

**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP AND LEARNER VOICE: A
FORMATIVE INTERVENTION IN A LEARNER
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL IN A NAMIBIAN
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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MASTER OF EDUCATION
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By
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Declaration

I, Vistorina Haipa, hereby declare that this thesis is my own work written in my own words, and that where I have drawn on the words or ideas of others; these have been acknowledged according to Rhodes University 2015 Referencing Guide. I also would like to declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for any Degree or Examination in any other University.



(Student's Signature)

17 November 2017

(Date)

Abstract

Learner participation in leadership in Namibian schools was legislated in 2001 through the Namibian Education Act, No. 16 of 2001. This has then become a requirement for all secondary schools to establish a Learner Representative Council (LRC). However, this legislation only gives mandates to schools with grade 8-12. Despite the impetus of having a LRC in secondary schools, learner leadership and voice remains limited, given that we are 26 years into our democracy. This awakened my interest to conduct a study aimed at developing leadership and voice within the LRC in a Namibian secondary school.

Additionally, this study was conducted to contribute to filling the gap in literature of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) studies in the field of Education Leadership and Management. In this critical case orientation, the LRC were the subjects and the object of the activity was voice and leadership development within the LRC. I investigated participants' perspectives on LRC leadership opportunities that existed in the case study school as well as factors that enabled and constrained leadership and voice development within the LRC of Omukumo (pseudonym) Secondary School in the northern part of Namibia. My study adopted a formative intervention design, using qualitative methodologies such as document analysis, observation, interviews, questionnaires and Change Laboratory Workshops. This study was framed by the second generation of CHAT. CHAT in this study was used as a methodological and analytical tool to surface the contradictions. Additionally, data were analysed by means of constructing categories and themes.

Five sets of findings emerged: (1) a lack of conceptual awareness of the construct 'learner leadership': learner leadership was understood in terms of the LRC, (2) LRC members were not really acknowledged as equal participants in the school decision-making due to unequal power relations between the teachers and the LRC members, (3) misinterpretation of LRC policy that speak about the establishment of learners club and inadequate LRC training hindered the development of voice and leadership within the LRC, (4) the overall leadership role assigned to the LRC was to oversee the adherence of the school rules, and last (5) learner leadership and voice was still developing in the case study school.

My key recommendation based on the research findings is the need for on-going LRC training at regional level; a need for large scale comparative studies between two African countries (Namibia, & South Africa) on the topic of learner leadership development and last, a need for workshops to train teachers on the implementation of national policies in schools, in particular those that speak to issues of learner voice and leadership.

Dedication

I DEDICATE THIS STUDY TO MY FAMILY MEMBERS: HAIPA; MWATEUVI; AND
SHAKUNGU FAMILY!!

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List of Acronyms

CHAT - Cultural Historical Activity Theory

CLW - Change Laboratory Workshop

ELM - Education Leadership and Management

HIV/AIDS-Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HoD- Head of Department

LRC- Learner Representative Council

MBESC- Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture

MEAC-Ministry of Education Arts and Culture

SBM-School Board Member

SMT-School Management Team

SS- Secondary School

SSS-Senior Secondary School

TLO-Teacher Liaison Teacher

UNAM-University of Namibia

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT OF MY STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at introducing the research conducted which sought to investigate the phenomenon of learner leadership and learner voice development in Omukumo Senior Secondary School (pseudonym) found in the Oshana region in the northern part of Namibia. Designed as a formative intervention, the study looked specifically at the leadership development of the Learner Representative Council (LRC) at the case study school. A pseudonym was used to protect the identity of the school and those involved in the research.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the background of the study on learner leadership development. This discussion provides an overview on the occurrence of the concern of learner leadership in the school. The chapter further entails the rationale of the study in which I describe factors that aroused my interest to investigate learner leadership in the Namibian context. Besides that, in this chapter, the reader will find the research goals and questions the study sought to achieve through investigation. Shortly after the discussion on the goals and research questions, a brief justification of the methodology is presented. This entails the approach and tools used to gather rich data of the study. Finally, in this chapter is the outline of the thesis.

1.2 Context and background of the study

During the pre-independence era, Namibia's education was characterised by the Bantu Education System, which segregated schooling along racial lines (Amukugo, 1993). During that time, there were a number of inequalities observed in learning and in the allocation of resources to different racial groups (Nauyoma-Hamupembe, 2011). Upon gaining independence in the year 1990, education reform became one of the country's top nationwide priorities. During the early post-independence years, the Namibian government established and implemented different reform initiatives aimed at eliminating inequalities observed during the colonial era.

One of the initiatives taken was to develop and implement policies that would guide the new education reform. The establishment of the policies titled *Toward Education for all*, (Namibian. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture [MBEC], 1993) and the *Education Act 16* of 2001 (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001), played and continue to play a crucial role in transforming the education system in an independent Namibia. It is through these policies that all educational stakeholders are encouraged, and have the right, to participate in school decision-making processes.

Specifically, the legislation of *Toward Education for All* centres around four educational goals, with democracy being one of the goals. Democracy, as understood in this legislation, is "organised around a broad participation of all educational stakeholders to participate in decision-making" (Namibia. MBEC, 1993, p. 41). Since decision-making is an aspect of leadership, the notion of democracy is calling for the engagement of educational stakeholders and particularly learners, who form the majority of the school, to participate in the practice of school leadership (Grant & Nekondo, 2016).

Democracy came as a guiding tool to facilitate the participation of learners in school leadership. It suggests that for the school to practice democratic principles, learners too are expected to play a role in school leadership. In signifying the participation of learner leadership in schools, the Namibian government implemented the *Education Act 16* (Namibia. MEC, 2001) which states that "every secondary school must establish a body of learners to be known as the Learners' Representative Council in accordance with the prescribed guidelines which must determine the composition and duties of such a council" (p. 33). Important to note is that this statement of the act does not apply to learners in primary schools.

The Learner Representative Council (LRC), currently found in almost every secondary school as advocated by the Educational Act, came to replace the "prefect" body of the pre-independence era (Uushona, 2012, p. 1). The prefect body of the past comprised senior learners in secondary schools. This body "was not a legitimate representative of learners because it was not democratically elected" (*ibid.*). Members of the prefect body did not play a role of representative of their fellow learners in the school, and they were not part of school decision making. In most cases, prefects were delegated managerial tasks by their teachers, including the task of monitoring other learners (Uushona, 2012).

The dramatic shift to a democratic system of education in Namibia has put school leadership in the spotlight (Nauyoma-Hamupembe, 2011, p. 3). Likewise, shared leadership and democracy is a worldwide development which prompts the attention of the international literature to identify a form of leadership which is fluid and which, at the same time, opens up the possibilities for a more democratic and collective leadership (Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006; Williams, 2011). Theories such as distributed leadership in schools have come to “replace the hierarchical and authoritarian relations which restrict wider participation and ensure political control by the top echelons of the education department” (Williams, 2011, p. 190).

Democracy advocates learners’ participation in school leadership. In the context of my study, learner participation refers to “the role of learners in the governance of educational institutions (Nongubo, 2004, p. 2). In demonstrating learners’ contribution in school leadership improvements, Rudduck and Flutter (2000) stress that “we need to look at school from the learners’ perspective and that means turning their experiences and views and creating a new order of experience for them as active participants” (p. 75). This suggests creating a platform in which learners can become active participants in decision-making concerning their school learning. Generally, this happens when leadership is being shared, practiced and encouraged from all the school stakeholders. As argued by Grant and Nekondo (2016), “learners should be treated as people whose ideas matter” (p. 13).

As suggested in this body of literature, distributed leadership theoretically allows “every person in one way or another to demonstrate leadership” (Harris, 2003, p. 317). However, this conceptualisation of leadership does not seem to be fully practiced by the majority of learners in Namibians schools. In many contexts, “parents and teachers take up leadership roles on behalf of young people whose perspective they often disregarded and misunderstood” (Fielding, 2001, p. 123). Cultural beliefs restrict learners to take decisions because they are considered as young and immature. Distributed leadership advocates a shared leadership in which everyone in one way or another can exercise leadership roles (Williams, 2011). In addition, Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond (2004) argue for a distributed leadership perspective, which draws on distributed cognition and activity theory for its conceptual foundations. For these researchers, a distributed leadership perspective seeks to understand “human activity in complex, emergent, and discretionary environments” (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 9). Thus, distributed leadership aligns well with Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the theoretical framework of this study.

Two key concepts which were central to this study were, ‘learner voice’ and ‘learner leadership’. Learner voice in the context of my study is understood as “a range of ways in which learners can share in decision-making in schools - the types of decisions that will shape their own lives and those of their peers” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). Due to the prevailing silence of learner voice in schools, critical educational leadership researchers have identified a gap within school leadership research which seeks to accommodate learner voice in the activities of school leadership (see for example Smyth, 2006; Mitra and Gross, 2009; Grant, 2015). Thus, learner voice and learner leadership are closely related, and my study seeks to open up this space for change in agency and transformation within the leadership of the LRC.

Learner leadership, for the purpose of my study, is defined as “a form of leadership from which young people can speak back regarding what they consider to be important and valuable about their learning” (Smyth, 2006, p. 282). Leadership fosters learner voice by "creating an enabling environment that resolves issues amicably and constructs an account of the social relations between people" (Mabovula, 2009, p. 223). Developing voice in learners creates an opportunity in which “young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working to improve school conditions for themselves and others” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522). Mitra and Gross (2009) further suggest that leadership is the driving force to learner voice in a sense that when learner leadership is enhanced learners will start to speak out on issues concerning their learning environment. It is against this backdrop that the study sought to develop learner leadership and to enhance learner voice in the LRC of the researched school. A key purpose of the study was to understand mechanisms that enabled and constrained leadership development and learner voice in a school – and specifically within the LRC.

1.3 Rationale for the study

I was drawn to this study for two main reasons. Firstly, drawing from my personal experience as a teacher for seven years in Namibia, I observed very few opportunities for learner leadership development in the three schools in which I taught. In all those schools there were LRC members elected as representatives of other learners, but still, the LRC’s had minimal involvement in school decision making as well as little say on how the school was administered. The recognition of the need for learner leadership in these schools was absent. Based on this, I had a belief that learners need additional platforms to raise their voice and partake in school decision making to share their opinion on educational issues and that of their

learning. In support of the above claim, Grant and Nekondo suggest that when learners are “given the appropriate forum, they are able to articulate what matters to them in schools, and be able to develop a voice” (2016, p. 13).

Secondly, as a Master of Education (MEd) student, I was required to do a contextual profile (pilot study) of a school of my choice as part of the pre-course assignment in January 2017. This assignment required me, over a two-week period, to identify leadership opportunities that existed in a school. Thereafter as per instructions, I wrote a mini research report based on the findings. Some of the data gathered during the interview sessions I held with the principal revealed that the notion of learner leadership was not understood, and nor was it practiced (Haipa, 2017). According to the data collected from this pre-course assignment, participants indicated that having an LRC in this school represented the extent of learner leadership (ibid). Moreover, the findings revealed that members of the council were not active in performing their roles, due to a lack of training and support from the teachers. In addition, LRC members had access to only one regional training session of one week, which offered induction and leadership training to four LRC members only at the beginning of the year (Haipa, 2017). I was interested in what the data revealed about learner leadership in this school and this drove my interest to conduct an in-depth investigation on learner leadership at this same school for my MEd thesis. The understanding of the participants and the observation I made regarding learner leadership during this pilot study correlates with my understanding and my observation in the different schools I taught.

In addition to these two personal reasons, elements of my pre-course findings aligned well with the research conducted on learner participation in leadership in the Namibian context by Uushona (2012), and provide additional reasons for the research. Uushona’s findings indicate that learner leadership is understood in terms of the LRC practice in the school. Furthermore, there was little interest in how well the LRC functioned or the extent to which the learners were actually engaged in school leadership, in or out of the LRC. As a consequence of this early research, I developed an interest in learner leadership, particularly within the LRC, and wished to engage with members about their different roles, assist them in making their voices heard, and in bringing about necessary changes in the LRC. Helping the LRC members to understand their roles is one of the recommendations made by Uushona (2012). Moreover, Uushona challenges researchers in the field of Education Leadership and Management to further investigate learner leadership, particularly in Namibia, by looking at the LRC contribution to

school academic performance and leadership development within the LRC. My study took up this call.

With regards to developing leadership within the LRC, the study granted me opportunities to respond to the question posed by Smyth (2006) which asks, “how to encourage forms of leadership that listen to and heed the voices of the most informed yet, marginalised witness of schooling, young people” (p. 279). This study encouraged a form of leadership which leads to change in the mind-set, agency, and attitude of learners and which, hopefully, leads to leadership development in this council of learners.

This study is of potential value in a sense that it contributes to the body of knowledge and to fill the gap in the literature of CHAT studies on learner leadership. The study sought to understand the history of the LRC in one particular school (a case school), people’s experiences, perceptions and feelings concerning leadership within the LRC and to identify generative mechanisms that lead to changes in the way learners might lead others in the future. In this study, data collection was done through interviews, observation, and administering of questionnaires during the data collection period. Even though the results of case study research cannot be generalised, Bassey (2001) argues that “it is possible to formulate the outcomes of empirical research as fuzzy generalisations and these can be useful to both practitioners and to policy-makers in education and probably in other fields of social research” (p. 5). I am part of a team researching learner leadership development in the hope that theoretical generalizations can be made from across the case studies. It is for the above claim that the findings and recommendations of this study will be relevant to schools, policy-makers in the education fraternity so that appropriate actions can be taken to bring changes in the agency of the LRC. Researchers in the field of ELM might also find this study useful to build on the ideas and recommendations developed.

Considering these reasons, it is for this purpose that the study on learner leadership within the LRC was worth doing, particularly in the Namibian context to seek for alternatives that lead to the development of LRC leadership and voice in schools.

1.4 Research goals and questions

The aim of the research was to explore learner leadership and learner voice development in the LRC in a secondary school in Namibia. The overarching goal of this study was to enhance learner voice and develop leadership within the LRC.

In an attempt to address the goal, the study sought to answer the following questions.

- How is learner voice and learner leadership understood?
- What leadership opportunities exist for the LRC in the school?
- What are the factors enabling the development of LRC leadership?
- What factors constrain the development of LRC voice and leadership?
- How can LRC voice and leadership be developed?

1.5 Orientation and methodology

The research orientation was critical and designed as a formative intervention. According Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) critical research seeks to "emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequalities and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society" (p. 31). The phenomenon was investigated through document analysis, observation, interview, questionnaires, and three workshops conducted.

