an attempt to depict the exact views of the participants. The data showed that all participants had different views about learner leadership in the case study school. Sometimes the reader will find that the different views from participants contradict each other.

4.2 Codes and research participants' profiles

Neuman (2003) mentions that we need to reduce discomfort and protect the confidentiality of data. With this in mind, pseudonyms were used to describe the different participants. I will also use codes to describe the data collection tools and to describe participants. This is done to allow readers

to obtain a clear picture of the participants who I used in my study. I will now present the codes and profiles of the participants.

Table 1: Descriptions and codes

Descriptions	**Codes**
Principal	P
Head of Department	HOD
Guidance Teacher	GT
Learner Representative Council members	L (1-14)
Interview	I
Focus Group Interview	FGI
Questionnaires	Q
Observation	O
Change Laboratory workshop	CLW

4.2.1 Learner Representative Council members (LRC)

The subject of the study, the LRC members, were selected from learners in Grade 6. In the first instance, 20 learners are selected by their peers. The 20 selected learners then hold campaigns for one week at the beginning of the third trimester in their Grade 6 year and 14 learners (seven boys and seven girls) are nominated by the Grade 6 and 7 learners to become LRC members for the following year. It is as this juncture that the teachers become involved in the process and have a say in the final selection, choosing learners who demonstrate good behaviour and sound academic performance. After the selection, these learners are taken to a leadership camp in the second week of the first trimester in their Grade 7 year and the camp takes place for a whole week. This camp focuses on capacity building of the LRC and aims to enhance their leadership.

4.2.2 The principal (P)

The principal of the school was appointed in 2015 after the previous principal passed away. The principal worked in this town for many years before he left for the Erongo region in the western part of Namibia, in search of promotion. He worked at a managerial level at different secondary schools in the western part of Namibia, before he was transferred to the case study primary school. He is a humble and hardworking man in his mid-fifties. He has been teaching for many years and holds a teaching degree from the University of Namibia. He specialised in Social Science and is teaching Social Studies to Grade 7. The principal is also responsible for teaching non-promotional subjects such as Arts and Religious Education to Grade 6 and 7.

4.2.3 The Head of Department (HOD)

The HOD is a soft spoken quiet man who is in his early forties. He holds a Basic Education Teaching Diploma (BETD) from Windhoek College of Education and an Advance Certificate in Education (ACE) from North West University. He specialised in junior primary phase and he is the HOD for junior phase. He has been teaching for 16 years. The HOD is also responsible for teaching a Grade 3 class. He is currently doing his Honours degree in Business Administration at the University of Namibia.

4.3.4 The guardian teacher (GT)

The guardian teacher is a vibrant, hardworking and passionate young man in his mid-twenties. He holds a degree in psychology from the University of Namibia. He has been teaching at the case study school for the past five years on a temporary basis because he does not have a qualification in Education. He is the chairperson of the sports committee at the school. He is also responsible for the school choir. He teaches Afrikaans to Grade 5 and 6. He is also accountable for different extra-mural activities at the school and has other social responsibilities outside the school.

4.3 Learner leadership roles explored

4.3.1Disciplinary roles

When I asked about the different roles in which the LRC are involved, one learner mentioned that the "LRC makes sure that we are not coming late to school by standing at the gates and asking us to work fast" (FGI). In addition, another learner added that "we stand at the gates and close the gates when the bell rings" (L12, Q). L12 (Q) further mentioned that "we write the names of the late comers and take them to the teacher who is on duty". Similarly, L14 added that "learners are coming late every day and it is not a good reputation for our school" (Q).

In the focus group interview one learner mentioned that the LRC members make sure that they are wearing the correct uniform and if they are not, they report them to the principal. In addition, L7 added that "we also look at how learners are looking especially in their uniform and we send them to the office if they are not wearing the right uniform" (Q). To confirm the above ideas GT further mentioned that:

> The LRC have a normal routine for a whole year, especially the ones that we place at the gates. They make sure that learners come inside before the bell rings and make sure that learners who are coming in are neat and their shirts are tucked in; and if learners do come late and the gates are closed they write down their names. So, we deal with those learners. The LRC at the pap kitchen normally make sure that the learners queue up and there is order, and learners are not pushing each other while they are taking porridge.

Furthermore, learners mentioned their involvement in different activities such as taking care of the parking area during break-time. L1 said, "I am placed at the parking area and make sure that learners don't play with cars" (Q). Similarly, another learner mentioned that "each LRC member has a role on what to do, for example, to take care of the cars at the parking area and to chase children away from the cars, because they are scratching the cars with metal" (L3,Q). As most of the above refers to controlling roles performed by LRC members, I identified these as policing roles – whereby they impose strict control on other learners in turn to maintain discipline and order in the school.

4.3.2 Maintenance of teaching blocks and classes

I discovered that the LRC are responsible for taking care of the blocks and classes when teachers are not around, especially during break-times or after school. The guidance teacher (GT) mentioned that "some of them we allocate at the blocks" and these learners make sure that learners are lined up in front of their classes when the bell rings. One learner mentioned that "I take care of the blocks and make sure that the blocks are clean" (L7, Q). L7 added: "We also supervise the learners who are sweeping the classes after school so that they cannot leave their rubbish outside the blocks". Furthermore, a learner emphasised that "the neatness of our school is very important, and we are not allowed to eat in front of the blocks during break-time or to leave the papers in front of the blocks when we are sweeping" (FGI).

The LRC members also take care of the classes and learners mentioned that "responsibilities of classes are mostly managed by the class captains and LRC members only help out when the class captains are absent" (FGI). In addition, HOD in his interview mentioned that "the involvement of the LRC is to take care of the classes on an instructional basis when teachers are busy at the office". In this sense, LRC members only take care of the classes when they are instructed to by the teachers. Sometimes, teachers are busy at the office with meetings and then they place LRC members in charge to take care of the classes.

4.3.3 Participation in different committees

Different committees were introduced within the LRC structure to allow learners to contribute to the development of the school and help to strengthen learner leadership. GT, in his interview, mentioned that "from the camp we divide learners into several committees, such as financial committee (fundraising), public relation committee and others". These committees are responsible for different functions which I am going to discuss below.

Fundraising committee

The participants have different duties within their committees and one learner mentioned that "I am an organiser and I organise shows and fun days for fundraising" (L9,Q). L8 mentioned that "my duty is to organise events for our school" (Q). Learners mentioned that during fundraising

events some of them are organisers and this year they wanted to contribute to bigger things at the school like helping with the building of the wall" (L2,Q).In addition, learners confirmed that the "LRC are divided into different committees and the fundraising committee had a video day last Friday after school" (FGI).

Another learner from the FGI stated that, "I like the fundraising committee because they also entertain us and our school is not only focusing on learning, but they give us time to relax and have fun". In the fundraising committee there are some learners who are given the role of taking care of finances. L2 mentioned that "I am working with money at fundraising activities and I am a treasurer" (Q). Finally, another learner confirmed that "I am a deputy treasurer and when we do fundraising activities we count the money and make sure that it is enough and then give it to GT" (L10,Q).

Public Relations Committee

The idea of setting up a public relations committee was for these LRC members to look at the needs of their peers and talk to the teachers. This was just to develop communication between learners and teachers. L11 mentioned that "I am a deputy head girl at the school and my portfolio is a spokesperson and sometimes we need to talk to other learners to find out how they feel about things at school" (Q). L5 further added that "I am a spokesperson and I am dealing with ideas and later take it to the principal to see what he can say about it" (Q). These were the only roles in their committees which were mentioned by the participants.

4.4 Leadership development opportunities for LRC members

Leadership development refers to different opportunities which are available to develop the leadership of LRCs. These opportunities try to equip and strengthen their leadership roles, but as a school which faces a lot of challenges with learner leadership development, only few opportunities emerged from the data collected. The following opportunities will be presented: leadership training and event organisation.

4.4.1 Leadership training camp

Figure 4.1: LRC members at the training camp (doing team building exercises)

"Practice is the hardest part of learning, and training is the essence of transformation".

Ann Voskamp

Leadership training camp was regarded as the main enhancement for leadership development of the LRC at the school. Learners are taken to a leadership camp every year at the beginning of the first term. They get trained using team building activities which help them to work together within their structure. The team building activities are in a practical format, but they also receive some theoretical lessons and write a test at the end of the training sessions (GT, I). The training takes place over a whole week.

P confirmed that "training is the only means how we can develop leadership in these learners because they are trained on different levels" (I). GT further added that "we take them to the leadership training camp, and there they are prepared to become good leaders" (I).

He further mentioned in his interview that:

> I went as an observer and attended two training camps with the LRC. I saw how they are being trained seriously throughout these sessions, so I decided that what is being done there should be put into practice and so I needed to implement these things at the school and see how it goes.

In contrast to the above, HOD mentioned that "learners come back the same from the leadership training camp and if there is no change it should be stopped" (I). HOD further added that "after these learners come back from the camp and they had received their notes and materials they should also have in-service training so that they can be reminded about what they have learned at the camp" (I). In agreement GT (I)said: "I want to see a change in the prefects because of the complaints that come from the teachers, they feel that the school pays a lot of money for training and when the prefects come back, no changes take place and it should be stopped". GT further added that "teachers don't see the need of them going to the camp" (I). During the FGI, a learner confirmed that "when prefects comeback from the camp they sometimes start playing with us without doing their duties". In addition, one learner in the FGI mentioned that:

> The teachers must speak to them and explain what they must do because sometimes teachers shout at LRC members if they are not doing their duties and they threaten to remove them from their positions; but that's not the solution and teachers must have meetings and workshops with these learners at the school.