The investigation was conducted in the form of a case study, framed by Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Both CHAT and a case study approach were relevant for my study in their ability to allow change in the phenomenon under investigation. A case study is "a strategy of research that aims to understand social phenomena within a single or a small number of naturally occurring settings" (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 27). The purpose is to provide a description, a detailed example or to generate or to test particular theories (*ibid.*). This aligned well with the purpose of my study which sought to conduct an in-depth investigation on learner leadership.

The study employed multiple methods to provide answers to the research questions. Data were collected through document analysis, observation, structured interviews, questionnaires and Change Laboratory Workshops Interviews were done with five teachers (the principal, the HoD, the senior teacher and two liaison teachers). Furthermore, questionnaires were administered to all the current LRC members and observation of an LRC meeting as well as

LRC interactions in the schooling context was done. Last, I conducted three Change Laboratory Workshops with participants, and these workshops aimed at uncovering the contradictions through a CHAT lens and suggesting feasible solutions.

Data were coded into themes to provide a framework for understanding the problems of the phenomena being investigated. Themes emerged from participants' responses and they (themes) helped me in discussing the research question by ensuring that all the research questions were answered.

With regards to ethical protocols, I considered the ethical considerations for conducting a research. This involved seeking for permission and explaining ethical protocols to the participants. I upheld confidentiality and anonymity of participants' personal identity throughout the data collection process. Most importantly, I did not influence my respondents' opinions at all during my study.

To strengthen my research data, questions were piloted, and all the instruments were verified and checked by my supervisors. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to enable participants to verify their responses and to check if I misinterpreted their responses. The use of multiple methods provides opportunities for data triangulation as well as to enhance data validity.

1.6 Thesis outline

This study consists of six chapters. As the reader is now aware, this chapter provides an overview of the study conducted. It starts with the context and the background of the study, and the rationale of the study. This chapter also involves the research goals and questions as well as a brief discussion on the research methods and tools I used to obtain the data. This chapter ends with the summary of what each chapter of the thesis entails.

Chapter two presents the views of leadership from the perspectives of both local and international literature that I found relevant to my study. This chapter constitutes the review on the concepts of leadership and management, traditional and contemporary leadership theories as well as the review on the concept of learner leadership, the focus of the study. This chapter

also presents the main theory of Cultural Historical Activity theory that frames this study. It provides the historical overview of the theory as well as reasons for choosing that theory.

Chapter three reports on the research orientation which the study employed. The chapter discusses the research case and participants. Additionally, this chapter outline the instruments used to gather data. These were: document analysis, observation, semi-structured interview, questionnaires and the Change Laboratory Workshops. This chapter provides a brief discussion of how data were analysed. It further entails a discussion on the validity of data, ethical consideration, study limitations and my position in relation to the research site. Chapter four presents and discusses the research findings in answering the first three research questions and these are: How is learner voice and learner leadership understood? What leadership opportunities exist for the LRC in the school? What are the factors enabling the development of LRC leadership?

Chapter five presents and discusses data to the last two research questions particularly through the lens of CHAT using the principle of contradictions and double stimulation. The questions answered in this section are: What factors constrain the development of LRC voice and leadership? How can LRC voice and leadership be developed?

Chapter six entails the presentation of a summary of the study findings and significance of the study. Furthermore, this chapter makes recommendations for practice to relevant stakeholders and to future researchers. Limitations, the value of the study and the conclusion of the whole research are as well discussed in this chapter.

I now turn my attention to chapter two, to provide the review on leadership and learner leadership in accordance with both local and international literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Learner leadership is a phenomenon which has awakened the attention and interest of many authors and researchers recently in the field of Education Leadership and Management. Although much research has been conducted in this field, most “focuses on adult leadership development at the expense of learner leadership” (Grant, 2015, p. 93). This reveals a need for research which focuses on the leadership of learners and, more specifically, interventionist research which seeks to expand and develop learner leadership and voice in schools.

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the concepts leadership and management. This discussion is followed by a review of traditional theories which present their historical background. Furthermore, the discussion on evolution of leadership theories makes it necessary to discuss contemporary views of leadership, such as distributed leadership. Also in this chapter, I review the literature on learner leadership and voice, the focus of the study. Finally, the chapter presents the main theory that frames my study, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), based on the work of Vygotsky and Engeström.

2.2 Leadership and management: definitions and manifestation in education

The main concept underpinning this study is leadership and it is discussed in relation to its associated concept of management. The origin and development of leadership and management is derived from management principles from the field of commerce and industry, in the United States during the late 1960s (Bush, 1999). Based on these origins, leadership and management were not originally linked to education as a discipline. However, the terms leadership and management are also often used interchangeably in the context of schooling (Christie, 2010), and I argue that this is problematic and so a discussion of definitions of the terms are necessary. Leadership is defined differently across the different literatures. Yukl (2002) makes the point that “there is no agreed definition of the concept of leadership, leadership is arbitrary and subjective” (p. 4). Yukl (2002) presents two dimensions of leadership that can be used to identify a basis for developing a working definition of the concept leadership. Firstly, he

defines leadership as a process of influencing. In this dimension, Yukl (2002) emphasises that one of the central elements in many definitions of leadership is that there is a process of influence.

The second dimension of leadership definition Yukl (2002) points out, is the centrality of values and power. According to Christie (2010), leadership is an “exercise of power, which is directed towards achieving goals, and it is associated with vision and values” (p. 695). Christie’s definition aligns well with that of Bush. Bush (2003) asserts that leadership is often associated with vision, which provides the essential sense of direction for leaders and their organisations. Whatever the basis of the different definitions reviewed, leadership is characterised by influence, values, vision, goals, change and power. These key words (leadership and management) are crucial in this study, since the focus of this study is to develop leadership and voice in a LRC. Next, I define management, a complementary term to leadership.

In contrast to leadership, management is viewed as an organisational concept which relates to “structures and processes by which organisations meet their goals and central purposes through a continuous cycle of planning, organising, leading and controlling” (Christie, 2010, p. 696). The core activities outlined in Christie’s definition, encompasses the tasks needed to be executed by someone in a position of authority to allow the organisation to achieve its goals. Management is also defined from the perspective of implementing policies. Bolam (1999) sees management as a central function for carrying out and implementing agreed upon policies to bring changes in an organisation. This means management is needed to ensure the proper adherence and implementation of policies in organisations such as schools.

Another definition of management stemming from literature, is centred on the activities needed to be performed to achieve organisational objectives. In agreement with this, Sapre (2002) defines management as “a set of activities directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational goals” (p. 102). Management is about holding the school, creating certainty, confidence and security, and allowing for evaluations which help one to make sure that the school as a whole is functioning effectively and achieving its vision (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1999).

2.2.1 The distinction between leadership and management

Leadership and management are often used interchangeably in peoples' every day speech and this is due to the fact that the person who is leading, is still the one who is managing (Christie, 2010). On this, Lunenburg (2011) argues that "there is a continuing controversy about the difference between leadership and management" (p. 1). It is assumed that "everyone in a management position is a leader" (Lunenburg, 2011, p. 2). Bass (2010) states that although leadership overlaps with management, they are not synonymous. To make this clearer, Cuban (1988) states that leadership is associated with changes while management is seen as maintenance of activities. This reflects that leadership influences others' actions in achieving desirable ends, while management is about maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements (Cuban, 1988). Lunenburg (2011, p. 2) further extends the distinction of leadership and management by saying:

Leadership involves developing a vision for the organisation, aligning people with that vision through communication and motivating people to action through empowerment and through basic need fulfilment. In contrast, the management process involves planning and budgeting, organising and staffing and controlling and problem solving.

Whilst there might be a degree of overlap in their set of activities and functions (Yukl, 2010), the concepts are distinctive and are therefore not used interchangeably in this thesis. Instead, as Zaleznik (1997) explains, both leadership and management form valuable contributions in an organisation and their contributions to an organisation are different.

2.3 The evolution of traditional leadership theories

This section presents the evolution of traditional leadership theories. I therefore begin with a discussion of trait theory and its development, followed by behaviour leadership theory. I then move on to review contingency theory and lastly transformational leadership theory.

2.3.1. The trait theory

According to Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman and Humphrey (2011), trait theory presented "heritable attributes that differentiated leaders from nonleaders" (p. 7). Correspondingly, Uushona (2012) asserts that early research began with the trait or great man theory, which suggested that there were certain characteristics that a person needed to portray to become an effective leader. To add to this, King (1990) asserts that trait as a theory was grounded by the principles of selecting a leader by looking at characteristics such as, moral standards and

personal qualities that could be observed within the person. Stemming from the literature, there were reasons for choosing leaders by looking at certain qualities. According to Horner (1997), the thought was that “if the traits that differentiated leaders from followers could be identified, successful leaders could be quickly assessed and put into positions of leadership” (p. 270). Personality, physical, and mental characteristics were examined (*ibid.*). Important to note is that those were not the only traits leaders were expected to have. Derue et al. (2011) identify individual characteristics such as “demographics, skills and abilities” that “predict leadership effectiveness” (p. 8). According to Derue et al. (2011), critiques of the trait paradigm awakened scholars to look beyond leaders’ traits and consider how leaders’ behaviour predicted effectiveness. This is reviewed in the next section.

2.3.2 The behavioural theory

In contrast to trait theory, the behavioural theory was identified as a second stage which “looked at leader behaviours in an attempt to determine what successful leaders do, not how they look to others” (Horner, 1997, p. 270). The behavioural theory is not based on the inborn personal qualities which determine a leader, it is grounded in the belief that leadership comes as a skill; a task that one can simply acquire from the learning process (Lambert, 2003). In the same alignment, Horner (1997) indicates that behavioural theory began to look at leaders “in the context of the organisation, identifying the behaviours leaders’ exhibit that increases the effectiveness of the company” (p. 270).

Moreover, behavioural theory provided the basis for a new theory and meta-analytic evidence which suggested that leaders’ behaviours were important predictors of leadership effectiveness (Derue et al., 2011, p. 8). Due to the nature of this theory, leadership was demonstrated through learning a skill; this allowed everyone who wanted to become a leader and was willing to play a leadership role, to participate in leadership. To concur with the previous argument, Lambert (2003) expresses the idea that “everyone is born to lead the same way that everyone is born to learn” (p. 422).

It is apparent in the discussion of both trait and behavioural theory, that there was a “lack of integration of leadership theories and constructs”; each paradigm looked at a different aspect without attempting to compare and contrast the validity of existing theories; coming up with one theory that addressed both traits and effectiveness was warranted (Derue et al., 2011, p. 8). As a result of this lack of integration of trait and behavioural theory, another new theory of

leadership, known as contingency theory, came into existence. My attention now turns to contingency theory.

2.3.3 Contingency theory

Contingency theory moved a step ahead from looking at traits and behaviours because it focused on situations. According to Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009), contingency or situational theory refers to “a broad range of approaches to leadership emphasizing how leaders and followers think and process information” (p. 426). King (1990) notes that contingency theory presented a great improvement in leadership evolution, which sought to inform people that leadership was not only associated with traits and behaviours, as discussed in the previous approaches, but rather was associated with the merging of leaders’ traits, behaviour and the situation. The essence of contingency theory was on identifying and matching leadership styles appropriate to a specific situation (Knott-Craig, 2007). It was therefore necessary for effective leaders to match leadership styles appropriately with the situation and in this way, they might improve the results of an organisation.

Studies conducted in this era failed to demonstrate accurate theory which predicted the usefulness and validity of a specific theory (Horner, 1997). This surfaced another traditional leadership theory, transformational leadership theory, which is the last theory I discuss in this section.

2.3.4 Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership is the last theory in the evolution of traditional theories, and it seeks to identify proactive leaders to transform an organisation. According to Avolio et al. (2009), transformational leadership implies “leader behaviours that transform and inspire followers to perform beyond expectations while transcending self-interest for the good of the organization” (p. 423). Nearly 30 years ago, King (1990) argued that transformational theory presented “the latest and most promising phase in the evolutionary development of leadership” (p. 49).

Even though previous authors looked at associating transformational theory with inspiring and proactive leaders, Horner looks at a different dimension in defining transformation. Horner (1997) suggests that transformational leadership strives to strengthen relations between a leader and followers in attaining objectives set, adding that leaders in this era are primarily expected

to assist subordinates to develop appropriate traits needed to achieve set objectives. In this theory, the emphasis is placed on the commitments and potential capabilities which followers need to demonstrate in the organisation (Bush, 2003).

Looking back at the discussion of traditional theories, the one thread that runs through all of them was their hierarchical style of leadership, in which a single, heroic leader is entrusted to make all things happen and influence others. Moreover, leadership theories in this traditional era focused heavily on what constituted “prototypicality”, which shows that followers may be more drawn to leaders who are exemplars of groups they belong to or want to join (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 427).

This section looked at the discussion on the evolution of traditional leadership theories. It has been claimed that less research of traditional theories is being conducted, as recent leadership researchers place their focus on shared leadership, distributed leadership and collective leadership to investigate how leadership can be shared between team members (Avolio et al., 2009). This study is underpinned by the conceptual framework which represents a contemporary theory of leadership known as distributed leadership. In the next section, I review literature on distributed leadership which represents one way in which team members can collectively lead each other (*ibid.*).

2.4 Contemporary view of leadership: The perspective of distributed leadership

There has been a shift from a traditional view of leadership to contemporary theories in leadership and management practice within organisations over the past decades (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008). This shift created interest among researchers to identify a leadership theory which is “informative, supportive and inclusive”, to address issues which were not considered by traditional theories, pointing at the need for distributed leadership theory in educational leadership practices (Uushona, 2012, p. 14).

Distributed leadership aligns well with learner leadership, the focus of my study. This is because the object of distributed leadership is “to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals or both. This influence process often involves peers, or lateral, influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1). My study aims to intervene so that learner democracy in decision-making can be

realised. By so doing, the expectation is that learners will become part of school leadership by leading and influencing one another through raising their voice.

This section starts with a discussion on the emergence of distributed leadership in education. The section further reveals the definitions of distributed leadership by different authors. Finally, a discussion on the significance and critiques of distributed leadership in schools will follow.

2.4.1 The emergence of distributed leadership in education

There seems to be a number of reasons for the occurrence of distributed leadership in schools. Firstly, as argued by Pearce and Conger (2003), one reason for the occurrence of distributed leadership is that leadership in the traditional era was not viewed as an interactive system and this resulted in the identification of a contemporary leadership which is emergent, shared and interested in the collective (*ibid.*). Avolio et al. (2009) also note that in the era of traditional leadership theory, “the unity of analysis is oftentimes the leader, the leader and follower, the leader and group, and so forth” (p. 431). This is not the same with contemporary leadership because with contemporary leadership in most cases, the unit of analysis is the combination of the leader and the follower (*ibid.*).