In conclusion, during the FGI, it was mentioned that more training should be done internally so that teachers could express their own goals on how they wanted the LRC to execute their duties and then train them for that.

4.4.2 Event organiser

Organising events was another factor that contributed to leadership development within the LRC members. One learner mentioned that they came up with an idea of a talent show at the end of July and it helped to raise money for the school (L10, Q). This was a good gesture towards developing learner leadership and an indication of a space being created for leadership development to emerge within the LRC. In line with the above view, from my observation I observed how the LRC came up with the cleaning campaign and that this is what actually happened (O, 10 August 2016):

> The guardian teachers announced the idea in the staff room at the morning briefing. The idea was supported by all teachers and the date was set for the cleaning campaign (12 August 2016). The principal also announced that the school will go out at 11:00 on that Friday for all learners and all classes will be involved in the cleaning campaign up to 1:00.

L8 mentioned that "we are always combining ideas and we do one idea at a time until we come up with a new one" (Q). In conclusion, the guardian teacher (I) mentioned the different events which they organised and in his own words he added that: "What we normally do is we organise activities, for instance we are planning for a dance at the school. So normally we have fundraising activities like a dance, movie day, or sometimes we decide to sell chips and sweets just to generate money for the school. Sometimes on Friday we will organise a casual day or funny face day".

4.5 Inhibiting factors of learner voice and leadership

The data collected showed many inhibiting factors at the case study school which hinder the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC structure. The following inhibiting factors emerged from the data: devaluing of learners' voice; resistance of learners to leadership of their peers; the size of LRC is determined by the policy; the need for empowerment and development of leadership in teachers and learners; lack of support and trust, and lack of communication.

4.5.1 Devaluing of learner voice

Devaluing of learners' voice refers to the underestimation of the worth of learners' voice in the case study school. Learners' voice gives learners an opportunity to come up with ideas in order to enhance their leadership skills. Enhancing leadership in learners can trigger learners' voice because learners will be more confident in speaking about issues that concern them in their learning environment. Looking at the case study school, the issue of learner voice was not fully understood by teachers and it emerged as an inhibiting factor for learner leadership from the data collected.

L7 mentioned that "sometimes our ideas are not taken into consideration" (Q). Furthermore, L14 added that "sometimes when we come up with ideas the guardian teacher must always take it up with other teachers and they sometimes don't agree with the idea" (Q). In line with the above, GT mentioned that "when we came up with ideas it always brings an opposing motion from the other

teachers, for instance if we decide that on Friday learners can wear casual clothes, other teachers oppose the idea because they feel that when learners wear casual clothes there is chaos in class because learners don't listen to them" (I). Similarly, L14 said "one day we came up with a casual day and teachers didn't want it because they said it brings chaos during learning hours" (Q). P (I) further added that:

> Children are not given that mandate and there is no platform, and they will not contribute if there is no platform. They cannot come up with something constructive because the only thing they do is just to wait for the teachers.

P (I) further added that learners are not involved in decisions and he said:

> All decisions are taken here without their knowledge and we just dump the decision on them and expect them to act accordingly. It will even be good if the guardian teacher can give them the platform in their mini-meetings. Ask them what they want the school to do in certain areas. Suggestions should come from them and to be honest we don't do that.

The HOD mentioned that the LRC lacks voice "because when they try to come up with something they are not supported by others, but if we teach them from the beginning what learner leadership is and allow them to sit in our meetings it will motivate their voice" (I). He further said that if the LRC were included in meetings they would feel that "this is also not only the teachers' ideas, but they will feel that they were part of the idea and if they take it back to their peers it will encourage them to lead by example" (HOD, I). I fully concur with HOD when he mentioned that we must allow learners to sit in on meetings at the school, because from my observation and from being a school board member at the case study school, I observed that learners are not allowed to sit in on school board meetings. When I asked the chairlady of the school board (I) about this, she felt that:

> There are sensitive issues shared in school board meetings and the learners are not allowed to listen to them. We feel that learners in primary school are too young to get involve in sharing decisions and keeping sensitive issues confidential.

P (I) felt that learner voice and leadership would bring a dramatic change in his school if teachers promoted and helped learners in their leadership roles. He felt that certain problems which the school were facing would be solved, such as drugs, fighting and any disciplinary problems,

because the LRC would be able to communicate with their peers and they might come up with better solutions. In his own words the principal (I) further adds that:

> If we can start building a pyramid and on the footing of the pyramid equip them very well so that they can know what the meaning of learner leadership and voice is. They will stand for themselves and identify their own problems and come up with ideas. They will identify because they will see the ability to identify obstacles, learning problems or any problems or to raise funds or anything that is positive.

In conclusion he (P, I) suggested that:

> Why can't we start little by little to develop learner leadership even from Grade 5 onwards? Who said that somebody who is in Grade 6does not have the ability to lead. …If we put a child from an earlier age that's how you see how he is progressing in leadership ability. But now we wait until the last grade.

4.5.2 Resistance of learners to the leadership of their peers

The LRC are elected by the learners and this means that learners should have assurance in them and adhere and support them in the running of the school. That was not the case at the case study school, because some learners did not listen to the LRC. Learners had a negative attitude towards the LRC and they did not respect them that much. Generally, the teachers that I interviewed felt that the LRC were just children and there was a lack responsibility amongst them as they failed to perform their duties responsibly throughout the year.

L8also mentioned that "learners see me as their friend and they don't listen to me and that upsets me very much and I just feel that I am just a nobody in front of them" (Q). In addition,L7 said "learners take us as their friends and they don't listen to us" (Q). A similar view was shared by L10 and he said that "other learners see me as their friend and they don't listen to me. Some of the learners say that I look small and that they are bigger than me and I must not give them instructions" (Q). L1 mentioned that "learners see me as their friend and when I tell them to pick up papers or to keep quiet some of them do what I say but others not" (Q). In agreement with the above learner, a respondent from the FGI said: "we forget that they are our leaders and we treat them like our friends and that's why we don't take them seriously". On the other hand, it seems to me that these learners are also seen as young children by other stakeholders, as P mentioned in his interview that "even the big learners in high school cannot come up with their own creative

activities so what about these little ones". In addition, GT said that "sometimes kids are just kids and they tend to forget and some of them we find are laid back in their duties" (I).

In contrast, when learners from the FGI answered the question – would you like to become a LRC member one day? – nearly all of the learners answered yes because they felt that when they became a LRC member, learners would respect them. They also mentioned that teachers also love and respect the LRC. One learner from the FGI answered no to the question. as he felt that the LRC were responsible for many things at the school and that he is not ready to take up that challenge.

4.5.3 The size of LRC is determined by policy

There is a big difference between the total enrolment of learners in the school and the number of LRC and there were complaints that the school was too big for the LRC to handle. However, the internal policy of the school indicates that only 14 LRC members should be selected yearly. GT confirmed in his interview and mentioned that:

> The other thing is that we only have 14 prefects and the school is about 1231 learners that need to be disciplined by 14 prefects. Unfortunately, we have that learner prefect ratio because the school is too big and LRC members are few. That's why we find that prefects are tired by June/July because they have to runaround the whole school. We asked for an increase in the number of prefects, but it was turned down by the SMT, because if prefects increase the cost for the training camp will also increase … and the school does not have money since they are already complaining about the cost of these 14 members.

A learner from the FGI mentioned that "maybe the school is too big for the LRC. Why are the teachers not increasing their numbers?". Answering the question of how they feel being LRC members, L7 said: "I feel tired because the school is too big, and we are running around up and down" (Q). In addition,L12 agreed that "it feels good when learners look up to me and respect me but sometimes it gets very tiring being LRC because the school is too big" (Q).

4.5.4. The need for empowerment and the development of leadership in teachers and learners

Lack of empowerment was seen as an inhibiting factor to learner leadership development and learner voice in the case study school; this was a concern coming from the top hierarchy of the

school and learners as well. P felt that his teachers were not empowered, and that it then might be difficult for them to empower learners, as they first needed to be empowered. P (I) mentioned:

> It is the same here when I am not around. The HODs will always wait for my instruction which is not good. It should not be like that. If it means that we want to be building leaders for tomorrow than we are not building actually, we are killing.

In addition, he further mentioned that the duties of the LRC are "like what teachers want or what teachers say and there is nothing independently designed to execute" (P,I). As an old school which has been here for so many years (108), things have always been done in the same way. This is one reason why CHAT is relevant to this study because leadership has been rooted in certain traditions. P (I) added that:

> It's a mindset from us. Probably we believe it or it's habitual or something which we do on one line and expect is should be like that. We don't want to be flexible and to look at different expectations of leadership. We look at principal to HOD, HOD to teachers and teachers to learners. It is rare that learners even have contact with principal. Even my LRC they will rather talk to their guidance teacher just to say we want to see the principal just to see and discuss something. They don't have that mandate because they are not encouraged to do so.

P added that "there is no way we are engaging them (LRC) and teachers are to be blame because we just take the decisions and we are not even going back to them and asking their opinion for that matter. … There is the problem of drugs, there is the problem of fighting and alcohol, and what can we do to alleviate these problems" (I). A similar point was raised by the HOD (I) when he said:

> In my own view from our background, learners were not expected to be at the forefront or to lead. They are not given the mandate to give input or to contribute to something. So, in other words we mostly exclude our learners, which is not a good thing because if you are talking about the school it consists not only of teachers. Learners are also part of the school, even the cleaners are part of the school. So, with all these things sometimes we also need to hear the view of learners and how they want to lead.

4.5.4.1 Lack of support and trust

HOD (I) stated that "learner leadership is not appropriate because teachers undermine learners". He also felt that the concept of learner leadership should be understood by teachers, before it is introduced in schools. In addition, the principal added that the concept of learner leadership needed

to be understood by teachers because teachers lack the ability to lead themselves and this might cause the lack of support from teachers. In his interview, P said:

> The other thing is also you talk about learner leadership, but now let us talk about the teachers. It's not all of us that have the ability of leadership. We are teachers, but we don't have the ability. I think that teachers also to an extent should have workshops on leadership in their own right and in their own classes. Sometimes teachers are just administrators but not leaders, so we have to go back also to equip teachers. For instance, even the curriculum can probably come up with certain periods of leadership where we encourage the emergence of leadership.

To show how little interest teachers have in helping the LRC members in their leadership roles, GT (I) said:

> You find that some teachers are just reluctant to be affiliated with the LRC because they feel it's the duty of guardian teachers. Most of the time, the guardian teacher is the one who has the pressure to develop LRC potential or so forth. The learners don't get support from the teachers. Thus, the LRC tend to withdraw, and they don't come and approach the teachers if they want to hold an activity at the school. If teachers can support the LRC in their activities and encourage them, learner leadership will be embedded in learners.

In line with the above view, I saw during my observation that LRC members only interacted with the guardian teacher and they were labelled by other teachers as Mr. GT's children. When they were not doing their duties, or they were misbehaving, teachers mostly called GT to reprimand them or talk to them; it felt like these learners were alienated from other learners in the school, as they did not get support from the teachers like the other learners.

GT (I) mentioned a scenario where they did not get support from other teachers when he said:

> You find that last year we wanted to host a dance at the school just to generate funds. … And we were told no – if you are going to have a dance who will do this and who will do that? … So those barriers are there and I think lack of funds as well because we don't have a prefect budget and we have to come up with fundraising activities.

Looking at the issue of trust at the school P said that the "LRC cannot organise themselves" (I). In addition, GT (I) further added that "I think that there is a lack of trust" from the teachers. Accordingly, L7 answering the question – what indicates that your voices are heard or not heard?

– mentioned that "our voices are not heard when our ideas are not taken into consideration, because teachers do not trust us when we come up with ideas" (Q). The other thing that showed lack of trust from the teachers, was the issue of selecting learners who are in Grade 7 and who are performing well academically to become LRC members. This indicated that teachers lacked trust in other learners and they only trusted Grade 7 learners because they are older; but, one must realise that not all learners who are older or intellectual are good leaders. From the interview P mentioned that "we are only concentrating on Grade 7".While GT (I) mentioned that LRC are learners "who perform well in school".

4.5.5 Lack of communication

From the data I collected I came to the conclusion that there was a lack of communication between the teachers and the LRC, in the case study school. Learners did not know what they should do and how to function in their roles. They waited to be instructed by their teachers most of the time. The principal mentioned in his interview that LRC duties are based on "what teachers want and teachers say". Learners did not freely communicate with teachers and were more on their own. They only felt that they needed to talk to their guardian teacher. GT (I) mentioned that other teachers did not associate themselves with these learners, meaning that he was the only person who communicated with them. Meetings could have helped to generate communication between the groups, but there was only one meeting held during the data collection period, and the guidance teacher was the only person who spoke. There was no interaction between the teacher and LRC members (O, 10 August 2016). P mentioned in his interview, that he had never seen these learners coming to his office to talk to him.

4.6 Conclusion

The data presented was gathered through individual interviews, a focus group interview, questionnaires and observation. Participants had differing views on how learner leadership is developed in the case study school. As a result, they did not agree on similar questions and tensions arose in their views. Through my observations, I found that the views from the interviews were complex and contradicted the way they behaved. My findings showed that there was an agreement that learner leadership should be developed in learners, but their behaviour showed otherwise.

There were many inhibiting factors that contributed to the lack of development of learner leadership. In general, this indicates that the notion of learner leadership is still a new concept and is not clearly understood at the case study school. Learners were not supported in their leadership roles.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the data presented in Chapter Four with analytical statements. Discussing the data collected will give an in-depth understanding of how learner leadership development is viewed in the case study school, informed by literature and the theoretical framework of CHAT. CHAT plays a role chiefly in identifying the contradictions that surfaced from the data collected and the solutions modelled in the two Change Laboratory workshops. The contradictions and the modelled solutions from the workshops will answer the fourth question in the research, namely: How can learner voice and leadership be developed within the LRC structure?

From the data presented in Chapter Four, I was also able to identify issues and I use them as themes in this chapter and they are:

- Involvement of LRC members in leadership roles;
- Existing potential of learner leadership;
- Challenges inherent in learner leadership development;
- Contradictions and possible solutions in the development of learner voice and leadership in LRC members.

5.2 Involvement of LRC members in leadership roles

The Learner Representative Council is a legal body which is elected by learners to cater for learners' needs or to speak on their behalf at management level, on issues that concern them in their learning environment. Data revealed that LRC members are involved in different roles (see Section 4.3) at the case study school. Their roles include:

- Controlling the gates, making sure that learners are wearing the correct school uniform, maintaining order at the porridge kitchen, and patrolling the parking area during break time (see Section 4.3.1);
- Supervising blocks and classes (see Section 4.3.2);
- Acting in different committees (see Section 4.3.3).

The LRC members were selected to supervise the above-mentioned zones and to make sure that their peers adhere to the school rules and policies. In Chapter Four (see Section 4.3.1), I identified some of those roles as policing roles because they required LRC members to control their peers to ensure positive and orderly behaviour. These policing roles are related to traditional leadership views which expect individuals to adhere to certain rules and receive punishment if they do not comply with them. These strict measures might be implemented at the school because sometimes children are portrayed as lacking moral standards and being out of control (Uushona, 2012). Uushona (2012, p. 86) further mentions some of the negative consequences that might arise by imposing strict measures on learners:

> When LRC members force fellow learners to strictly adhere to school policies, which are believed to be made by positional leadership, and inflict fear of punishment for rules infringement they create enmity instead of collegiality between them and general learners' community.

Moreover, LRC members were also reported to be supervising the teaching blocks when the other learners were sweeping after school. L7 mentioned that "we also supervise learners who are sweeping the classes after school" (see Section 4.3.2). The aim of supervising was to make sure that their peers were cleaning the classes so that they would be in a favourable condition to be used the next morning. The LRC members further made sure that the learners who were cleaning also cleaned in front of the blocks. Coleman (2005) argues that supervision is one of the managerial roles essential "for efficient achievement of goals" (p.15).Griffin, Patterson and West (2001) similarly mention that supervisors can play an important role in structuring the work environment and providing information and feedback to others in the organisation. They further add that the behaviour of supervisors in an organisation can have an impact on the affective reaction of the team members (*ibid.*). This indicated that the way these learners supervised their peers could influence the way work was completed, as well as their emotional well-being.

Supervising the cleaning of the block also contributed to a clean learning environment which the school clearly valued: learners from FGI mentioned that "the neatness of our school is very important" (see Section 4.3.2). In addition, Flutter (2006) mentions that "the school environment is one of the important factors affecting the quality of student learning in school" (p. 184). Moreover, Ogbeba and Muluku (2013) add that "the school environment is the focus of the education industry, on which success of teaching depends" (p.21).Ogbeba and Muluku (2013) stress that the learning environment plays a vital role in determining how students perform or respond to circumstances and situations around them. Clearly, cleanliness is not the only factor in an environment conducive to learning, but is probably an important one.

The data further showed that LRC members were assigned to maintain discipline in classrooms in the absence of teachers. This was done mostly when teachers were busy with meetings in the office or when they were doing other administrative duties (see Section 4.3.2). This measure is put in place because "educators want a structured and orderly environment in the classroom as well as in school" (De Klerk & Rens, 2003, p.367). Involving these learners to help with maintaining discipline is the right gesture towards change, as we know that poor discipline in learners has contributed to poor academic performances in some schools. In addition, Flutter (2006) adds that students like a calmer and quieter environment to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their learning (p.184). This further indicates that the way learners behave towards their learning can play a positive or negative role in their academic performance. In her research, Subbiah (2004) mentions that "discipline is a problem experienced throughout the world and there is a widespread breakdown in school discipline" (p.1). Therefore, learners should not be left alone without being monitored and this is why the LRC were assigned to maintain discipline when teachers were not around. By the same token, Subbiah (2004, p. 6) adds that:

> The body [the LRC] must foster a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and morality amongst learners. Furthermore, they must promote and maintain discipline amongst learners and uphold the general welfare of the school. Learners must be led to develop high ideals of personal conduct, promote orderliness and not disrupt the order in the school.

The data further revealed that when LRC members are allocated different roles by the guidance teacher they serve in the same roles/position for the whole year and if they want to bring about

change they need to go through the different management structures of the school. I doubt whether this approach would give learners enough freedom to do their work, thereby limiting their exposure to leadership development opportunities, as I really believe that people learn from different and varied experiences. MacBeath (2005) makes a similar point, drawing on his study of three English schools in the UK as he mentions that "the controlled structure of school activities does not help pupils to acquire the skills to succeed in a world that is flexible, adjustable, free thinking, high level of communicative skills" (p.352). MacBeath (2005) further adds that controlling learners can militate against distributed leadership.