The second reason for the occurrence of distributed leadership, is that distributed leadership emerged as a response to critics of the notion of the heroic leader found in traditional theories, after realising that learners were being excluded in school leadership (Hartley, 2007). This reason corresponds with that of Pearce and Conger (2003) as discussed in the previous paragraph. The third reason contributing to the occurrence of distributed leadership in education, is what Hartley (2007) calls “a greater complexity of activities which now beset school leaders” (p. 206).

2.4.2 Distributed leadership defined

Distributed leadership as a contemporary theory became popular in response to the traditional theories. Distributed leadership is defined in terms of school leadership by Grant (2008, p. 85) as:

A shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school.

The definition claims that distributed leadership is an inclusive theory that involves multiple people in leading and it is inclusive of all individuals within a certain school (organisation). Distributed leadership is also defined from a democratic perspective.

Furthermore, distributed leadership is understood as a theory of practice. This is in line with the definition of Spillane et al. (2004) who say that distributed leadership is best understood as “a practice distributed over leaders, followers and incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals” (p. 20). The definition given by Spillane et al. (2004) aligns well with the theory of practice which frames this study, and that is Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). CHAT suggests a collective generation of knowledge and innovation (Engeström, 1987) and this can be achieved through collaborative learning. The theoretical framework for this study is discussed later in this chapter, Section 2.6. Distributed leadership by its nature is primarily concerned with leadership practice and it is driven by the culture of collaboration among teachers, and other school stakeholders, in their daily involvement in leadership with other members of the school (Spillane, 2006).

Another definition of distributed leadership shows that it has an element of social interaction. According to Harris (2003), distributed leadership is framed as a social influence where interactions are at the core of leadership practice. This means distributed leadership is characterised as a collective approach to leadership in which teachers, learners and parents develop expertise by working together to achieve the school objectives. Distributed leadership as a social influence also implies the creation of space and an environment in which members of the school can share leadership roles through interaction with other members (Hamatwi, 2015).

Bearing these definitions in mind, they describe distributed leadership as a system of sharing activities through interaction. However, this does not mean all shared activities practise the idea of distributed leadership; it all depends on the level and quality of involvement of people within that setting, plus the degree of skilfulness within the group (Harris, 2004).

2.4.3 The significance of distributed leadership in schools

The notion of distributed leadership might well be viewed as a new practice in some Namibian schools, while to some it might have been a part of the school culture, without stakeholders being aware of it. In organisations such as schools, where knowledge is being formed, there

are complex roles which need to be executed through the involvement of different groups of people. Based on this statement I can argue with Harris (2003) that distributed leadership is needed to provide “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contour of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture, it is a glue of common task” (p. 14).

Moreover, distributed leadership is significant to a school in the way that it offers opportunities for learner voice to be developed, allowing democracy within the school which results in learners feeling attached to the school (Grant & Nekondo, 2016). This is because distributed practice is “stretched over” (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 5) the social and situational context of the school, and in the context of the school, learners form the majority of school members.

Even though distributed leadership seems to bring changes in schools, and other organisations in general, it is argued that “opportunities to contribute to leadership are not equal and that distributed leadership remains silent on persistent structural barriers” (Lumby, 2013, p. 581). The discussion that follows next presents critiques of distributed leadership.

2.4.4 Critiques of distributed leadership

One notable critique of distributed leadership revealed by different authors is associated with its lack of conceptual clearness. In line with this idea, Hartley (2007) notes a “lack of conceptual clarity” in relation to the concept of distributed leadership (p. 203). Similarly, Harris & Spillane (2008) assert that the term distributed leadership is sometimes used interchangeably with terms like shared or team leadership.

Similarly, on the issue of conceptual confusion, Lumby (2013) argues that “the theory’s confusions, contradictions and utopian depictions are argued to be a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power status quo” (p. 581). Furthermore, the functions of distributed leadership in schools have raised some of the challenges which create uncertainty in practicing distributed leadership. By this Harris (2004, p. 20) argues that there are “inherent threats to status and the status quo in all that distributed leadership implies”:

First, distributed leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to give power to others. Second, the top down approaches to leadership and the internal school structure offer a significant impediment to the development of distributed leadership. The final challenge faced is how and who distribute leadership for development possibilities.

Finally, Lumby (2013) points out that distributed leadership “has expanded into a theory and prescribed practice which promotes a fantasy apolitical world in which more staff are supposedly empowered, have more control of their activity and have access to a wider range of possibilities” (p. 592). Based on this criticism, it is still unclear how the success of empowered people makes significant contributions to the observed achievement of the school’s goal objectives.

Based on this critique, I can therefore argue with Harris and Spillane (2008) that distributed leadership is not necessarily a good or a bad thing; it depends on the context within which leadership is distributed and the prime aim of distribution – it is therefore the nature and quality of leadership practice that matters (p. 33).

Distributed leadership proposes a kind of leadership which is inclusive to all and does not come with formal authority. However, the question which remains silenced and that needs unpacking is: how can learners raise their voice through participating in school leadership? The discussion that follows reviews the literature on learner leadership.

2.5 Learner leadership

Learner leadership development is the focus and the object of this study. It is underpinned by the conceptual framework of distributed leadership which suggests leadership that is distributed amongst the members of an organisation. In this case, learners are the focus of the research, as majority members of the school community. Learner leadership arose as a response to a “shrinking of opportunities for learners to have a democratic voice in the educational process” (Grant, 2015, p. 94). A positive response to the concerns of shrinking opportunities for learners in school leadership, reveals a need to create opportunities to develop learner leadership as “a possible way for creating spaces within which forms of leadership inclusive of the aspiration of young people can be exercised” (Smyth, 2006, p. 282). Learner voice and learner leadership form an integral part of this study. Hence this section begins with the definition of learner leadership and learner voice as they stem from literature. That discussion is then followed by the reviews on two different ways in which learner leadership and voice can be encouraged in schools and lastly, a discussion on factors limiting learners’ participation in school leadership.

2.5.1 Learner leadership defined

There is no common definition of learner leadership; authors reveal aspects that facilitate learner leadership instead of defining learner leadership (Uushona, 2012). According to Uushona (2012), learner leadership “is a system of pupil leadership found in every school by means of which pupils take an active part in activities in a direct capacity” (p. 22). To add on to this definition, Mordaunt (as cited in Uushona, 2012) defines learner leadership as an aspect of “interaction and building relationships with other students, peer leaders and other members of the organisational community with the outcome of developing leadership skills” (p. 22). Bearing these definitions in mind, learner leadership seeks to awaken learners’ participation in school leadership. However, this does not imply that there is no platform in schools which allows learners to participate in school leadership. It implies that learner leadership tries to “instil principles and values of democratic citizenship in learners and treat them as people whose ideas matter in the school through an appropriate forum” (Grant & Nekondo, 2016, p. 15).

One way in which learners can participate in school leadership is when they are given opportunities to participate in school decision-making. During these platforms, learners are required to raise their voice regarding what matters to them. Next, I present learner voice, another aspect which the study sought to investigate.

2.5.2 Learner voice defined

According to Mitra and Gross (2009), learner voice is defined as “the concept that describes different ways in which youth have opportunities to share in school decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers” (p. 523). Learner voice is not only bound to the participation of learners in school decision-making processes; it does more than that. According to Fielding (2006, p. 299) learner voice:

is a new wave, ranging over a huge vista of activities, through encouraging the involvement of young people which echoes the energy, if not the aspirations. ... This ranges from the familiar engagement with social and interpersonal matters such as: prefects, buddying, mentoring, coaching and traditional school councils through more innovative, often student-led development.

The awakening of learner voice in schools seems to be an important practice. This is due to its nature of allowing learners to “substantially practice in the change process by collaborating with adults to address problems in schools and policy” (Mitra, 2006, p. 325). Learner voice

helps young people to “learn civic habits that prepare them for social interaction that can involve them in their own communities and more broadly in society” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522). This may result in raising pressing issues which get in the way of improving school conditions.

2.5.3 Enhancing learner voice and leadership in schools

There seems to be few platforms in school where learner voice and leadership are enhanced. Literature which focuses on learner voice, highlight “ways in which young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working to improve school conditions for themselves and others” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522). Literature on learner leadership suggests two ways in which learner voice and leadership can be developed in schools. This can be through learner voice development and establishment of learner leadership clubs in schools.

2.5.3.1 Learner voice development: Types of learner voice

According to Mitra and Gross (2009), the pyramid of voice below illustrates youth development opportunities that are possible, as learner voice is increased in a school. The pyramid begins at the bottom with the most common and most basic form of learner voice, “being heard”, followed by collaboration with adults and, lastly, building capacity for leadership (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 523).

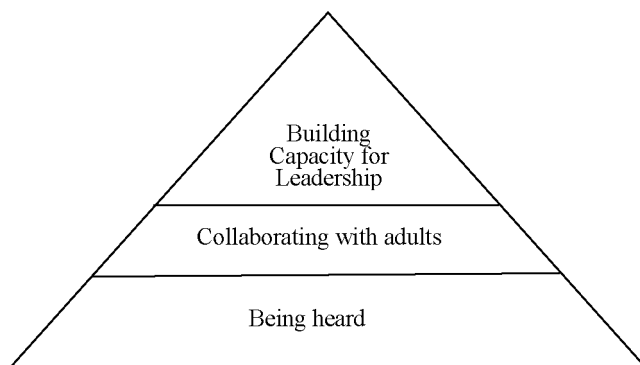


Figure 2.1 Pyramid of student voice (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 523)

The first level of learner voice development is “being heard”. This is the most basic form of learner voice. According to Mitra and Gross (2009), being heard gives assurance to teachers and administrators that learners possess unique knowledge which cannot be ignored. Not only that, this level contributes to learners’ motivation and makes them act like people whose presence and ideas matters in a school (Mitra & Gross, 2009).

The second level of learner voice illustrates “collaborating with adults”. This level describes “instances in which learners work with adults to make changes in the school, including collecting data on school problems and implementing solutions” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). Moreover, this level strengthens open communication between learners and parents, to discuss learning that takes place in classrooms.

The last level of learner voice presents “building capacity for leadership” (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). According to Mitra and Gross (2009, p. 523), this level creates chances for learners to participate in school decision-making that shape their lives and those of their peers by re-engaging learners in the school. Additionally, Grant (2015) asserts that this is the level where learners can “serve as a source of criticism and protest in schools by questioning issues such as cultural and structural injustices in the school” (p. 100).

2.5.3.2 Establishment of learner leadership clubs

Learners are the majority members in the school and so need to be granted opportunities to take part in school decision-making processes. This can be exercised through the establishment of leadership clubs which researchers such as Grant and Nekondo (2016), as well as Mitra and Gross (2009), have identified. As argued, learner leadership clubs will “open spaces of leadership from which young people can speak back regarding what they consider to be important and valuable about their learning” (Smyth, 2006, p. 282).

The initiative of establishing leadership clubs in schools creates opportunities for a form of leadership that requires learners to speak up about matters affecting their education (Mitra & Gross, 2009). In line with Mitra and Gross, Grant and Nekondo (2016) add that such clubs provide ways that allow teachers and learners to engage meaningfully and share their knowledge on how best they can bring changes in the school. The idea of these clubs is to offer “space for the development of learner voice and leadership” (Grant, 2015, p. 104). Based on the goals of leadership clubs in schools, the focus is to offer opportunities to learners who did not meet the criteria of serving in alternative leadership structures, such as the LRC and class monitor system at schools. These clubs offer ways to engage learners as participants in key school leadership processes (Grant & Nekondo, 2016), especially those in primary schools. Currently, learner leadership in many schools is only viewed in terms of the structure of the LRC, leaving out the majority of learners (Uushona, 2012). It is therefore necessary that schools establish leadership clubs so that learner leadership and voice can be developed in the

majority of learners in schools. The establishment of more leadership clubs in schools will result in increased potential for the development of LRC voice and leadership.

2.5.4 Limitations of learner leadership and voice in schools

There are no clear guidelines in schools on how to guide the development of learner voice and leadership. However, the discussion on learner voice by different authors, suggests the need for more schools to introduce additional platforms for the development of learner voice, such as active learner leadership clubs, in which learners discuss issues affecting their own learning (Grant, 2015; Grant & Nekondo, 2016). Despite learners' agency and eagerness to participate in leadership, there seems to be limitations to their full participation in leadership at their schools. Following next is the discussion on some factors which hinder learner participation in leadership, as reviewed in literature.

2.5.4.1 Misinterpretation of national policy

The Namibian Education Act (2001) stresses the establishment of a learner body known as the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in secondary schools (Act 16 of 2001). However, this statement is only applicable to learners in secondary schools and it leaves out learners in primary schools. There seems to be a misinterpretation of policy facilitating the LRC in schools. As argued by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), schools depend on the LRC alone for learner leadership and they sometimes blame policy (Education Act, 2001) for not allowing the establishment of more leadership committees for learners. However, the Regulations made under the Education Act state that "The LRC may establish committees for specific functions or projects of the LRC, which may include learners who are not members of the LRC as members, and must designate a member of the LRC as chairperson of such committee" (Namibia. MBESC, 2002, p. 19).

2.5.4.2 Lack of capacity building for learner leadership

Another factor that emerged from the literature and is believed to constrain learner leadership development is lack of capacity building for leadership amongst the learners. There seems to be few leadership training initiatives offering basic leadership skills to learners to enhance learners' capacity to lead. Supporting this, Uushona (2012) asserts that LRC training seems not to be fully functioning in regions, and schools are hesitant to invite an inspirational leader to train learners on leadership roles, especially for the LRC. Training in general, develops people to improve their understanding, skills, confidence and wisdom and stimulates people to commit themselves toward achieving goals (Hamatwi, 2015). Lack of training and support are viewed

as a challenge that inhibits learner leadership within the structure of the LRC. Furthermore, training plays a significant role in helping people to become effective. For example, Joyce and Showers (2002) assert that training is needed to “enable people to learn new knowledge and skills and to transfer these in to their practice” (p. 2). It is in this manner that the LRC needs to be trained in different areas including: leadership, roles and functions, meeting procedures, conflict management and planning, as suggested by Uushona (2012), so that their capacity to lead others can be enhanced. Lack of training and support from the school might affect the effectiveness of the LRC and hinder the development of leadership within the council.