In terms of the LRC as an organisational structure, the data showed that LRC members are allocated in different portfolios such as treasurer, deputy treasurer, chairperson and spokesperson. In light of Uushona's (2012) comment that the "structure of any organisational leadership does not exist in a vacuum, but its members are expected to perform several duties on behalf of the organisation" (p. 27), it seems that learners contribute to the leadership of the school through the different committees. GT explained that when learners came back from the leadership camp they were allocated to several committees (based on the way they performed at the camp) (see Section 4.3.3). The establishment of different committees further demonstrates the idea of distributed leadership which "promotes the development of collegial norms which contribute to the effectiveness of the school" (Williams, 2011, p. 193). In addition, Vaeta (2015) also mentions that the establishment of small committees in schools can "create a cornerstone of a conducive platform for teachers or **learners** [emphasis mine] to work together in smaller groups where they share good practice, work on tasks, influence one another and create a good working relationship" (p. 56).Even though the different committees were established within the LRC structure at the school, the teachers interviewed did not mention the effectiveness of the LRC members or their committees. This may suggest that the committees existed in name only, and were not effective in practical terms. It may also suggest that teachers were not generally aware of the committees and their work.

5.3 Existing potential of learner leadership development

An important trigger of learner leadership development at the school was the leadership training camp. The data revealed that 14 LRC members are taken to a leadership camp at the beginning of

every year. These learners get trained through practical team-building activities, and they are given theoretical lessons where they learn about how to lead others. While critics of training, such as Rothwell (2002) – who refers to training as a "short-term change effort intended to improve individual work performance by equipping people with knowledge, skills and attitudes they must possess to be successful in their work" (p. 7) – argue that training cannot bring about lasting change, several studies of learner leadership have argued the need for this kind of training. Uushona(2012) believes that training may be the main means of LRC support, while it remains the best means for organisational empowerment. Be this as it may, training camps and workshops have become routinised in school learner leadership programmes.

Interestingly, the data further showed that some teachers were not happy with the training camp as they believed that learners did not show any change in their leadership when they returned from the camp. Some teachers were also concerned about the high cost of the training and felt that if training could not change the performance of these learners. it should be stopped (see Section 4.5.3). This may be a short-sighted view though. If learners received no training, they may be disadvantaged in ways pointed out by Heystek (cited in Subbiah, 2004, p. 110):

> Lack of knowledge and skills does not enable learners to make a substantial contribution. Hence if learners receive more training and experience they will be better equipped to contribute positively towards school governance. For learners to become involved in school management, it is vitally important they be trained accordingly. Schools should try and develop programs for leadership training on an ongoing basis to equip all learners to become actively involved in their education.

Rothwell (2002) does however, distinguish between problems that can be solved by training and those that can only be solved by management action (p.7). In other words, short-term problems – such as lack of knowledge and skills – are easily addressed through training. The respondents in this study exhibited more faith in training, as the data persistently showed that the school was expected to provide more training throughout the year – as some learners and teachers interviewed felt that one training session at the beginning of every year was not enough (see Section 4.5.3). Heystek (as cited in Subbiah, 2004, p. 110) agrees with this when he mentions that:

> The training of learners should not be a single event aimed at the year in which learners are serving as representatives; training should be given to learner leaders in all grades over many years to enable them to grow in the democratic process of participatory decision-making.

Apart from training, another avenue for learner leadership development emerging from the data was the idea of giving learners opportunities to organise events at the school such as talent shows, school dances and casual days. Organising events such as these can, according to Grant (2008, p. 85) promote distributed leadership and develop the "untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school". Clearly the key point here is "supportive"; learner leadership needs a support environment, with access to the guidance of teachers, to flourish. In this way distributed leadership in the organisation can help people to think ahead and become "generators of new knowledge" (Williams, 2011, p.193).

An example of learners taking charge of events emerged from the data when LRC members organised a cleaning campaign during the data collection period (O, 10 August 2016). The cleaning campaign did not raise any funds, but it did help to contribute in promoting a clean environment. This serves as an example of activism. Learners saw the littering situation at the school and they did not wait for teachers to tell them to act, but took the initiative themselves. Hence the LRC members exercised their right of being taught in a clean environment. Ajiboye and Silo (n.d.) affirm that it is the "obligation and the right for children to be involved and engaged in civic responsibilities and decisions about matters that affect their lives" (p. 108). These rights are firmly protected in the United Nations Convention (Graham, Whelan & Fitzgerald,as cited in Ajiboye and Silo (n.d), p.108) which states that these rights,

> principally enshrines children's participation in all matters affecting children. Therefore, state parties must take all appropriate measures to ensure that the concept as right holders are anchored in the child's daily life from the earliest stage. State parties should take all appropriate measures to promote active involvement of … school and communities at large, in the promotion and creation of opportunities for young children to actively and progressively exercise their rights in the everyday activities.

5.4 Challenges inherent in learner leadership development

The data collected revealed many inhibiting factors at the case study school which may hinder the development of learner leadership within the LRC structure. The following inhibiting factors emerged from the data: the need for empowerment and development of leadership in school; lack of trust and support from the teachers and learners; devaluing of learner voice; lack of communication; financial constraints to the size of the LRC body and resistance of learners to the leadership of their peers. Now I will discuss each of these in turn.

5.4.1 The need for empowerment and the development of leadership in school

The data revealed that lack of empowerment was seen as an inhibiting factor in learner voice and leadership development. Lack of empowerment refers to limited opportunities available for equipping LRC members with knowledge and skills in order for them to be more effective in their roles. Firstly, the principal felt a lack of capacity in his School Management Team (SMT) members. He mentioned in his interview that the SMT members could not execute their duties in his absence. That behaviour revealed that teachers had not been empowered to allow for personal management and the creation of strength and independence in employees (Kulakowska, Piatkowski & Zebrowski, 2010). The principal further mentioned that if teachers are not empowered they won't empower the learners (see Section 4.5.4). The reason why the principal, even though he knew that there was a lack of empowerment in his teachers, did not do anything to bring about change, might be due to the fear of distributing leadership as "some head teachers hold back on the idea of distributed leadership because they are afraid to fail as leaders and they feel that they are the ones who must give answers if something goes wrong in the organisation (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). Just as in distributed leadership, empowering stakeholders would mean that you needed to give them certain responsibilities in the organisation and some principals would be reluctant to do that.

Literature, by contrast, always seems to support notions of decentralisation and delegation. According to Malen et al. and Rowan and Syker, (as cited in Marks & Louise, 1999) to make schools a fruitful workplace for staff and students, reformers have to promote the idea of decentralising bureaucratic authority. They further add that "decentralisation can empower

teachers to varying extents ranging from merely nominal empowerment to the full partnership or very rarely, to full teacher control" (Marks & Louise, 1999, p.710).

Furthermore, LRC members reported that they were mostly instructed by teachers and they did not execute their duties independently (see Section 4.5.5).These learners felt that all the instructions on how to perform their daily activities or duties needed to come from the guidance teacher. The principal mentioned in his interview that learners were not given the mandate to take the lead. This indicated that learners lacked voice which could have led to an "increase in youth empowerment, which can provide sources of social capital for youth that can yield opportunities for further education, employment and other enrichment opportunities" (Larson, Walker, Pearce, O'Connor & Camino,as cited in Mitra, 2006, p. 2).

This is perhaps the most significant item of data to emerge from the study; an admission on the part of the principal that he is failing to develop leadership, even among his SMT members, let alone learner leaders. If this is a reflection of the organisational culture of the school, it helps to explain why learner leadership development has been limited, and why learner leadership is unlikely ever to flourish unless there is a change in mindset.

5.4.2 Lack of trust and support from the teachers

The data collected identified lack of trust from teachers as an inhibiting factor in learner voice and leadership development. The guidance teacher and one learner mentioned in their interview and questionnaire that "I think there is a lack of trust" and "teachers don't trust us when we come up with our ideas" (see Section 4.5.5). The lack of trust between the teachers and learners might be because teachers regard these learners as children who are not mature enough or ready to participate meaningfully in leadership, or execute their duties properly; the principal also mentioned that these "learners cannot organise themselves" (see Section 4.5.5). The absence of trust among teachers and the LRC will cause a lack of interaction and effective communication. Wells and Kipnis (2001) affirm that people in an organisation mostly prefer to interact regularly with the people they like or trust and steer clear of those they do not trust, even if they depend on them. They further argue that "trust is an essential element in the productive and effective intra-organisational communication and interaction" and that trust is an "essential ingredient in open

and meaningful communication within an organisation" (Wells&Kipnis, 2001, pp. 593-601). In a situation where teachers and learner leaders do not trust each other openly, it is unlikely that much effective, goal-directed communication takes place.

The HOD comment that "teachers undermine learners" (see Section 4.5.3), led him to conclude that learner leadership may be inappropriate in a primary school; but his attitude is more likely informed by the belief that teachers do not trust learners and lack a clear understanding of learner leadership development. Undermining these learners may weaken the LRC members' ability to work and contribute to the development of the school.

Teachers lack of trust in learners' ability to lead was further demonstrated by the fact that only learners from Grade 7 who were performing well academically were chosen to become LRC members. This kind of thinking portrays an outmoded notion of the trait theory, where "leadership was explained by internal qualities with which a person is born" (Bernard,as cited in Horner, 1997, p.270).According to trait theory, leaders were characterised by their different characteristics such as being hardworking, ambitious, self-confident and dependable. The more contemporary view argues against this thinking. Rudduck et al. (as cited in Pomeroy, 1999, p. 446) argues that:

> The voices of *all* pupils should be listened to and not just those who are more academically and socially confident, for it is the less effective learners who are most likely to be able to explore aspects of the system that constrain commitment and progress; these are the voices least likely to be heard and yet most important to be heard.