2.5.4.3 Cultural factors: The view that young people cannot lead

Cultural beliefs represent another factor constraining leadership and voice development within the LRC. Traditionally, learners have been overlooked as valuable resources in the restructuring of schools (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 82). This indicates that young people are considered as immature and have limited understanding of issues discussed by elders. Adding to this is Uushona (2012), who contends that “there is a legacy of public perceptions of childhood that has made it difficult until recently, for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about things that affect them, both in and out of school” (p. 32). On a similar note, Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) exposes cultural beliefs which restrict learners to take decisions because they are immature, and that they still need to be under the command of their parents. One increasing contribution to the lack of leadership development among learners, as argued by Phaswana (2010), is that parents are less willing to have discussions with minors, especially the LRC, during School Board meetings. It is therefore noted that such kind of “reluctance is to be expected as learner participation challenges traditional adult-child relationships in [the school context]” (Phaswana, 2010, p. 107). On a similar note, Rudduck and Flutter (2000) assert that “children have not been accorded either dignity or respect; they have been reified, denied the status of participating in the social system, labelled as a problem population” (p. 82). Learners are not considered as social constructors (*ibid.*). Removing barriers constraining leadership development among learners might be a challenge. As argued by Smyth (2006b), “there are no magic formulae, typologies of school culture, or heroic formulations of leadership capable of rectifying this situation” (p. 291). What is needed is rather the “preparedness” to challenge the status quo, and ultimately that is leadership (*ibid.*).

2.5.4.4 Power relations

International literature highlights power relations as a limitation to learner participation in school leadership as well as to leadership development. Phaswana (2010) contends that “school governing bodies exacerbate inequalities of power relations, race, gender and socio-economic class” (p. 107). This corresponds with the study conducted in Namibia which found that “schools are showing little faith in learners regarding sharing of power and school leaders believe that issues discussed in schools are intellectually rooted, which requires teachers’ competencies and practices” (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 13). Unequal power relations hindering leadership development seems to be a result of the school structure. This is supported by Phaswana (2010, p. 107), who asserts that “some schools in their nature value hierarchies and exclusions” of other school members. As a result, “the school as a sphere of participation that does not encourage young people to challenge the structure of authority around them” (Phaswana, 2010, p. 107). Learners being at the grassroots of the leadership structure in the school, always find themselves having to adhere to the decisions made, even if they were not part of that decision. Such practices do not give learners opportunities to make any contributions to the decisions made in the school.

The aim of this study, as mentioned in Chapter One, is to intervene, and to bring transformation in the LRC of the case study school through voice and leadership development. As argued by Engeström and Sannino (2010), traditional research methods deal with collecting data at an empirical level, which is mostly needed when a person merely wants to understand the case. However, traditional research lacks an interventionist element. The argument is that, when one wants to intervene, there is a need to redefine one’s self and use a theory which will facilitate/inform the intervention one may want to engage with. It was against this background that I identified a theory that guided my intervention, and this was the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the theoretical framework I discuss next.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This section discusses the ontological and epistemological theories that frame the study. In order for my study to carry out an in-depth investigation of leadership development that took place in the LRC body in a school, I used Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). The theory to be discussed helped me to provide a framework that allowed me to understand the

history and witness the practice of learner leadership in the school. For this reason, this study drew on the theory of CHAT.

2.6.1 Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

CHAT arises from the work of Vygotsky in the 1920s and early 1930s, drawing from Marx's trans-historical concept of labour (Engeström, 2001). CHAT is grounded in Vygotsky's methodological interest in the mediation of human activity, using physical as well as psychological tools, used to build culture (Smagorinsky, 2010). Vygotsky's colleague and disciple Alexei Leontiev (Engeström, 2001, p. 134) further developed CHAT.

CHAT is defined as “a learning, development and agency development theory, which encompasses intergenerational knowledge transmission, learning from those who know more and collective generation of knowledge and innovations” (Mukute, 2015, p. 25). Basically, CHAT is a theory of practice which creates opportunities for intervention and learning expansively with people engaging in an activity. The development of learner leadership through enhancing learner voice within the LRC, was understood and analysed through a CHAT lens.

Yamagata-Lynch (2010) claims that CHAT has the potential to examine interactions shared within different activities and the boundaries of the activities, to identify potential changes in both human activity and the societal system. Identifying of potential changes was done by first questioning the history of LRC leadership in the school. Questioning was necessary because I believed that only when we (the participants and I) understood the history of the LRC in the school, could we bring changes. Historicity is one of the core principles of CHAT. According to Engeström, (2001), activity systems take shape and are developed over long periods. The activity system for my study, leadership development of the LRC, was understood and analysed in terms of the LRC leadership history in the school. The understanding of the history also informed the intervention during the Change Laboratory workshop process. During the Change Laboratory workshops (to be discussed later in this thesis), new ideas and models were developed based on what participants believed was not practiced in the past, and which they hoped will bring changes in the agency of the LRC. The participants shared the history of the LRC in terms of the LRC election process, the training received, support given by school members, as well as the LRC contribution to the school development in both academic and non-academic activities.

CHAT does not only examine interactions as stated in the previous paragraph. According to Roth and Lee (2007), CHAT is substantial in “both analysing data gathered in a real situation and designing changes when trouble and contradictions become evident within a particular setting” (p. 188). This implies that CHAT provides a concrete analysis of the central activity. In this case, the unit of analysis for my study was the activity system of developing leadership and voice within the LRC. The prime unit of analysis is one of the CHAT principles which imply that the prime unit of analysis is an activity system model (Engeström, 2001).

Furthermore, the use of CHAT, as a theoretical framework for this study, provided me with opportunities to listen and attend to the multi-voicedness of participants, on what they considered constrained the development of learner leadership and learner voice in the LRC at the case study school. Multi-voicedness is another one of the CHAT principles. On this principle, Engeström (2001) asserts that an activity system is always a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests. The study was interested in listening to and understanding the multiple voices of participants (the LRC, teachers, and liaison teachers) concerning leadership development within the LRC. I worked with those participants because developing leadership within the LRC was a collective activity. Since my study was framed by the second generation of CHAT, I viewed leadership development in the LRC as a collective activity.

CHAT evolves through three generations: first, second and third generation. However, this study was framed by the second generation of CHAT. First generation was not appropriate for my study because first generation focuses more on the individual, “it lacks socio-cultural historical artefacts which affect human actions” (Sannino, 2011, p. 572). The unit of analysis of the first generation remains individually focused, and it did not adequately address cultural evolution (Engeström, 2001). Similarly, third generation was not ideal for my study because it has more than one activity system. For my study, I elected to focus on only one activity system.

2.6.2 Second generation of CHAT

The second generation of CHAT started with Leontiev and is characterised by the expansion of the unit of analysis, from individual action to collective activity (Sannino, 2011, p. 573). Engeström “expanded the original triangular representation of activity to enable an examination of systems of activity in preference to a macro level concentration on the individual actor or agent operating with tools” (Engeström, 1999, p. 29).

The second generation of CHAT helped me to understand key dimensions and interrelations between various elements of the activity system, which, in this study, were the object (learner leadership development and enhancing of learner voice) the subjects (members of the LRC), tools (LRC minutes, meeting agenda), rules (national and school internal policies), communities (teachers, SMT, learners and parents) and division of labour (LRC portfolios and the LRC roles). The rules refer to formal or informal regulations that can, in varying degrees, constrain or liberate the activity and provide guidance to the subject on correct procedures and acceptable interactions that take place with other community members. The community is the social group with which the subject identifies while participating in the activity. Division of labour refers to the roles distributed between individuals within an activity system (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 6).

The diagram below presents second generation of CHAT as it relates to my study.

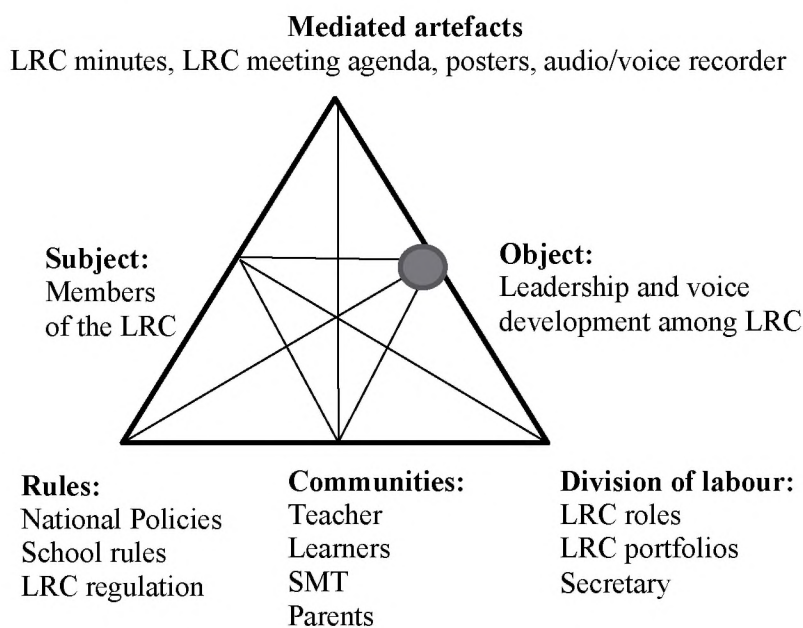


Figure 2.2: Second generation of activity theory (Adapted from Engeström, 1987, p. 178)

Figure 2.2 depicts the central relationship between the subject and the object, mediated by the artefacts. The subject being part of the community, their relationship is mediated by the rules. Lastly, the subject is striving to achieve the activity system outcomes through division of labour (Daniels, 2008). The members of the LRC were the subject for this study because they presented a group of individuals engaging in an activity with the hope of achieving their object – leadership development. Since the purpose of this study focused on developing learner

leadership and enhancing learner voice within the LRC, there were tensions between participants and other school members, which contributed to the silence in learner voice. The second generation of CHAT helped me to surface the contradictions and engage with the study participants to discuss solutions to the contradictions. Next, I discuss the CHAT principle of contradictions.

2.6.3 Contradictions

Contradictions are central to the theory of CHAT. They are evident in obstacles, challenges and tensions experienced by people and practices and they are central in human and social development (Van der Riet, 2017, p. 86). A key aspect of contradictions is that their recognition delivers insight into the change and development possibilities of activities (Karanasios, Riisla, & Simeonova, 2017). Contradictions occur when there is a clash within or between the elements of activity systems and they are needed to bring changes, development and learning (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). According to Virkkunen and Newnham (2013), there are four types of contradictions: primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary (p. 125). My study revealed primary and secondary contradictions within the elements of the activity system, and they are discussed in Chapter Five. Primary contradictions occur within elements of activity systems such as the tools or the community of the activity system (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). Secondary contradictions occur between the constituents of the central activity, between tools and division of labour, for example (*ibid.*). According to Engeström and Sannino (2010), contradictions become the actual driving force of expansive learning when they are dealt with in such a way that an emerging new object is identified and turned in to a motive: “the meeting of need with object in an extraordinary act” (p. 7). The collaboration among participants in the Change Laboratory to solve contradictions is “based on expansive learning which means new understanding in concrete situations with the elements (components) of the activity system” (Lund & Juujärvi, n.d, p. 71). I now turn my attention to discuss expansive learning.

2.6.4 Expansive learning

Expansive learning is the fifth principle of CHAT. According to Engeström and Sannino (2010), expansive learning is “a form of learning in which people are involved in constructing and implementing a radically new, wider and more complex object and concept for their activity” (p. 2). In expansive learning, “learners learn something that is not yet there. In other words, the learners construct a new object and concept for their collective activity, and implement this new object and concept in practice” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). An

important aspect of expansive learning in this study commenced with the identification and surfacing of contradictions (phase two of data collection) which is the fourth main CHAT principle that underpins this study, and this took place during the second and third Change Laboratory workshops. The contradictions which emerged were considered as an essential tool for directing participants to search for solutions of which some were implemented to bring changes in agency of the LRC. Overcoming some contradictions presented the stage of collaborative learning, illustrated in the expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 2016). The expansive learning circle is understood as "a collective journey through the zone of proximal development of the activity" (Daniels, 2008, p. 127). Furthermore, expansive learning “form a cycle where questioning and analysing contradictions necessitate changes in current practices, leading to innovating new models and ways of working” (Lund & Juujärvi, n.d, p. 71). Expansive learning aims at explaining and guiding collective transformations, workplaces and communities (Engeström, 2016). The diagram below demonstrates the expansive learning cycle:

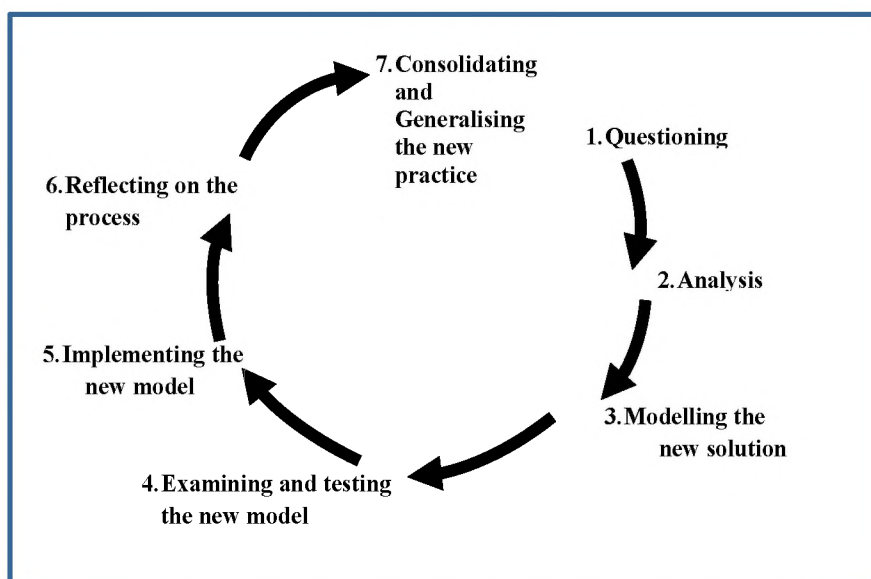


Figure 2.3: Expansive learning cycle (Source: Engeström, 2016, p. 110)

The expansive learning cycle has the following stages, as discussed by Engeström (2016, p. 142):

The first stage deals with **questioning**. This involves criticising or rejecting some aspects of the accepted practices and existing wisdom. **Analysing** is the second stage in the expansive learning circle and it involves mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation in

order to find out the causes or explanatory mechanisms. Analysis evokes WHY questions and explanatory principles. Next is **modelling** which involves constructing an explicit, simplified model of a new idea that explains and offers solutions to the problematic situation. Another stage in the expansive circle is **examining the model**. This includes running, operating and experimenting with the new model to fully grasp its dynamics, potential and limitations. The fifth stage is **implementing** of the new model – practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions. **Reflection** is the stage which focuses on reflecting and evaluating the process of the new model. The last stage is **consolidating**. This deals with implementing the refined model into a new stable form of practice.