Furthermore, learners lacked support from their teachers because teachers were unwilling to be associated with the LRC members; they felt it was the duty of the guardian teacher (see Section 4.5.4).The lack of support from teachers created fear in learners and hence they withdrew from approaching other teachers for guidance. As was the case in Uushona's (2012) study, I also found that, although teachers were knowledgeable and skilful in leadership and management, they did not support the LRC members and they were reluctant to share their skills. This lack of or little support is regarded in constructivism as an unguided learning approach which may result in incomplete and disorganised knowledge (Meyer, as cited in Uushona, 2012).

5.4.3 Devaluing of learner voice

In Chapter Two I spoke about the importance of learner voice in schools, especially primary schools. As a democratic society, introducing learner voice in schools is vital because it gives learners the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making of the school. In my study, the data revealed that the voices of learners were not always taken into consideration. LRC members' responses were mostly negative: "Teachers sometimes don't agree with our ideas" (see Section 4.5.4) and "When we come up with ideas it always brings opposing motions from teachers" (see Section 4.5.5). The principal further added that learners were not given a platform to contribute their ideas and all decisions were taken without their knowledge. According to Sithole (as cited in Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 14),this might be caused by the cultural tradition which believes that:

> Elderly people do not discuss important matters in the presence of children, and to do that now would tarnish the respect which children must accord their elders, and bring about decay and morass in the traditional value system.

However, the notion of learner involvement did have some support in the school. The HOD (see Section 4.5.1) suggested that to develop learners' voice in LRC members they should be allowed to sit in on school board and staff meetings. He further said that if these learners were contributing to the decision-making in these meetings, they would be eager to work harder for the success of the school because they were part of the decision-making. Agreeing with the above view, Nongubo (2004, p. 89) argues that:

> When learners are involved in decision making processes they could easily take it upon themselves to make it their responsibility to own up to their actions and in the process help diffuse possible tensions amongst themselves.

The policy of Education for All [MEC], (1993, p. 171) also reminds us that:

> We cannot expect our citizens to contribute to our schools without having a voice in their management and functioning. And we cannot ask our students and their parents to behave responsibly toward community schools unless they also have some responsibility for those schools.

This statement suggests that for schools to be run effectively, all the stakeholders should contribute towards its well-being. Subbiah (2004, p. 86) further insists that:

> Learners' involvement in education is a non-negotiable issue. It is compulsory for all schools to have proper structures in place to allow for learner involvement in managing the school.

Fullan, Noguera and Ruddock et al. (as cited in Mitra and Gross, 2009) also make the good point that disengaging students from raising their voice can have disadvantages such as less regular attendance at school, lower self-concept in learners and low academic performance, which can lead to school dropout.

Involving all stakeholders in the development of the school supports the theory of distributed leadership, which asks that leadership be distributed to everyone in the organisation. Distributed leadership can "contribute to the school improvement and build capacity for development" (Harris, 2003, p.13) which teachers and learners in the case study school were lacking. Neuman and Simmons (2000, p. 10) further add that:

> Distributed leadership calls on everyone associated with schools – principals, teachers, school staff members, district personnel, parents, community members, and students – to take responsibility for student achievement and to assume leadership roles in areas in which they are competent and skilled. "Leadership" is no longer seen as a function of age, position, or job title.

Finally, I can say that all respondents interviewed in this study supported the idea of developing learner voice in the school. The principal felt that learners should be given opportunities to have a voice in decision-making at the school. He further suggested that learner leadership should be developed at least from Grade 5 and not only be focused on Grade7. Yet, this belief does not seem to have translated into practice.

5.4.4 Lack of communication

"Communication is the vehicle which allows humans to recall the past, thinkin the present and plan for the future" (Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000, p.6).

As mentioned earlier, it was apparent from the findings that there was a lack of communication between the LRC members and the teachers. Learners did not always know what their daily duties were, and they were mostly waiting to be told what to do by the teachers. This was affirmed during the FGI interview when a learner said that "when the LRC cannot do their duties the teachers must stop shouting at them and they should speak to them and explain what they must do" (see Section 4.5.4.1). Communication can be effective through meetings because people can brainstorm and exchange ideas for the stability and growth of an organisation, but during the data collection period only one informal LRC meeting was held (O, 10 August 2016). The meeting was about sharing information and only the guidance teacher spoke throughout the entire meeting. In addition, Lindbom (1996) affirms that "communication should be full and free regardless of rank and power" (p. 59). If no dialogue occurs during meetings, one can hardly describe these as opportunities for communication; communication is a two-way process. Nongubo (2004, p. 69) mentions that for stakeholders to work effectively there should be a:

> flow of information in any working environment pertaining to general and specific duties and assignments to be performed by different individuals and groups in an organisation; communication is one aspect an organisation cannot afford to do without. As organisations, schools are no exception to the view that they should and must keep information flowing if they are to come anywhere near attaining goals.

The flow of information (communication) needs to be a two-way process. As Fullan (cited in Nongubo, 2004, p. 69) puts it:

> The real world demands collaboration, the collective solving of problems. … Learning to get along, to function effectively in groups, is essential. Evidence and experience also strongly suggest that an individual's personal learning is enhanced by collective effort. The act of sharing ideas, of having to put one's own views clearly to others, of finding defensible compromises and conclusions, is in itself educative.

Finally, Nongubo (2004) points out that "the exchange of ideas would help minimise misunderstanding between all involved, and that through these kinds of interactions those involved would learn a lot from each other" (p. 70). What emerges here is likely related to the adults' reluctance to accept learners – especially primary school learners – as leaders. Hence such communication as may exist is one-way traffic, instructive in nature and purpose.

5.4.5 Financial constraints to the size of the LRC body

The data revealed that despite high enrolment of learners at the school, the total number of selected LRC members is very low. In his interview, the guardian teacher mentioned that the school was too big for the selected number of LRC members and that this made it difficult for them to be effective. He further mentioned that he had asked the SMT for permission to increase the number of LRC members, but his request was rejected because the school did not have enough money to send more LRC members on the leadership training every year (see Section 4.5.3).

Lack of funds is a big concern in many public schools, even though, as my findings revealed, LRC members often organise fundraising events to contribute to the school development fund. One would think that the money which they raised through fundraising, could help to pay for LRC training, but how these funds were used was not disclosed in my findings. Similarly, in his findings, Nongubo (2004) also found that although RCL members were involved with organising fundraising activities at the school he was researching, apparently the money they raised was not used for learner leadership development. In a study of parental involvement in a Namibian school, Niitembu (2006, p. 19) points out that "financial responsibility and accountability involves knowledge and power" and this may be especially true when learners are involved. Denying learners access to financial planning and resources is not likely to encourage collaborative leadership development.

Financial management – and mismanagement – has long been identified as a huge barrier to school development, and writing in a South African context, Mestry and Bischoff (2003, p. 2) point out that:

> The fact that financial resources are scarce makes it even more vital for school managers to understand and practice effective financial management. For schools to be successful, the generation of resources will not be limited to those funds provided through the state structure for funding education. Schools will have to engage a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to schools' coffers. For example, schools that build positive relationships with parents and the community in which they are located will gain direct financial support through donations and sponsorship.

In light of these arguments it seems extremely undemocratic to encourage learners to raise funds over which they will have no control.

5.4.6Resistance of learners to the leadership of their peers

It was evident in my findings that LRC members are perceived in ways which work against their leadership potential. Some of the learners interviewed, perceived the LRC members as their peers and they sometimes forgot that they were in leadership roles. One of the LRC members (L8) answered in his questionnaire that the "learners see me as their friend and they don't listen to me and that upsets me very much and I just feel that I am worthless in front of them"(see Section 4.5.2). If we agree with Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 438) that leadership is "the ability to encourage colleagues to change" –L8's response shows how difficult this expectation may be, since peers may be experiencing the LRC member as "their friend". Moreover, the principal also mentioned that LRC members were *young children* and that this was the reason why they could not suggest ways in which the school could improve.

5.5 Tensions and contradictions surfaced in the activity system

I will now discuss the contradictions that emerged from the collected data. There are four types of contradictions which may be surfaced by CHAT:

- Secondary contradictions occur between two elements of a primary activity system and these are the contradictions which emerged from the data.

5.5.1 Contradiction in leadership training

Firstly, I discovered that even though Rothwell (2002) mentions that training is a short-term effort to improve individuals, it was regarded as a major enhancement to develop learner voice and leadership (object). On the other hand, the teachers interviewed had a different perspective on the training camp, as they felt that the leadership training was ineffective and it did not improve learner leadership in LRC members. They mentioned that the camp was wasting the Universal Primary Education Fund in view of the fact that the school was paying a lot of money and there was no improvement in these learners. This was a secondary contradiction between an artefact and the object and it created tension within the community (teachers).

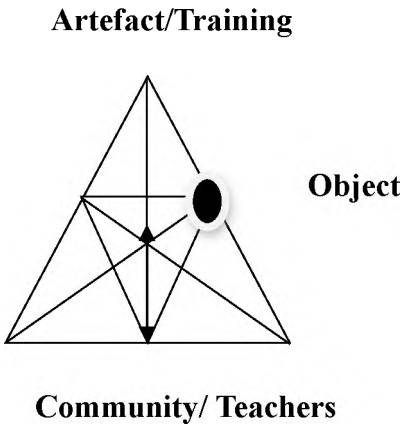

Figure 5.1: Contradiction between the artefact, object and community

5.5.2 Contradiction in learners' voice

From the data I concluded that the community (teachers) understood the significance of learner leadership and voice, and the benefits this might bring to the school. They mentioned the dramatic changes that learners could contribute to if they were given an opportunity to raise their voice. They believed that if subjects were given the platform to express learner leadership and voice they would have more confidence to speak on issues that concerned them in their learning environment. Collinson (2006/7) mentions that encouraging student voice in learners, brings greater success and when learners are empowered they take ownership within corporate decision-making.

However, even though these suggestions and ideas were voiced by the community (teachers), learner leadership was still not supported. This contradiction lies between the subject and the teachers. Even the principal mentioned in his interview that "children are not given that mandate and there is no platform, and they will not contribute if there is no platform" (see Section 4.5.1). In the absence of a platform, it follows that the voices of learners are not likely to be heard; the irony is that the very same people who see the need for such a platform and the lack of opportunity, seem to be doing nothing to make it happen. The ignorance of teachers towards developing learner voice can be supported by the view that learners in our society are essentially viewed as children, who should not have a voice in decision-making (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008).

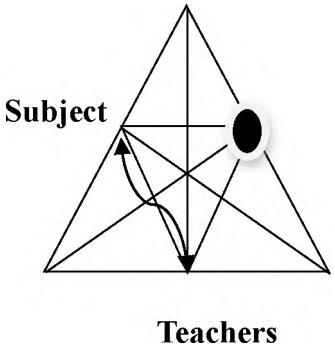

Figure 5.2: The contradiction between subject and the community (teachers)

5.5.3 Contradiction from lack of support and trust

Although the idea of learner leadership was supported by the community (teachers), the issue of lack of trust and support was a hindrance for the subjects to achieve the object. This is a secondary contradiction that emerged from the data. This is really a significant contradiction, because as much as learners needed support from their teachers, they did not get it and this inhibited learners to achieve the object. Contradictions emerged between the subject (LRC members) and the community (teachers/learners).

In his interview, GT mentioned that "some teachers are just reluctant to be affiliated with the LRC because they feel it is the duty of the guardian teacher" (see Section 4.5.4.1). Learners were selecting and voting for the LRC to represent them at the school, but they were not supporting them in their roles. If the LRC instructed these learners, they were not listening to their instructions. The other contradiction is that teachers did not trust these learners in their leadership roles, although trust is an important way to "open and meaningful communication in the organisation" (Wells & Kipnis, 2001). The LRC members were not even allowed to sit in on board meetings. As a member of the school board, I approached the chairperson to ask why these learners were not allowed to represent the learners in meetings. She mentioned that "learners in primary school are too young to get involved in sharing decisions and keeping sensitive issues confidential" (see Section 4.5.4.1).

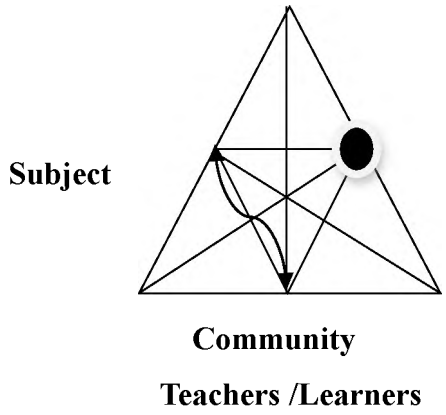

Figure 5.3: Contradiction between the subjects, teachers and learners (community)

5.5.4 Contradiction between the size of LRC and ratio of learners

The number of prefects and the ratio of learners was another secondary contradiction that surfaced from the data collected. This secondary contradiction was between the rules of the school and the subject's ability to achieve the object. Only 14 prefects (see Section 4.5.3) were selected to run a school of 1231 learners. From the data it was evident that learners complained that being on the LRC was tiring because they had to run up and down the whole school in order to maintain discipline. Increasing the number of LRC members was not an option. According to GT (I), he had asked for an increase in the number of prefects, but it was turned down as the SMT complained that it would increase the cost of the training camp and that it was the internal policy of the school to only select 14 LRC members (see Section 4.5.3). This was a difficult situation which frustrated the LRC members and the guardian teacher. This issue showed that teachers lacked agency to think laterally or offer alternative or non-costly forms of leadership training. Possible solutions discussed in the workshop with teachers will be discussed later in the chapter.

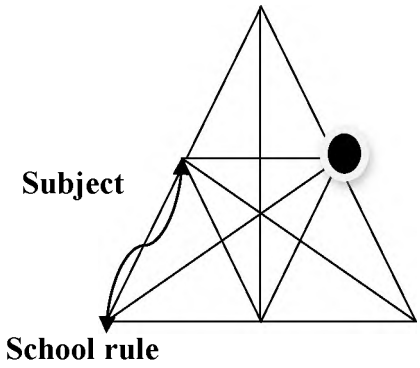

Figure 5.4: Contradiction between the subject and the rule

5.6 Modelled solutions from the Change Laboratory workshops

5.6.1The change laboratory workshop process

I now present the findings from the data collection process in the two Change Laboratory workshops which were held with learners and teachers in order to model the contradictions presented above. These two Change Laboratory workshops were held separately in order to avoid the issue of power relations between the two parties. During the Change Laboratory workshops, we looked at how learner voice and leadership could be developed in LRC members. The four contradictions (see Figure 5.1; 5.2; 5.3; 5.4) which emerged from the data collected, were mirrored back to the participants in both workshops. The Change Laboratory workshop was helpful because it helped the participants understand the importance of learner leadership development in a primary school. The LRC members also learned about the importance of their role and what exactly was expected from them as learner leaders.

5.6.2 Change Laboratory workshop one

The first workshop was conducted with learners (see Figure 3.1) on 14 February 2017 after school. All members were notified of the workshop and they all met in the guardian teacher's classroom where the workshop was held. This Change Laboratory workshop was attended by the guidance teacher and 14 LRC members. After all participants were seated and settled, I greeted and welcomed all of them to the workshop. I first explained to them that the purpose of the workshop was to develop learner voice and leadership in them. To make things easier for these learners, I did

not explain the CHAT triangle to them but showed them where the contradictions lay. This I used as mirror data as described in Chapter Three. I explained to them that their participation was significant in resolving the contradictions or identified challenges. The mirror data presented to participants in both workshops are summarised below:

- The leadership training is not effective for LRC members and they do not show improvement after coming back from the camp;
- Although learner voice was seen as a great tool to improve learner leadership in the school, teachers did nothing to develop it;
- Learners did not get support from teachers in their roles as learner leaders;
- There are too few LRC members.

After participants observed the mirror data, I divided them into three groups. I hoped they would express themselves and share more openly in their groups, than individually. I then provided them with a flip chart and marker to note down the solutions. We discussed each contradiction in turn and I encouraged them to present possible solutions to the whole group in the class. The guidance teacher was appointed as secretary and wrote down the solutions presented. All the contradictions were explained thoroughly to the learners before the discussions. Group members were also asked to summarise their solutions and presented one solution for each point which I am going to discuss below.

5.6.2.1 Contradiction one: Modelled solution

Learners felt that the reason they did not perform well after the training camp is because they were being taught many things in a limited time-frame and this made it difficult for them to recall everything. They also complained that they did not receive any learning material from the training to read on their own afterwards. These learners suggested that they should be provided with training material at the end of the training and they also asked the trainer to only focus on important topics in the training. They further suggested for the training to be held at school so that some experienced teachers could train them on what the school wanted them to achieve as learner leaders.

5.6.2.2 Contradiction two: Modelled solution

Even though some learners showed limited knowledge about the idea of promoting learner voice in schools, these learners came up with significant solutions. Learners mentioned that teachers must give them the platform to raise their voice so that they could contribute to their learning environment. They felt that, if a platform was created, their ideas would not be rejected the same way they were currently, and teachers would start listening to their views. They endorsed the idea of learner voice by saying that it would build good relationships between them and their teachers – as Fielding (2006) posits that teachers who engage learners' voice will improve relationships between teachers and learners based on mutual trust and understanding. These learners suggested that they should also be allowed to be part of school board meetings so that they could air their voice during decision-making at the school.

5.6.2.3 Contradiction three: Modelled solution

Learners felt that the teachers were their guides and that they needed support from them in terms of running the school effectively. They felt that as learner leaders, they needed their guidance and motivation. These learners felt that to encourage support between themselves and the teachers, the school should introduce a teacher and LRC day, whereby teachers and LRC members would come together and talk about any concern they had within the learning environment. Nongubo (2004) also affirms that "communication is one aspect an organisation cannot afford to do without" (p.69). They further suggested for an open relationship between teachers and learners which would influence support.

5.6.2.4 Contradiction four: Modelled solution

Learners mentioned that the high number of learners made it difficult for them to maintain discipline and they suggested that there be an increase in the total number of LRC members. They mentioned that the ratio in the total number of learners should balance the number of LRC members.