Due to limited time, the completion of the whole expansive learning circle could not be accomplished in my study, only the first three stages of the circle were completed: questioning, analysing and modelling. Time was the biggest limitation for the intervention and indeed for this framework (CHAT). It would have been ideal to complete all stages of the expansive learning cycle to see how new models were implemented and then to reflect on them. This was, sadly, not possible. This limitation could have been overcome by spending more time on the research site, for example three to six months.

2.6.5 The Change Laboratory

According to Sannino (2011), a Change Laboratory is an interventionist method for transforming work used by researchers within the broad theoretical and methodological framework of developmental work research (p. 589). The Change Laboratory method was a useful tool for my study since it was not only “aimed at producing just an intellectual solution or a change of practice, but also at building up the practitioners’ collaborative transformative agency and motivation based on a new understanding of the idea of the activity and a new perspective of its future development” (*ibid.*, p. 10). According to Engeström and Sannino (2010), a Change Laboratory is “typically conducted in an activity that is facing a major transformation” (p. 15). This was necessary for my study because it aimed at transforming the agency of the LRC by developing leadership and voice within the LRC in one secondary school found in the northern part of Namibia.

The Change Laboratory goes through different sets of surfaces, and each workshop serves a different purpose (see for example Sannino, 2011; Virkkunen, & Newnham, 2013). The first surface is called “mirror” and serves as a first stimulus to bring in discussions of critical events

or innovative solutions from the work place (Sannino, 2011, p. 590). During this workshop, participants' experiences on the phenomenon were examined to surface contradictions and "novel" innovative solutions (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 15). The second surface is called "model and vision". This surface "is used as a second stimulus for elaborating conceptual models of the activity under scrutiny in order to analyse its inner contradictions (Sannino, 2011, p. 590). In my study, the second stimulus was done using Engeström's triangular model of an activity system to elaborate the conceptual model. The third surface used in the Change Laboratory is called "ideas and tools" and it is located between the two other sets of surfaces (*ibid.*). According to Sannino, (2011) this is the stage between the experimental mirror and the theoretically structured model/vision in order to capture emerging ideas and representation processes (p. 590). As a researcher-interventionist during the Change Laboratory workshops, I performed different roles such as: mirroring the data to the participants, facilitating the discussion on contradictions, and helping participants to build new practices through collaborating with each other in groups (second workshop). During the third workshop, I helped the liaison teacher conduct training and assisted participants in drafting the LRC year plan.

2.6.6 Critiques of CHAT

While CHAT approaches have in general been highly influential (Russell, 2009, p. 41), Engeström's system version of CHAT also has some limitations. One major critique of the triangular representation of the activity system, is the claim that "these works neglect key ideas of the founders" (Sannino, 2011, p. 577). Roth (2009) argues that "the meditational triangle Engeström proposed excludes the presentations of the sensuous nature, emotive identity-related and ethico-moral dimensions of human actions and activities (p. 65). Roth's (2009) critique leads to the suggestion of clearly distinguishing the level of activity and the level of action in order to connect collective needs and emotions to activity, on the one hand, and individual needs, emotions and feelings to actions, on the other hand (Sannino, 2011, p. 577).

Another critique with regards to CHAT, is that it does not deal with issues of power (Young, 2001). The differences between people in terms of their position, are not considered. This limitation posed a challenge to the discussion of contradictions during the Change Laboratory workshop. During the Change Laboratory workshop, I observed power differences between the teachers and the learners (LRC). Learners were not free to express themselves in the presence of the teachers because they looked at teachers as having more power than themselves.

Even though it was not easy to eliminate occurring power relations, as a researcher-interventionist I encouraged learners to be free and avoided giving extra time to answer, to the two teachers who were present during the workshop.

Furthermore, CHAT has a time limitation. From my experience of using CHAT to intervene with the aim of bringing transformation, I experienced that more time was needed to conduct multiple workshops. For a proper intervention to take place, the researcher-interventionist needs to spend a lot of time at the site preparing for all the practices.

Another critique pointed out by Sannino (2011), is that “the contemporary, widely known version of CHAT, neglects different aspects of dialectical thinking and consequently narrows its potential to a socio-critical approach to societal practice and human development” (p. 578). The author questions “how the single triangle can help to comprehend any change or movement within the activity represented except in its outcome” (Sannino, 2011, p. 578). The representation appears to suggest that the subject’s motives and intentions to become engaged in a certain activity would be identical with its outcome(s) (Sannino, 2011, p. 578).

Despite the critiques, CHAT, especially in the education field, is a theory of practice that helps researchers to intervene in order to bring change and transformative agency. In addition, CHAT is a theory that deals with problems practically. It does not only allow researchers to explain, but helps them to improve the practice (Engeström, 2001).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter began with a description of leadership and management, highlighting the background and the distinction between the two concepts. The chapter further provided a description of the evolution of traditional leadership theories. This was followed by a discussion on contemporary leadership theory, where I discussed distributed leadership which is the conceptual framework for my study. Moreover, the chapter presented a description of learner leadership and learner voice, the focus of my study. The chapter ended by providing a description of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the theoretical framework for my study. In the next chapter I describe the methodological framework I used to collect data which provided answers to my research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approaches and strategies I used to investigate and intervene in leadership and voice development within the LRC of one secondary school found in the northern part of Namibia. Methodology is "a framework associated with a particular set of paradigmatic assumptions that a person will use to conduct a research" (O' Leary, 2006, p. 85). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), methodology enables people to understand the research in the broadest possible terms and it serves as an important tool which directs the researcher in carrying out the study.

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the research goals and questions that guided my study. I then move on to a description and defence of the research paradigm I employed. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the description of the research approach for my study. This study employed multiple data sources which I describe in this chapter. The reason for using multiple data sources was to capture more than one perspective to present a more comprehensive picture in a form of data triangulation. Data analysis follows next with the description of how I analysed the data. Last in this chapter, I discuss the ethical implications as they pertained to my study.

3.2 Research goals and questions

Goals are defined as the purposes that reflect what a researcher wants to achieve (Uushona, 2012). The ultimate goal of the study was to develop leadership and voice within the LRC. Additionally, the study sought to help the LRC members in the case school through the intervention to understand their leadership roles as stipulated in the Education Act 16 of 2001.

In order to achieve the research goals, the study endeavoured to answer the following research questions:

- How is learner voice and learner leadership understood?
- What leadership opportunities exist for the LRC in the school?
- What are the factors enabling the development of leadership within the LRC?
- What factors constrain the development of LRC voice and leadership?
- How can LRC voice and leadership be developed?

Once a researcher has identified research questions, there is also a need for a research orientation and a need to develop a research design, and my attention now turns to this aspect of my research.

3.3 Research orientation and design

This research was a critical study, designed as a formative intervention. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a critical study “sees reality as shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and other dynamics of society” (p. 26). Critical studies are influenced by critical theory, a paradigm in which people’s understanding of the world is characterised by unequal power relations (*ibid.*).

Intervention is defined simply as “purposeful action by a human agent to create change” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 15). A formative intervention was an ideal design for my study for the following reasons, as argued by Engeström, Sannino, and Lemos (2016): (a) “formative interventions are based on design done by the learners; (b) the collective design effort is seen as part of an expansive learning process including participatory analyses and implementation phases; (c) rather than aiming at transferable and scalable solutions, formative interventions aim at generative solutions developing over lengthy periods of time both in the researched activities and in the research community” (p. 599).

The orientation I discuss above describes the beliefs the researcher has about what can be known about the world. Next, I discuss the study approach that deals with beliefs about the significant way of acquiring the knowledge (about the world).

3.4 Case study approach

A case study is one of the popular research approaches within the social sciences and education studies. This study adopted a case study approach to enhance my understanding of learner

leadership and voice development within the LRC, as well as to retain the holistic meaning of a real-life situation surrounding learner leadership in the case study school. Case studies aim to describe “what it is like” to be in any particular situation, so they are generally descriptive in nature, however, they can also be used to generate claims for further verification” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 42).

The notion of learner leadership presents an instance the study sought to investigate, in the milieu of Omukumo (a pseudonym) Senior Secondary School. Through the investigation of the phenomena under study, I acquired new knowledge that helped me to understand how learner leadership and voice was understood, what leadership opportunities existed for the LRC, as well as the enabling and constraining mechanisms to leadership and voice development within the LRC.

The case study approach enabled enough data to be captured, to allow plausible interpretations of data collected and to test the trustworthiness of interpretations through the first stage of mirror data in the Change Laboratory workshops. Despite the significance of a case study to my study, it has limitations, such as its findings cannot be generalised and it has personal biases (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2012). I opted for a case study because a case study “is useful for exploring and understanding the process and dynamics of change” (Simons, 2009, p. 23). This study explored learner leadership by interacting with teachers and learners (LRC) through analysing related documents, observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The limitation of not generalising case study findings is discussed in Chapter Six.

When researchers plan research designs and approaches, they also have to decide on other important aspects that need careful consideration, such as the research site and participants, which I discuss next.

3.5. Research site

This study was conducted at Omukumo Senior Secondary School. A pseudonym was used to “respect and protect the rights of people consenting to be studied” (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 66) and to address issues of confidentiality and anonymity in the research (Cohen et al., 2007). The site for this study is a non-boarding Secondary School found in the northern part of Namibia. The school is situated in a rural area under the educational directorate of Oshana

region. Currently, Omukumo Secondary School caters for learners from Grade 8-12 with a learner population of 393 (boys and girls). The school accommodates learners from various socio-economic backgrounds. There are 20 teachers in the school including the school principal, three heads of department and three support staff. This school is a state school; parents are not obliged to pay school development fees, since the implementation of free secondary schooling in the year 2015.

There are various legislated structures found in the school, including the School Governing Body (SGB), the School Management Team (SMT), and the LRC, just to mention a few. In addition to that, the school has a vision and mission statement and a motto which guide the school activities, both academic and non-academic. The infrastructure of the case study school is moderate; there is no hostel and so some learners stay with their parents in their homesteads, while others settle in an informal location found in a nearby town, and as a result, they have to travel a distance of more than three kilometres to reach the school.

This school was chosen for several reasons. In 2015, I undertook my Honours school-based project with the University of Namibia at this school and spent two months there collecting data. I went back to the same school at the beginning of the year (2017) to do the pre-course assignment (pilot study) for my Master's degree (Rhodes University). My position in relation to this school is therefore two-fold. Firstly, I considered myself as an outsider, as per Mercer's (2007) definition, which refers to an outsider as a non-member researcher of an organisation. Secondly, I can claim to be an insider because of familiarity with the group to be researched. I belong to the same ethnic group as the majority of learners and teachers at the school, and we have access to the same languages we use for communication (English & Oshindonga) (Mercer, 2007). Furthermore, I became familiar to the learners and teachers because of my research at the school during the Honours project and the pilot study as discussed earlier. Since I have done research at this school, I developed a good relationship of trust with learners and teachers and I was able to relatively easily, get access to the school. Members of the school knew me as a researcher; I was not a stranger to them.

3.6 Research participants and sampling

A sample is “a representative of the total population” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 143). I used purposive sampling to select the participants because it is “based on the assumption that the

researcher wants to discover, understand, gain insight and select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). I selected a sample of 20 participants: 15 current members of the LRC and five teachers. The whole population of current LRC members (2017) were the subject (main participants) of the study. Teacher participants were comprised of the school principal, one Head of Department (HoD) and one senior teacher due to their experiences in different leadership aspects, as well as their knowledge of the history of learner leadership at the school. Two liaison teachers responsible for facilitating the LRC, were chosen for their experience in working with the LRC. Thus all participants of the study were purposively selected because of their interest in and proximity to the LRC in the school.

3.7 Data gathering tools

This section outlines research techniques I used to gather data about the phenomenon of learner leadership. I planned to collect data using multiple data sources. This study was conducted using five different techniques including: document analysis, observation, interviews, a questionnaire and Change Laboratory workshops. The collection of data lasted for eight weeks and it commenced at the start of June until the end of July 2017. All activities happening during the data collection weeks were divided into four phases, which I will briefly discuss next.

Phase one started in the first week of June. During this phase, I visited the research school to familiarise myself with participants. I also presented the principal with the permission letter I got from the Director of Education. Moreover, during this week I held a meeting with my study participants to brief them about the purpose of my study. This was done by explaining all ethical issues to be considered and most importantly, I issued the consent letters to all participants to agree/disagree to participate in the study. The piloting of the research tools with two LRC members and two teachers from a different school, took place during this phase as well.

Phase two started during the second week until end of June. Phase two began with tracing the current happenings of the LRC leadership at the school. This phase aimed to collect data using document analysis, observation, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to capture participants understanding on the notion of learner leadership. Phase two built on the pre-course assignment I conducted at the beginning of this degree.

Phase three of this study took place during weeks five and six. During this phase, I surfaced the challenges that emerged from phase two. I conducted three Change Laboratory workshops aimed at bringing changes to develop leadership and voice within the LRC.

Phase four of this study was done in weeks seven and eight. During this phase, I engaged with the participants by probing and verifying the findings, and seeking further clarity.

Next, I present the data collection tools I used to gather the data.

3.7.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Document analysis was used because it has potential to "provide background information as well as historical insight which can help the researcher to understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation" (*ibid.*, p. 29). I firstly analysed the *Education Act* 16 of 2001, the Regulations made under the Educational Act (2002), the school rules and the school development plan (2017 academic year) (see Appendix A for all documents analysed). In these documents, I reviewed the roles, rules, and principles guiding the action of the LRC. Even though I intended to analyse two sets of LRC minutes for the current year meetings (2017), there were no LRC minutes filed. I only analysed one set of minutes for one parent meeting conducted in this year (2017). I expected more sets of LRC minutes to be available as per the policy, which mentions that an "LRC must hold at least two meetings during each school term" and "the secretary of the LRC must keep minutes of the proceedings of all minutes of the LRC" (Namibia. MBEC, 2002, p. 19). Analysis of documents was conducted during the first week of the data collection period and findings from this tool were used to inform the intervention process (phase three). Analysing of documents gave me an idea on how the LRC is regulated and to broaden the findings gathered during the pre-course assignment (January 2017). I was aware that sometimes documents provide "insufficiently detailed information due to the fact that, they are produced for some purpose other than research and they are created independently of a research agenda" (Bowen, 2009, p. 31). In contrast, I opted to analyse documents on the grounds of providing "authenticity, representativeness, credibility and meaning of information entirely different from the data gathered from people" (May, 2001, p. 190).