5.6.3 Change Laboratory workshop two

The next Change Laboratory workshop was done with the teachers (see Figure 3.2) on the 17 February 2017 and it was conducted in the class of one of the teachers who was also a participant. The workshop took place from12:00 to13:00, as teachers had other commitments to attend to after

13:00. It was attended by eight teachers and the principal. Permission was granted by the principal for the workshop to take place during school hours, as was requested by the teachers. During this workshop, the guidance teacher who always helped me with taking notes and photographs, had other commitments to attend to, so I had asked another teacher who agreed to assist with taking pictures and notes. After all the teachers had arrived and were seated, I greeted them and welcomed them all to the workshop. Before I mirrored the data back to them, I first explained what the workshop was about and how the whole process worked, for example, where the contradictions came from. Because of their level of education, I explained the LRC as an activity system by using Engeström's second generation triangle and I also described the contradictions which emerged during the data collection process.

I first explained to them that they needed to take one point at a time and look for solutions, before moving on to the next point. Teachers looked at the mirror data and started responding by proposing solutions. Discussions were done randomly by the teachers and there were no guidelines.

5.6.3.1 Contradiction one: Modelled solution

After looking at the first contradiction, just as the LRC members, teachers mentioned that the leadership training should be held at the school. They felt that LRC members should not be trained on leadership in general, but they should be trained at school level and on what the school wanted them to achieve. The teachers felt that having their own workshop at the school, would give them more control on what learners should be taught and that it would cut the cost of the training camp.

5.6.3.2 Contradiction two: Modelled solution

Learner leadership was seen as an enrichment to develop learner voice, but some teachers in the workshop had limited knowledge about the newly introduced concept. Many teachers felt that learner voice would bring a great improvement in leadership roles of learners, as learners would be more open and free to come up with ideas, which would contribute to the school development. To promote learner voice in LRC members, teachers mentioned that the LRC must be given an opportunity to come up with ideas on what they wanted to do. They requested that the LRC members come up with their own term plan, so that they knew what they wanted to do throughout the term and could support them in their activities.

5.6.3.3 Contradiction three: Modelled solution

Teachers mentioned that to support the LRC members, they would engage with them and see how they were coping in their daily roles. One participant suggested that teachers must not depend on the training/workshop as the only support system, but they must call the LRC at the end of every week to encourage them – praising them for what they had done well and seeing where they needed to improve. This would motivate them to work hard in their leadership roles.

5.6.3.4 Contradiction four: Modelled solution

Teachers requested that the total number of LRC members be increased up to 20. They mentioned that it would be better for the LRC, as it would help them maintain discipline in the school as they could then be fairly divided between the two phases. *This point was written down to be discussed during the school board meeting.*

After the workshop, the principal agreed to look into the matter and also encouraged the teachers to work on the solutions given. He asked for a copy of the modelled solutions from the learner workshop, so that they could look into all the solutions together.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, I did note that some views from participants in the discussions, contradicted each other. In this chapter, I related the findings that emerged from the data collected, along with the arguments from literature and other research findings, to comprehend the views of participants. The findings shed light on the fact that there were few opportunities for leadership development amongst LRC members and many inhibiting factors were identified. Furthermore, it was obvious from the discussion that teachers had positive attitudes towards learner leadership development and the two workshops brought new hope as participants looked at their current situation and came up with new ways of doing things.

In the next chapter I will conclude this research study, by summarising the findings based on the data presented and looking at the recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I drew from the data and discussed the main findings about the development of learner voice and leadership in LRC members. I discussed the data by relating it to different literature in order to gain an in-depth understanding about the phenomenon.

In this chapter I summarise the main findings of the study. I then present the possible significance of the research and look at the limitations of the study. I then recommend areas that still need to be researched in order to gain a broad understanding about learner voice and leadership. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for upcoming research.

6.2 Research goals

The aim of the study was to develop learner voice and leadership opportunities for the LRC members in a public primary school. This was done to help LRC members raise their voice on issues which affect them in their learning environment. The study further helped teachers to understand the importance of involving learners in decision-making.

To achieve these goals the study was guided by the following questions:

- How are the LRC members currently involved in the leading of the school?
- What opportunities exist for the development of learner voice and leadership within the LRC of the school?
- What are the factors inhibiting the development of learner leadership in the school?
- How can learner voice and leadership be developed within the LRC structure?

6.3 Summarising the findings

It has become evident from the data that LRC members took responsibility for several roles at the school. They were involved in enforcing orders and monitoring their peers in different areas. They came up with a cleaning campaign and organised fundraising activities which contributed to the school development fund. However, their involvement in different roles was only recognised by themselves and the guidance teacher, because some stakeholders felt that the LRC were not doing enough and that they were not functioning successfully. The reason for this, as discussed in Chapter Five, may be that LRC members were not active in their roles, or those who were interviewed had different views or feelings on how they should function or what they should do. This is because there were no formal guidelines from the school or from the Ministry of Education to be implemented internally as a guide for the LRC. This might be caused by the fact that the Education Act 16 of 2001 legitimised learner leadership through the establishment of Learner Representative Councils in secondary schools, but not in primary schools.

The LRC members were also selected by looking at their academic performance and behaviour. They were divided into different portfolios based on their performances at the camp and their function in different committees within their structure. Selecting learners according to their academic performance indicated that these learners were chosen according to their traits. It was evident from the study that stakeholders understood the LRC as a legitimate leadership body of the school which was selected from learners who portrayed certain traits, capabilities and potential. Learner voice and leadership were classified as having the function of maintaining rules and discipline.

The findings further indicated that the school was going through many challenges that inhibited the development of learner voice and leadership. The data revealed that the SMT showed a lack of capacity to carry out their duties in the absence of the principal and hence this influenced them when empowering learners in leadership roles at the school. The study revealed that a lack of communication was an aspect that led to confusion in the leadership of the LRC, because they sometimes neglected their duties, or they did not know what to do. A typical example is when during the FGI, it was mentioned that teachers should not berate LRC members, and should rather

ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities. The other problem was that LRC members were not meeting regularly with their teacher (guidance teacher) to share information. Meetings can be another means of communication, but the data revealed that there was no formal meeting held and only one informal meeting was held under a tree for sharing information. Readers should also take note that this meeting was the only meeting that I observed during the four months while I was collecting data.

It was stated clearly in the findings that teachers were reluctant to be affiliated with the LRC members. Instead of being an example to these learners, teachers ignored them and did not care about guiding and advising them in their leadership roles. The responsibility of guiding these learners was left on the shoulders of the guidance teacher and these learners were lost in his absence. I also found that the idea of learner leadership wasnot the norm to some and although stakeholders saw it as a good thing, it was not clearly understood by all. The other challenge was the issue of trust that teachers had in the learners – this became apparent when learners came up with proposals which were questioned and mostly rejected.

The ratio of learners in the school was also found to be a significant challenge for the LRC, as they struggled to maintain discipline and to achieve their objectives. Participants thought that the school had too many pupils for the LRC to have only 14 members and there was a need to increase the total number of students on the LRC. However, the cost of the training camp was identified as a major challenge in increasing the number of LRC members. This was a clear indication that a lack of teachers' agency and leadership in the school contributed to the paucity of learner leadership development.

The LRC members were elected by their peers to represent them as decision-makers and to act on their behalf at management level, but in contrast the findings revealed that learners did not respect them, and they did not adhere to their orders. Some teachers felt that these learners were too young to organise themselves or to come up with creative activities.

Similar to Uushona (2012), I can say that their involvement in leadership roles was not in their best interest, as they were also not part of decision-making at the school. These learners were not

allowed to be part of school board meetings because they were identified as minors, who could not contribute to the sensitive issues discussed at these meetings. Furthermore, there was no distribution of leadership at the school and LRC members were under the traditional leadership style where teachers hold all the power and control. The LRC members were only expected to perform certain roles which teachers thought were the duties that they needed to do. Finally, I will mention that although the development of learner voice and leadership was seen as a great opportunity to bring a change in the leadership of the LRC members, their voices were devalued, and they were living like prisoners in their own learning environment.

However, to develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members, two Change Laboratory workshops were held with teachers and learners. Contradictions which surfaced that inhibited learner voice and leadership, were modelled in the workshops and teachers and learners came up with solutions.

6.4 Possible significance of the research

The study aimed to develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members; this was done through providing opportunities for learners to raise their voice and bring about change in their learning environment. Developing learner voice and leadership in learners is a new concept in schools which is still under research and I hope that this study will contribute to encouraging people to learn more about its significance. Other schools or readers can relate to these findings and can apply the recommendations to their situation. In addition, Fielding (2006) adds that teachers who engage with learner voice will improve relationships between teachers and learners, based on mutual trust and understanding. Learner voice improves the relationship between learners and teachers because when learners raise their voice, teachers will know what learners need and learners will know what is expected from them.

Furthermore, the study upholds the idea of distributed leadership whereby leadership is distributed to all the stakeholders in the organisation. The promotion of learner voice and leadership in LRC members gives them the opportunity to contribute towards decision-making in the school, because

distributed leadership is a "collective interaction among leadership, followers, and the situation that are paramount" (Spillane, 2006, p. 4).

The Education Act 16 of 2001 legitimised learner leadership through establishment of Learner Representative Councils in secondary school, but primary schools were not recognised. Primary schools copied the idea from secondary schools and they established LRCs in their own schools, but there are no guidelines which assist learners in how to lead and I hope that these findings will encourage policy makers in the Ministry of Education to recognise primary schools and produce guidelines for them as well.

Lastly, learners who contributed to the study felt neglected and left out in decision-making by their teachers and the study might bring hope to these learners, as teachers could start perceiving them differently in the school.