3.7.2 Observation

I used observation as my second data gathering technique. Observation is “a research process that offers an investigator the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situations” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396). Observation is based on “close monitoring of facts and practices of the target groups, besides observation implies seeing as well as observing with other senses” (Henning, 2004, p. 82).

Structured observation was conducted and I performed a role of an observer as a participant because my intention was to understand and make sense of the situation observed (Maree, 2007). Observation was carried out in different activities (see Appendix B). These included observations during school morning devotions, during study sessions and observation of the LRC involvement in school academic and non-academic activities. Moreover, I used observation to grasp how the LRC in the case study school raised their voice in matters affecting them. One formal observation was conducted during the LRC meeting (held after school, in the school library). This was done with the intention of getting an idea on how the LRC facilitated their meetings. Another reason, was to get an idea of the roles of different LRC members during the meeting, including those of their liaison teachers, the LRC participation and how they raised their voice when taking decisions. During observation, I used a research journal to capture field notes. Field notes are "gathered, recorded and compiled on-site during the course of a study and they provide a record of the researcher's understandings of the lives, people, and events that are the focus of the research" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 410). Data collected during observations complemented data from document analysis, interviews, and questionnaires.

It is worth mentioning that I acknowledge the challenges of observation – that it requires time, that it restricts the researcher from asking questions to some extent, and that issues of language might contribute to the limited understanding of the interactions between individuals (Durrance & Fisher, 2005). Notwithstanding, I chose observation on the basis that it allows a researcher to take advantages of unforeseen data resources as they surface and it provides answers to questions not asked (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

3.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is a conversation between the researcher and the respondent. In this study I used a semi-structured interview to generate the data from teachers. Semi-structured interviews are

"a set of predetermined questions that participants provide answers to" (Maree, 2007, p. 87). This technique is relatively flexible in the way that once questions are posed, it allows for probing and follow-up questions to be asked. A face-to-face interview was conducted with five teachers: the principal, one HoD, a senior teacher and two liaison teachers. The teachers were interviewed to give their opinions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings regarding their understanding of learner leadership. Not only that, their views on the roles and factors enabling and constraining LRC members in executing their roles, were considered as well (Appendix C).

Interviewees decided on a convenient venue and time for the interview sessions. Interviews were conducted during the second week of data collection and each interview session lasted for 18-30 minutes. These were face-to-face individual interview dialogues. This technique was more appropriate for teachers because they had detailed information regarding the phenomenon under study which they openly shared with me. Four interviews were conducted in the school, whilst one was conducted outside the school, as per the participant's request. During the interview I probed to get more clarity on some issues I had observed and analysed from the documents.

All interviews were audio-recorded with a cell phone (permission was granted) and transcribed later. Transcribing was a bit challenging and time consuming. I experienced a challenge with regards to transcribing the interview I had with one liaison teacher. This interview was conducted during break time, and learners were scattered everywhere in the school. There was no-one to tell them to lower their voice levels because it was their break and so the audio recording was not very clear.

Conducting in-depth interviews takes a considerable amount of planning, experience and time. It requires a conducive environment, and it is costly in a sense that the interviewer needs to buy devices to use during interview sessions (Lichtman, 2014). Gay et al. (2009) support the use of interviews by saying: "Firstly, personal contact with participants generates deeper understanding of a phenomenon being studied. Secondly, interviews gain the perspectives from the voice, not from the writing or reading. Lastly, interviews provide information that is inaccessible through observation and questionnaires". These factors influenced my decision to use interviews to gather data.

3.7.4 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is “a printed sets of field questions to which participants respond on their own” (Rule & John, 2011, p. 66). Cohen et al. (2011) argue that a questionnaire is a significant tool to be used when collecting data because “responses from respondents are standardised, and questionnaires can be administered without the presence of the researcher” (p. 377).

A set of questionnaires was administered to 15 participants (the whole population of the current LRC). Questionnaires comprised both closed and open-ended questions covering all four research questions indicated earlier (Appendix D). Closed questions were chosen because they “prescribe the range of responses from which the respondents may choose” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 321). Similarly, open-ended questions were used because they provide detailed answers (Maree, 2007). The questionnaires were handed to the LRC participants during week two of data collection. This was done to allow abundant time for the completion of questions. Questionnaires were used as a framework to triangulate data collected from document analysis, observation, and interviews. I administered the questionnaires to the learners because this tool does not have direct influence on respondents and the LRC were free to express their opinions on paper without any fear. Questions which learners struggled to understand, were explained in Oshindonga (mother tongue). This helped in stimulating the LRCs understanding of the questions and contributed rich data to my study.

Using questionnaires has limitations such as that the “respondents may not understand the questions asked or may give the answer that they think the researcher wants to hear” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 78). To minimise this, questionnaires were piloted with two members of the LRC at a different school (piloting the questionnaire). This exercise gave me the assurance that questions were clear, because the respondents were able to provide answers to all the research questions. All 15 questionnaires were returned but some of the LRC did not complete all the questions. I should mention that it was not easy to collect back all the questionnaires, as the LRC kept on postponing and giving excuses for not completing the questionnaires on time. In addition to that challenge, learners were complaining that there were too many questions. I tried to encourage them to complete all the questions. I also explained that all the questions were relevant to my study, thus the need to answer them all.

3.7.5. The three-weeks Change Laboratory process

Another tool used to contribute to the data from the tools discussed above, were the Change Laboratory workshops (CLW). As explained in Chapter Two, a Change Laboratory is typically conducted in an activity that is facing a major transformation (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 15). Three Change Laboratory workshops were conducted. The first workshop was an introduction of the workshops to be conducted. This workshop was attended by all the LRC, a liaison teacher and a senior teacher. During the workshop, I reminded the participants about their right to participate in the workshop as well as to request them to allow me to take pictures and videos. We also put up some rules to be adhered to during the workshop. During this first Change Laboratory workshop, the other teacher participants could not attend because they were attending a meeting with visitors from the educational office.

The second workshop was attended by all the LRC, a liaison teacher and a senior teacher. The central activities that took place during this workshop included a mirror data process, presenting ideas and tools and modelling (a full discussion is provided in Chapter Five).

The last workshop was an intervention in which the LRC year plan was developed and training was given to the LRC. The collaboration of the researcher-interventionist with participants during the last workshop, resulted in a transformative agency of a strong sense of leadership and voice development of the LRC members. With permission from the participants, Change Laboratory workshop sessions were captured and video recorded to strengthen the validity of data.

3.8 Data analysis

The next step that followed data collection deals with data analysis. According to Cohen et al., (2011) data analysis in qualitative research includes "organizing, accounting for and explaining the data. In short, making sense of data in terms of the participant's definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (p. 537). Analysing of data started at the time of collecting data, as the data and its impact were still fresh in my mind. This also created an opportunity to restructure my questions and to concentrate on aspects not well articulated with regard to leadership and voice development within the LRC.

Firstly, data was analysed following the two levels of analysis. The first level was that of a descriptive account. In this level, data were compressed and linked together in a narrative that conveys the meaning I derived from the investigation (Merriam, 1998, p. 179). This level required me to think about the kind of data to include and what not to include in my findings. The second level of analysis I employed was that of constructing categories and themes. This level started with coding. According to Rule and John (2011), coding is a process of choosing labels and assigning them to different parts of data (p. 77). During the coding process, texts with a significant meaning relating to my research questions were written on sticky notes and pasted on flip chart paper. Thereafter, units of data with similar ideas were grouped together to form categories and themes, the second level of analysis. Naming of categories and themes came from participants responses that reflected what came up in the data, relevant to the research questions. The photo below demonstrates the analysis of data to construct categories and themes.

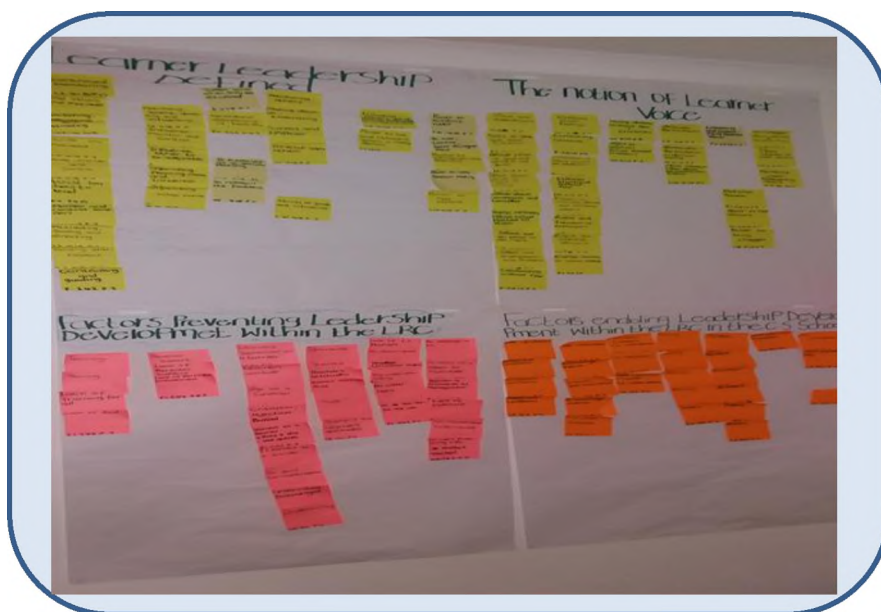


Figure 3.1: The process of categorising and development of themes

Secondly, data collected was analysed manually by using the second generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). CHAT as an analytical tool, helped me to surface and dig deeper into the challenges that constrained leadership and voice within the LRC. The analysis of data using CHAT was used to locate the contradictions within the elements of the second generation of the activity system described in Chapter Two (see Section 2.6). One can imagine the situation where the LRC members were not co-operating well with other members of the

council. One would therefore surface a primary contradiction within the same element (LRC). In such situations I used the CHAT lens to analyse the cause by finding reasons that gave rise to such situations through questioning. Since this study was an interventionist research, I was not just aiming to understand, but to bring changes, by solving the problems experienced through the collaboration with research participants. Contradictions surfaced are fully explained in Chapter Five.

Triangulation of data from five research tools used, denoted validity of data. Next, I discuss validity as one way of enhancing reliability and trustworthiness of the data.

3.9 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the data

Validity is defined as “the extent to which the research instruments measures what it is actually intended to measure” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 28). Concerning validity threats and biases, Maxwell (2008) stresses that validity threats cannot be eliminated but researchers should declare the personal values and beliefs that they bring to the study in order to minimise those threats. This study relied on three validity strategies to ensure legitimacy of the data collected. These were piloting, member checking and triangulation.

I first submitted my research tools (interview questions, questionnaire and observation schedule) to my supervisor (as indicated earlier). This was done to ensure the appropriateness and potential of the four tools used, in answering the research questions. Prior to collection of data, both the interview questions and questionnaires were piloted. With the interview, I piloted the questions with a colleague who was not a research participant to ensure that questions were clearly formulated, based on the research questions. Similarly, questionnaires were piloted with two LRC members from a different school (my school where I teach) to test their effectiveness in reaching the research goals.

Apart from piloting questions, data was collected using multiple sources as a means to triangulate. According to Simons (2009), triangulation is “a means of cross-checking the relevance and significance of issues or testing out arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence in support of key claims” (p. 129). It is in support of this claim that the study sought to investigate the phenomenon by using multi-methods such

as document analysis, observation, structured interviews, questionnaires and Change Laboratory workshops.

Another method I used to enhance validity was member checking. Member checking refers to "checking the accuracy, adequacy, and fairness of observations, representations and interpretations of experience with those whom they concern" (Simons, 2009, p. 131). This method was performed on data generated from interviews, questionnaires and during phase three (mirror data) of a Change Laboratory workshop. During this stage, not only data was checked, also unfamiliar words or use of inappropriate words were corrected and confirmed. Additionally, member checking was practiced with teachers when they verified their responses after I transcribed their interviews. Furthermore, member checking was also practiced during the mirror data in the second Change Laboratory workshop by all the workshop participants. During the mirror data, all participants confirmed that the mirror data reflected the responses they gave in their questionnaires and interviews.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Due to the nature of the research which involved interactions of the researcher with participants, there was a need to adhere to appropriate ethical considerations. This section of the chapter presents the parameter of ethics within which researchers need to bind themselves when conducting research. My argument on ethical protocols is based on the standards of autonomy, confidentiality, honest and transparency (Cohen et al, 2007).

The first standard I upheld was autonomy. In the first place I obtained ethical clearance from Rhodes University, which was an approval of my research proposal (Appendix E). I also sought permission to conduct the study from the Educational Director of the region as well as from the principal of the research school. Permission was granted in writing from the Educational Director and the principal of the case study school after providing generous information regarding the purpose and nature of the study (Appendices H & J). Furthermore, I prepared consent letters for the interview and questionnaire participants (Appendices K & L). In these consent letters, I made it clear to the participants that their choice to take part in my study was voluntarily and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, the content of the consent letter outlined how the participant's personal identity, confidentiality and autonomy would be dealt with. According to Cohen et al. (2007), a consent "is the

procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (p. 52). As well as the above, I conducted a meeting with all the participants to brief them about the purpose of the study which was to develop leadership and voice within the LRC.

In relation to confidentiality, I ensured the participants that their identities and that of the school would not be revealed. I used pseudonyms and codes to refer to the names of the participants and that of the school. As I planned to record the interview sessions to enhance transparency, honest and validity, I first sought permission from the participants and it was granted. Pictures were taken from the back of the classroom. This was done intentionally so that participants could not be identified. Trustworthiness of the study was enhanced through member-checking of interview transcriptions.

With regards to working with minors in a study, Cohen et al. (2007) emphasise that the researcher should seek informed consent by firstly consulting and seeking permission from their parents, secondly, the researcher should approach the young people themselves. In line with this, I sought permission from the LRC members’ parents. To do this, I sent consent letters with space for their parents to sign as a way of authorising their children to participate in my study. The content of the letter included the purpose of the study, as well as an explanation on how I planned to maintain confidentiality of the data I intended to collect from the learners (Appendix K).