6.5 Research limitations

Like many other case studies, this research also experienced its limitations. The scope of the study was for a Master's degree which meant that it was a small-scale study with only afew participants. To gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena, research should be done on a broader scale. The study was conducted in one primary school in the Otjozondjupa region with only 14 participants and therefore it cannot be generalised. The findings cannot apply to other primary schools because different schools have varied circumstances. However, this finding can be generalised in another way, as Stake (1995) mentions that people can form generalisations from their own experiences. This is called naturalistic generalisation. Naturalistic generalisation can occur when a "conclusion is arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). He further adds that "readers often are more familiar with the case than we researchers are and they can add their own parts of the story" (Stake, 1995, p.85).

Another possible limitation was the issue of power relations between participants and myself as the researcher. The research was done at the school where I am teaching and my position as their

teacher might have influenced the way the learners responded in their questionnaires. I think that this might have stopped learners from sharing their honest feelings. However, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, I was aware of my influence and I confirmed my position as a researcher and not as their teacher, and ensured the confidentiality of the data collected from them. Time was also a limitation during the data collection process because I needed to collect this data after school and some learners were involved in extra-mural activities. Sometimes we ended up postponing our meetings because learners needed to compete in soccer, volleyball and netball matches with other schools. I can finally add that because of time constraints and their busy schedule, not all relevant stakeholders who needed to be interviewed were interviewed; for example, I wanted to interview all four HODs, but I only managed to interview one. Time was another limitation when holding the Change Laboratory workshop with teachers as they had other commitments that they needed to attend to after school, which made it difficult to find a suitable day.

6.6 Recommendations from the study

It shows from the findings that the development of learner voice and leadership in primary schools is far from ideal, and the following recommendations are made from the study:

- Learners should be given the opportunity to raise their concerns on issues that hinder their learning. As primary school learners, these platforms should be made visible to them and they must be made aware of where they can air their voice. They should also know the extent of their rights.
- The government should introduce a policy guideline for LRCs in primary schools or the schools should compose an internal policy guideline.
- The school should introduce several leadership training sessions throughout the year and they should not rely on one training session only.
- The school must have a budget for LRC activities every year, which includes enough money for the training camp.
- Learners must be supported and empowered in their roles by all stakeholders and there should be good interaction.
- The number of LRC members should be in proportion with the number of learners in the school.
- LRC members in primary school should be granted opportunities to attend school board meetings.

- Respect between the LRC members and their peers is very important for the leadership of the school and the school should sometimes call meetings with learners to explain the significance of the LRC and their role in the school.
- From time to time the school should invite motivational speakers who are thriving in leadership roles to come to the school and motivate LRC members.
- The selection of the LRC should not only focus on learners who are in Grade 7, but it should be extended to learners who are in other grades so that it can give more time for teachers to mould and develop leadership in these learners.
- At least two guidance teachers with experience in leadership should be selected to guide LRC members throughout the year; this will help them to be able to assist each other. Guidance teachers should rotate every year so that all teachers are given a chance. This might also help teachers to become interested in LRC affairs.
- Workshops should be organised at school to teach teachers about the importance of developing learner voice and leadership.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Developing learner voice and leadership is a new concept in Namibian schools and upcoming researchers in the field of Education Leadership and Management should do more research on this concept in order to give teachers an in-depth understanding. My research topic focused on developing learner voice and leadership within LRC members and a study on the same topic should be repeated in other primary schools, looking at different cultures and back groundsto attain broader views from diverse circumstances. Furthermore, I'd like to recommend the following to future researchers:

- Developing learner voice and leadership in learners does not particularly focus on learners in leadership structures (according to my focus) and I would encourage upcoming researchers to look at different aspects of this topic.
- One thing that can motivate the development of learner voice and leadership is the encouragement of learners (LRC members) to be part of school board meetings which consist of parents; however, because of the scope of my study I did not collect data from them to get their views. I hence recommend future researchers to include school board members in their research, because they play an important role in the decision-making at the school.

6.8 Summary of findings

The aim of the study was to develop learner voice and leadership in LRC members. Previous researchers like Uushona motivated for more research to be done on the same concept and because he had done his in a high school context, I opted to do mine in a primary school, to find out what was happening elsewhere. In some cases, the findings interestingly related to each other even though they differed in their settings.

The findings showed that learners (LRC) were not developed in their leadership roles, but they were assigned to perform certain roles in order to help the teachers with maintaining discipline. These learners were more constrained by an old out-dated, traditional view of leadership. There was a lack of distributed leadership and that ensured teachers had more control and power over the LRC members. The voice of the LRC was silenced because they were not allowed to sit in on school board meetings or contribute to decision-making at the school, as they were seen as minors. Furthermore, all participants interviewed felt that there was a need for developing learner voice and leadership in the case study school, but there were a lot of inhibiting factors which needed to be taken into consideration. However, I suggested some recommendations to help improve learner voice and leadership development in schools. The two workshops held with teachers and learners at the end of the data collection process played a vital role in solving some of the inhibiting factors. Teachers reacted positively throughout this whole process and I hope that following this study, new changes will be introduced in the case study school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire for LRC

Instructions:

1. Use a **Black** or **Blue** ink pen. Please do not use a pencil.
2. Please answer all questions in full sentences.
3. This questionnaire is to be answered by LRC members.

This questionnaire is designed by Bertha Kapuire a Master of Education in Leadership and Management scholar at Rhodes University. She is carrying out research on learner leadership: A case study on conditions that enable and constrain learner voice and leadership in LRC members in school. The information you are providing will be used for academic purposes only. You do not have to write your name. The researcher will ensure that the information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidence.

1. How does it feel being a LRC member?

……
……

2. What roles are you involved in as a LRC member?

……
……
.

3. Do others (teachers/learners) at the school support your roles?

☐ ☐

YES NO

If yes, explain how/ if no, why not?

……
……

4. As a learner leader are you allowed to come up with your own ideas? If yes, give an example/If no, how do you feel about it?

……
……

5. What indicates that your voice is not heard /or heard by others?

……

……

6. Do your ideas contributed lead to any changes? (Name a few)

……

……

7. What other things would you like to do which will contribute to other developments at your school?

……

……

Appendix B: Interview Schedule (focus group)

1. What can you tell me about the leadership role of the LRC at the school?
2. How do the LRC carry out their duties?
3. In your opinion, what other duties should the LRC carry out, that they fail to do?
4. Do the LRC members speak on your behalf about things that concern you at school? If yes explain/ if no, why (what are the causes and hindrances).
5. In your own opinion what must be done to develop their leadership roles?
6. What support or guidance do the LRC get from teachers?
7. Would you like to be on the LRC? (Why/why not?)
8. Do you take the LRC seriously as your leaders?
9. What other opportunities for leadership exist at the school?
10. If you became an LRC member, what would you change?

Interview Schedule (teachers)

1. How do you understand the concept of learner leadership and learner voice?
2. Is learner leadership appropriate in primary schools?
3. When and how do learners participate in leadership activities at school?
4. Do you think that learner leaders can help to maintain discipline at the school?
5. How do the LRC contribute to the development of the school?
6. Do you encourage the LRC to be effective in their leadership roles?
7. What do you think gets in the way of leadership development of LRC members in school?
8. What potential exists to increase LRC participation in school?

Appendix C: Observation

Activities	Leadership practice (involvement)
1. Assembly; Meeting of SBM; LRC meeting	
2.How are they involved in extra-mural activities?	
3. Decision making: Do they share decisions/ideas between themselves? Do they come up with decisions which contribute to the development of the school? Cooperation within the structure.	
4.The teachers' interaction with LRC: Teachers sharing knowledge, ideas and decisions with the learners.	
5. What support do they get from learners/teachers?	

Appendix D: Letter to the gate keeper

P.O. Box 60558
Katutura
Windhoek

The Principal
Primary School
Private bag 181
Okahandja

Dear Mr.

Re: Permission for conducting my research

I **Mrs. Bertha Kapuire** would like to ask for permission to contact a research for my Master degree in Education Leadership and Management at Primary School. This research will be conducted with the LRC members of the school. The study aims to explore underlying reasons for the current problems in LRC structure which we are facing in Namibian Schools. Thus will further help to open up leadership opportunities in learners and promote learners voice within the LRC structure.

I would like to meet with them once after every second week to contact the research and for collecting data. This will be done strictly after school hours and consent letters will be given to the LRC members to notify their parents and to be given permission.

Thank you in advance.
Yours Sincerely

Mrs. Bertha Kapuire

Declaration/ Consent

I ..... (Name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this research study , and I have permitted Mrs. Bertha Kapuire to conduct her research at the school.

..... 06.09.2016
Signature **Date**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
PRIMARY SCHOOL
2016 -09- 06
P. O. Box 181 - Fax 501020
OKAHANDJA
OTJOZONDJUPA REGION

Appendix E: Consent letter to parents/ declaration

I, Mrs. **Bertha Kapuire** would like to ask for permission for your child to be part of the research which I am conducting at the school. This research will be conducted with the LRC members of the school. It aims to explore underlying reasons for the current problems in the LRC structure that we are facing in Namibian schools, and thus will help to open up leadership opportunities and promote learner voice within the LRC structure.

I would like to meet with them once after every second week to conduct the research and for collecting data. This will be done after school from 13h00-14h00.

Thank you in advance
Yours sincerely
Mrs. Bertha Kapuire

Declaration

I …….. (Full names of parents) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this letter and the nature of the research study, and I have permitted …… (Learners name) to participate.

…….. **……**