3.11 Positionality

In relation to positionality, John and Rule (2011) warn researchers to be aware of their position in relation to the study context and participants, and how such positioning may influence the study and its overall quality (p. 113). Given my position as a teacher in a different school in a different region, I was aware of the power influences between me and my study participants. The teachers and learners in the case study school knew my position. They came to know me during my stay in their school for my Honours project and during a pilot study as stated earlier. I was aware that my position would likely bear power relations with the study participants. Even though the elimination of actual influence when conducting research is impossible (Maxwell, 2008), I requested my participants to consider my presence in their school, in the context of an academic researcher. I also assured them that my research had nothing to do with

performance evaluation for both teachers and learners. It is worth mentioning that I did not experience/observe any challenges relating to my position from participants in any way. I was fully supported and given all materials I needed to use in the process of collecting data.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter embraced the methodology of the study. Within this chapter, I described the paradigm of the study as well as research tools I employed to collect data. This chapter further discussed aspects regarding data analysis, ethical considerations adhered to and strategies I put in place to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. Finally, I discuss my position in relation to the case study school. Once the data is collected and analysed, the next step is to make sense of the data by presenting and discussing data in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. My attention now turns to the presentation and discussion of the findings to see how the research questions were answered.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

As indicated earlier, the purpose of my study was to investigate learner leadership development opportunities and learner voice in Omukumo Senior Secondary School in Namibia. Due to the large amount of data captured from the different phases of data collection, I have chosen to split the presentation and discussion of data across two chapters (Chapter Four and Five). In this chapter I present and discuss the data in response to the first three research questions gathered from the tools I discussed in Chapter Three. To remind the reader, my first three research questions were: *How is learner voice and learner leadership understood in the school? What leadership opportunities exist for the LRC members in the school? What factors enable the development of LRC voice and leadership?* Data in this chapter are discussed and presented under the following themes:

- Towards an understanding of learner leadership;
- Learner voice explored;
- LRC leadership opportunities in the school;
- Enabling factors influencing the development of LRC leadership in the school.

4.2 Coding and participants profiles

In writing this chapter, I distinguish participants' responses from each other by means of different codes. For example, P in this case stands for principal while L stands for learner. Similarly, where I want to refer to the name of the school, I use a pseudonym (Omukumo Senior Secondary School), to respect and protect the identity of the school and that of the participants. It is worth reminding the reader that only the current LRC were part of the study, no any other learner was interviewed or answered the questionnaire.

Following hereunder are the tools I used to gather rich data for my study and the preferred codes I used.

- Interviews - I
- Questionnaires - Q
- Observation - OB
- Document one: School Rules - D1
- Document two: Education Act - D2
- Document three: Regulation made under Education Act - D3
- Document four: School Calendar of Activities - D4
- Document five: The LRC Minutes - D5
- Document six: Minutes for Parents' Meeting - D6
- Document seven: The LRC Agendas - D7
- Document eight: LRC File - D8

4.2.1 Learners in the council (L1-L15)

The learners in the council were the subject (the primary participants) of my study. The council consists of 15 members. It comprises learners from Grade 9 to Grade 12, and their age varies from 16 to 20 years (D8). The current LRC members were nominated early in 2017, on the 27 January and their term will end in December 2017 (D4). The LRC members occupy different portfolios, including that of the head boy, the head girl, deputy head boy, deputy head girl, sport, culture, infrastructure, gender and academic affairs, treasurer, and lastly entertainment.

4.2.2 The principal (P)

The principal of the school has 17 years teaching experience. He teaches Mathematics to Grade 10 and 11. During his office hours, he spends time performing leadership roles including class visits, conducting management meetings, supervising teachers and learners, as well as attending to visitors.

4.2.3 Head of department (HoD)

The head of department is a woman with 14 years teaching experience. She is the HoD for Mathematics and Science in the school, and she teaches Mathematics to Grade 8 and 9. As a HoD, she helps the school principal to manage the school, and conducts classroom observations with teachers in her department. She serves on different committees in the school including the school board, timetable and disciplinary committee.

4.2.4 Teacher liaison officer (TLO1)

This teacher has been responsible for the LRC since the year 2013 when she joined the school. She has 12 years of teaching experience. Apart from being the LRC facilitator, she is the school head of examinations for both Grade 10 and 12, a work that keeps her busy, especially during final examinations. She volunteered to facilitate the LRC because she had experience in facilitating the LRC from her previous school.

4.2.5 Teacher liaison officer (TLO2)

This was another teacher who is in charge of the LRC. He started working in this school in 2013, and he has 15 years of teaching experience. He is responsible for the LRC because he underwent leadership training at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). Apart from being in charge of the LRC, he is a member of the following committees: management, disciplinary, promotion and timetable. He teaches Agriculture and Geography.

4.2.6 Senior teacher (ST)

This is the longest serving teacher in the school who started teaching at the school in 2001 to date. This teacher has been at the school for 16 years and teaches Accounting and Entrepreneurship to Grade 8-10. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting. Apart from being a teacher she serves on the academic and promotional committees, and she is a spiritual counsellor in her community.

I now turn my attention to discuss the first theme which sought to explore the participants' understanding on the notion of learner leadership.

4.3 Towards an understanding of learner leadership

The first research question of my study aimed at determining the participants' understanding on the notion of learner leadership. The study found that participants' understanding of learner leadership varied. It emerged from the data that the notion of learner leadership was viewed as influence; as guiding and directing; as managing; and as a practice of power. To begin with, I present the findings on participants' understanding on the notion of learner leadership. One such view was that learner leadership was understood as an act of influence.

4.3.1. Learner leadership as influence

One central view emerging from the data, was that learner leadership was seen as a system in which learners influence each other within the school environment, in order to achieve certain goals, and to improve school effectiveness. Responses from questionnaires indicated that learner leadership is “*the ability that learners have to influence others so that things can be done effectively and efficiently in the school*” (L8, Q). Similarly, a senior teacher during the interview reiterated that learner leadership is “*when the LRC have ability and willingness to influence other learners to co-operate in the school environment*” (ST, I). Likewise, another learner felt that learner leadership is “*the responsibilities given to the learners especially the LRC to influence other learners in a good way and with respect*” (L14, Q).

The understanding of participants on learner leadership as influence, was not far from that of leadership in general as defined by different authors. According to Yukl (2002), a central element in many definitions of leadership is that there is a process of influence (p. 4). In addition, leadership is understood as a relationship of influence directed towards goals or outcomes, whether formal or informal (Christie, 2010). The LRC members were considered the highest representative body in the school and they were entrusted with responsibilities to influence their followers positively. This aligned with my observation. I observed that the LRC members were always punctual. Evidence for this was my observation field notes which read “*LRC come early, stand at the gate and write the names of the late comer*” (O, 07.06.2017). I therefore concluded that some participants’ definitions of the concept were influenced by the work of the LRC and how they conducted themselves in their day-to-day operation. This idea was borne out by one teacher who echoed that “*the LRC are chosen to represent others, they need to be influential, they are no longer considered as ordinary learners, but we see them as learners with extra obligations, and that is to influence others*” (HoD, I).

4.3.2 Learner leadership as an approach to guide, direct and motivate other learners

Some of the participants understood learner leadership as giving direction and guiding learners to engage in school leadership, as well as to become active members in school activities. In his own understanding, the principal stated that, “*Learner leadership are the responsibilities we give learners to lead others by guiding them and controlling them in conjunction with teachers*” (I). In the same vein, one learner defined learner leadership as “*the way learners guide and motivate other learners with full respect*” (L13, Q). A similar response was also provided by another learner who mentioned that learner leadership is “*a way of motivating other learners,*

guiding, directing and influencing learners in the school'. This particular learner further maintained that *"In our school we show our fellow learners how to behave and help them with their school work during study time"* (L2, Q).

The understanding of participants on learner leadership as a way of guiding and directing is not far from what Uushona (2012) terms as characteristics of learner leadership. According to Uushona (2012), learner leadership involves interactions and building relationships with other learners, peers and other members of the organisational community with the outcome of developing leadership skills in learners (p. 22). The support which the LRC were giving the other learners in the school created a strong relationship with their fellow learners. Confirming this, was my observation notes which indicated that *"four LRC helping the Grade 8 learners with recording transactions in Accounting"* (O, 13.06.2017). In doing so, they were guiding their peers to achieve higher learning outcomes.

The data further revealed that learner leadership was linked to motivation. As one LRC member said, learner leadership is all about *"motivating others, guiding and directing learners in the school"* (L3, Q). Adding to this was another learner who indicated in the questionnaire that learner leadership is all about *"having learners to guide, and motivate others to perform well"* (L4, Q). These two views denoted that the LRC in this school were expected to encourage those learners who seemed to lose focus on academic work. My observation at the morning devotion confirmed that the LRC were expected to encourage their fellow learners. I witnessed the deputy head boy delivering a motivational speech to his fellow learners during a morning assembly. In his speech the deputy encouraged learners by saying the following: *"Take education first before other things, and always remember that education is the key to succeed"* (O, 14.06.2017). The explanation given on how the LRC motivate fellow learners, speaks to what transformational leadership theories advocate. According to Horner (1997), the role of transformational leaders is to strengthen followers in attaining objectives set, and to develop appropriate traits needed to achieve set objectives. This suggests that the LRC, as representatives of other learners in the school, are obliged to transform and inspire their fellow learners to achieve higher academic and social progress.

4.3.3 The perspective of learner leadership as the managing of other learners

The study also found that learner leadership was defined from the dimension of managing. The HoD and three of the learners (L7, L1 & L5) all viewed learner leadership as a way of

performing a managerial role. During the interview, the HoD in particular said, “*We give responsibilities to the LRC to lead, control and manage others in their classroom*” (I). The HoD further added that “*it would be hard for teachers to know everything happening in the school grounds without the help of the LRC. It is for that reason we regard the LRC as our eyes to monitor what goes on around the school, especially in the classrooms in the absence of the teachers*” (HoD, I). So, to her, that was learner leadership.

Moreover, one learner stated in the questionnaire that learner leadership was “*the way of monitoring and managing others in the school and to make sure that everything runs smoothly*” (L7, Q). It was not a surprise for people to define the concepts of leadership and management interchangeably. These two concepts are intertwined, and they are often used interchangeably (Christie, 2010). The definitions given by respondents lean more towards management, and it concurs with the definitions of management reviewed in the literature. According to Christie (2010), management is viewed as an organisational concept which relates to structures and process by which organisations meet their goals and central purpose through a continuous cycle of planning, organising, leading and controlling (p. 696). It was apparent from respondents that learner leadership was understood in terms of managing. Monitoring and control are the central activities in management. Since learner leadership was understood from a management perspective, this was an indication that the LRC in the case study were also considered as managers of other learners.

4.3.4 Learner leadership as a practice of power

The data also revealed that learner leadership was seen as a practice of power. According to the liaison teacher, learner leadership is “*the ability to give the learners, especially the LRC, the power to influence other learners, the power to make decisions, power to lead others and to reinforce order in the school*” (TLO1, I). Similarly, another learner pointed out that learner leadership is “*the power given to us to lead fellow learners, to correct them in a good way, and to help to solve disagreements between them*” (L6, Q). Still on leadership as power, the liaison teacher during the interview defined learner leadership as “*the power given to the LRC to represent fellow learners in decision-making*” (TLO2).

All the above definitions suggest that learner leadership in the school is associated with the abilities of LRC members to monitor fellow learners within the school. In support of this claim, the liaison teacher insisted that “*we give the LRC power to reinforce order in their classrooms*

with the help of the class monitor, sometimes it is not easy for teachers to be aware of what is happening in classes” (TLO2, I). One key point to remember is that power is a central activity in leadership. Christie (2010) views leadership as an “an exercise of power, which is directed towards achieving goals, and it is associated with vision and values” (p. 695). It is therefore important to realise that the school management alone cannot lead the entire school, thus the LRC as a structure was introduced so that leadership in the school can be shared amongst multiple people, including the learners (D2). Learner leadership being understood in terms of sharing power, resonates with contemporary views about leadership, which advocate for the distribution of power (Avolio et al., 2009). It emerged from the data that participants believed leadership roles in this school should be distributed to learners as well. The practice of allocating roles to a range of school stakeholders reflects the notion of distributed leadership. As emphasised, distributed leadership came as a response to critics against the notion of the heroic leaders found in traditional theories, after realising that learners were being excluded from school leadership opportunities (Hartley, 2007).

This section looked at participants’ views towards the understanding of learner leadership. It is evident from the discussion that participants had different views on what learner leadership is. As shown in the discussion above, learner leadership was mostly understood in terms of the LRC’s role in the school. Participants’ views on learner leadership were more about the managing of other learners.

4.4 Learner voice explored

In the same way that participants held different views in defining learner leadership, the study also found that participants held different understandings of learner voice. The notion of learner voice among the participants can be differentiated into two categories. Firstly, some participants were of the view that learner voice is about ‘being heard’ and, on the other hand, participants understood learner voice as democratic participation in school decision-making.

4.4.1 Learner voice as ‘being heard’

Another set of views that emerged from the data showed that learner voice was understood as the way of giving learners opportunities to make their voice heard. For example, one learner indicated in a questionnaire that learner voice is “*when learners’ concerns are heard on whatever they are not happy with and what they want to be done in the school*” (L14, Q). Another participant with a similar view in an interview, said that learner voice is about “*when*

the learners are allowed to raise their opinions concerning their school issues in the environment” (ST). In elaborating how learner voice is being heard in the school, the responses revealed two possible explanations. The liaison teacher echoed that *“the LRC gather other learners to discuss things they are not happy with, and bring the concerns to us to tackle them. Apart from that, there was also a suggestion box which learners use to express their views”* (TLO1, I). The point which the liaison teacher made was that learners ideas were not neglected, they spoke through the meetings initiated by the LRC. In addition to that, the school created platforms for learner voice to be heard. The suggestion box was a good initiative for the teachers to hear learners’ concerns and attend to them accordingly. The principal, in his interview, elaborated on the use of the suggestion box by saying:

The suggestion box was created for the learners to write educational problems they are experiencing in the school. The box was placed in the staff room and learners instructed just to write their concerns without writing their name or that of the teacher they are having educational issues with. It was the responsibilities of the management to read through the issues found in the box, and look for amicable solutions.

The HoD also commented on the use of the suggestion box. From her point of view, the HoD said that it was not going to be possible for teachers *“to listen and attend to individual complaints experienced by the learners”* (I). Thus, teachers felt the use of a suggestion box was a good initiative to help them to hear and attend to the voice of the learners. With reference to Mitra and Gross’s (2009) pyramid of student voice, being heard is one of the three levels that illustrate youth development opportunities for learner voice. The first level of ‘being heard’ helps teachers and administrators understand and acknowledge that learners possess unique knowledge which cannot be ignored. Not only that, this level contributes to learners’ motivation and makes them act like people whose presence and ideas matter in their school (Mitra & Gross, 2009).

I therefore argue that learners should be provided with opportunities to participate in school affairs and that their voice should be recognised. As argued, voice is not only bound to democratic participation, but it also requires provision of opportunities and encouragement of learners to get involved and share their aspirations (Fielding, 2006). Literature also advocates for equal opportunities to be created – *“for every person to make proposals and to criticise in conditions free from any form of domination”* (Shushu, Jacobs, & Teise, 2013, p. 28). This means that learners’ participation in leadership can only occur if opportunities are given to the

learners and they are given a mandate to make suggestions and to criticise the conditions in which they find themselves, without reprisals.

4.4.2 Learner voice as democratic participation

Learner voice was also understood as a democratic participation of learners in the school decision-making processes. Responses from questionnaires indicated that learner voice is “*when learners are given chances to speak about their problems and their right to participate in school decisions affecting them*” (L2, Q & L12, Q). Likewise, one learner viewed learner voice as “*the way learners make decisions without fear and criticism*” (L11, Q). I found this definition corresponded to that of Mitra and Gross. According to Mitra and Gross (2009), learner voice is defined as “the concept that describes different ways in which youth have opportunities to share in school decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers” (p. 523).

However, the data also revealed that learners from this school were deprived of chances to participate in decisions affecting them. The LRC were not allowed to attend any School Board meetings due to a lack of trust. This was confirmed by the principal when he reiterated that “*they are learners and we cannot trust them with the discussions made in that meeting*” (I). A study conducted on the voice of learners in democratic school governance also revealed a “lack of acceptance of learners as equal partners and fully-fledged members of the SGB” (Shushu et al., 2013, p. 19). Similarly, LRC members in my study were not accepted as equal partners of the School Board. They were only seen as “*mediators between the teachers and other learners in the school setting*” (TLO1, I). The LRC members were undermined with regards to democratic participation in school decision-making.

I thus agree with Shushu et al. (2013) who asserts that “if learner-governors are perceived not to have the same status as other governors, are excluded from decisions on issues that affect them, and are merely used in the process without providing them with an authentic voice, the legitimacy of Democratic School Governance (DSG) is threatened” (p. 19). The fact that LRC members were not part of School Board meetings, implied that their voice was still silenced due to a lack of connection with the School Board members (Smyth, 2006, p. 280). Their voice was still absent in matters affecting them and it needed to be developed. It was against this backdrop, that this study hoped through the Change Laboratory process, to effect change.

4.5 LRC leadership opportunities existing in the school

The second research question for my study focused on exploring leadership opportunities existing for the LRC within the school. The study therefore discovered that the LRC, being the only legitimate learner representative body in the school, were assigned many roles and responsibilities within the school by the teachers and their fellow learners. These included among others: monitoring, supervision and controlling others, assisting other learners in academic work, representing other learners in decision-making, disciplining other learners and leading extra-mural activities. I therefore present and discuss these roles as such.

4.5.1 To supervise learners with respect to the academic programme

The data revealed that LRC members were expected to perform different supervisory roles in the school. One example of such a role was the supervising of study periods as indicated by a participant when she said: *“The LRC are entitled to supervise study time when teachers are busy with their daily work, and the LRC allocate themselves classes they supervise”* (ST, I). In addition, the principal also said, *“We delegate the LRC to supervise study”* (I). One observation which I conducted (19.06.2017) confirmed that LRC members indeed supervised study classes. As they supervised, they checked who was present and who was not. I also noticed one class which was not supervised, because the responsible LRC member was absent. Learners in that class were making a lot of noise, compared to those that were supervised. This proved to me that the LRC helped to minimise noise during study time.



Figure 4.1: LRC supervising afternoon study time

As can be seen from the photographic evidence, the LRC not only supervise study by checking the attendance of their fellow learners, but they also assist learners with their homework. Confirming this was the liaison teacher when she mentioned that *“there are some LRC who volunteered to assist the Grade 8 learners in mathematics and accounting”*. He further added that *“these subjects are considered as big challenges to the learners, and the LRC are helping them a lot to understand them better”* (TLO1). Supervising of study time was part of enforcing school rules, a management role, because I found one statement in the school rules that read: *“It is compulsory for all the learners to attend study sessions and all lessons, and absenteeism must be reported to the class teacher”* (D1).

4.5.2 To ensure the adherence to and enforcement of school rules

Another key LRC management role which emerged from the data, was that the LRC members had to ensure the adherence to and implementation of the school rules. For example, they had to monitor late coming to school. This was indicated by the liaison teacher who said, *“The LRC helps with controlling at the gate to write the names of the latecomers”* (TLO2, I). This was also confirmed by the senior teacher, who pointed out that *“the LRC usually stand at the gate, and write the names of the latecomers everyday in the morning and immediately after break time”* (ST, I). Monitoring late coming was being done to enforce one of the school rules which says: *“All learners are expected to be in school at 07:45 for morning assembly”* (D1). During one observation which I conducted (14 June 2017), I also observed that some LRC members were walking into classes to see if all learners left their classes to attend the morning assembly.



Figure 4.2: Supervisory role - LRC monitoring at the gate

Furthermore, as stated in the school rules, "*every learner is expected to wear a full school uniform every day*" (D1, p. 2). LRC members were expected to ensure that this rule was being adhered to by all the learners. In support of this role, one learner said: "*we are responsible to ensure that learners wear their uniforms properly and their shirts are well tucked in*" (L10, Q). Adding to this, the principal also noticed that "*the LRC monitor other learners to check if there are learners who were not LRC members wearing a similar uniform as the LRC this is totally not allowed*" (I). On a similar note, the liaison teacher also mentioned that "*LRC writes the name of learners who misbehave as well as those who do not wear the school uniform properly, not tucking in their shirt and those with short skirts*" (TLO1, I). Actions were then taken to reprimand those who do not adhere to the dressing code, the teacher added.

Another role revealed by the data as part of enforcing school rules was that the LRC had played an important role in promoting hygiene in the school. This included classrooms and the school environment in general. The promotion of cleanliness was in accordance with the school rules, which says "*classrooms or school environment should be kept clean, tidy and neat at all times*" (D1, p. 2). This role was supported by the liaison teacher during the interview. He said that, "*It's a school norm for the learners with the responsibility of sweeping the class to remain to clean the classes under the auspices of the LRC and the class monitors*" (TLO2). However, he admitted that "*not all the LRC are doing that, some LRC usually leave this role to class monitors*" (ibid). In terms of power, this does not suggest power relations and hierarchy between the LRC and class monitors. LRC being the only legislated body in the school might not want to consider themselves as the overall seer of everything happening in the class while there are class monitors assigned specifically for that class. Thus, they left that role with the class monitors to avoid power conflict. Two other learners (L14 & L15) also had similar views that LRC members, together with class monitor, ensured that classes were neat.

In addition, LRC members also monitored learners' behavior- a role they shared with class monitors. On this, one learner mentioned, "*in the classes, we work together with the class monitors to make sure that no fighting in the classes and that all learners are quiet*" (L7, Q). In the same vein, three other learners indicated in their questionnaires that, since they were the role models to other learners, *they helped to maintain order and discipline, and ensured good cooperation among learners in the classrooms* (L9, 12, & 13, Q). LRC members were also charged with maintaining discipline in the school and this is what I present and discuss next.

4.5.3 To maintain discipline among other learners

Maintaining discipline amongst fellow learners in the school emerged as another responsibility entrusted to the LRC members. Answering the question of what the LRC members' roles were, one learner wrote, to "*protect the learners from being bullied*" (L5, Q). Another learner also answered by writing, "*to make sure learners adhere to the school rules*" (L12, Q). Another participant added that the LRC "*report learners who are misbehaving as well as those who are not adhering to the school rules*" (TLO1, I). She elaborated on this by saying "*the names are submitted to the disciplinary committee so that appropriate action can be taken*" (TLO1,I). This role was in agreement with the LRC function as per the Regulations made under the Education Act (MBESC, 2002) which reads "*to assist the principal and teachers to ensure adherence to the code of conduct of the school by all learners so as to create and maintain an orderly and disciplined school environment conducive to learning*" (D3).

The research data also revealed that LRC members were expected to motivate other learners in the school. I now turn to this role in the next sub-section.

4.5.4 To motivate other learners in the school

Some participants' responses reflected that LRC members had the responsibility to motivate other learners in the school to behave well and to be serious about their education. As highlighted by one learner, the LRC was responsible to "*motivate other learners to achieve a high level of discipline and academic excellence in the school*" (L11, Q). In addition, another learner said the "*LRC gave motivational speeches regarding the importance of education*" (L5, Q). Teachers also supported the role of the LRC in motivating other learners. The principal said "*Our LRC care much about others, you find them giving motivational speeches especially when the examination is about to start*" (I). Furthermore, the senior teacher added that the "*LRC motivate other learners to study hard. They do this during the morning assembly*" (I). The liaison teacher also noted the commitment of the LRC on the role to motivate fellow learners as mentioned in an earlier section.

4.5.5 To represent fellow learners at school meetings

Another set of views that emerged from the data with regards to LRC roles in the school, was that they played a representative role for their fellow learners in decision-making during parents' meetings. LRC participation in decision-making is legislated in the Education Act 16 of 2001, which stipulates that the LRC are to "*represent the interest of the learners in this*

board, by ensuring that the decisions taken do not negatively affect individual learners or the general school community” (D2). However, this point was only supported by three participants. The HoD and the senior teacher during their interviews, mentioned that the head boy and the head girl represented other learners in the School Board meetings as well as during parents’ meetings.

In answer to the question of whether the two heads (head boy and head girl) attend School Board meetings as stipulated in the Act (D2), the principal said the following: *“No we don’t include them. Sometimes we discuss confidential issues which are not fit for their ears like school finances, disciplining of teachers and solving teachers’ and learners’ controversy” (I).* This seemed to show me that the SMT did not trust the learners and this can well be a limitation to the development of learner voice. The principal further added that, *“we do not include the LRC all the times” (I).* One might conclude that learner involvement in decision-making was limited in the research school and as such, the Education Act was not adhered to. Another conclusion stemmed from the principal’s point of view where he clearly indicated that there were few platforms in the school which allowed the LRC to ‘collaborate’ with adults. Collaboration between adults and learners is the second level of student voice, as per Mitra and Gross’s (2009) pyramid.

The HoD however elaborated on the exclusion of the two LRC heads during the School Board meeting by saying: *“We are not ignoring what the policy is saying! We know our learners and we know what we discuss. We did not exclude them completely, we invite them when there are crucial issues affecting them being discussed. The LRC have nothing to contribute on the discussions we used to have with the School Board” (I).* This shows an example of how adults (teachers) use (misuse) their power in this particular school to suppress learner voice. The HoD cited examples of meetings where they included the head boy and head girl such as *“updating of the school rules and discussions concerning School Development Funds (SDF)” (I).* The point the HoD wanted to make was that the LRC have little understanding of particular discussions that take place in the School Board meetings, thus they only include the LRC when they discuss issues directly affecting the learners and to which the LRC could contribute.

In addition to the role of the LRC in representing others, it was noted that the two heads (head boy and head girl) and their deputies, used to attend parents’ meetings to represent other learners on whatever decisions were to be taken. This was supported by the senior teacher who

said: *“The two heads and their deputies attend parents’ meetings”* (I). Another LRC indicated in the questionnaire that *“we do not attend the School Board meetings. We only attend the parents’ meetings”* (L1). Evidence of this was the minutes for the parents’ meeting held on the 28 March 2017. There was a discussion about *“learners’ concerns”* by the head boy (D4). Unfortunately, there was no parents’ meeting held during my stay at the school, so I could not witness the attendance and the role of LRC members during a parents’ meeting.

4.5.6 To lead co-curricular activities in the school

Facilitating of co-curricular activities was another leadership opportunity for the LRC in the school. The HoD during the interview indicated that the LRC used to organise *“beauty pageants, cleaning campaigns and fun day”*. The LRC collected money from the learners when they paid the entrance fee to enter the venue. The money collected was used to pay for some school expenses. In response to whether these events organised by the LRC were part of the school culture, the HoD said the following: *“The beauty pageant is part of the school culture. It is done every year under the auspices of the LRC. However, fun day is a new initiative which the LRC organised themselves. It is the first time we are having it in this school”* (I). This was confirmed by two learners in their questionnaires, when they indicated that they were entrusted to *“organise co-curricular activities such as a fun day, a casual day, the beauty pageant and a cleaning campaign”* (L1 & L7). Apart from the role of organising fund-raising events, the LRC were at the forefront of sports training in the school. This was noted by the senior teacher who said: *“Whenever the school was invited for any sports competition, LRC members responsible for sport had to make sure that football players attended training regularly”* (ST, I). A learner also indicated in the questionnaire that *“we collect balls, nets, and other things we use during the training, and we train the learners with the sports captains because teachers do not really follow us to the sports field”* (L9, Q).

The majority of learners in their questionnaires *“strongly agreed”* when asked the question whether LRC members were given opportunities to facilitate extra-mural activities (non-academic activities) such as culture, cleaning campaigns and sport.

4.5.7 To serve as the voice of learners

Another role that emerged from the data indicated that the LRC were expected to be the voice of other learners in the school. In support of this view, the liaison teacher pointed out that *“the LRC are like the mediators, whatever problems that learners are having they are the ones to*

“speak up for them” (TLO2, I). They were also *“responsible to speak up and communicate problems experienced in the school by their fellow learners”* (HoD, I). Apart from that, they also served as a communication link between learners and parents. This was confirmed by the senior teacher who indicated during the interview that the two LRC heads and their deputies attend parents’ meetings to *“speak on behalf of other learners”*. Evidence of this view as mentioned earlier was the minutes for the parents’ meeting I analysed which indicated *“learners’ concerns”* by the head-boy (D6). This meeting took place on the 28th March 2017 (D4). One of the points the head boy spoke about was the request he made so that parents *“fulfill the needs of their children such as providing them with calculators, pens and other stationary especially during the examinations”* (D4). The data revealed that this school conducts three parents’ meetings, one meeting per school term (D4). Unfortunately, there was no parents’ meeting during my stay to confirm this.

My discussion on the above presentation of data, shows that the LRC members were entrusted with many roles in the school. The data also revealed that roles were shared in the school between the LRC and teachers, and this represents the practice of distributed leadership. According to Grant (2008), distributed leadership defined in terms of school leadership, refers to "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" (p. 85). Distributed leadership is an inclusive theory that calls for all individuals to contribute to the development of the school and bring changes in that particular school. In this case, LRC members were contributing to the betterment of the school by organising fund-raising events, offering sport’s training and representing their fellow learners in decisions that affected them.

As can be seen from the data presented above, some of the LRC roles were more managerial such as policing, supervising and controlling and reinforcing discipline. This managerial role fulfilled by the LRC seems to be common in schools. To confirm this, three studies conducted on learners’ participation in school leadership (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008; Uushona, 2012, Strydom, 2016) all found that overseeing the adherence of school rules, handling of discipline, monitoring and controlling latecomers, were among learners’ leadership roles in schools. Furthermore, the findings of those studies also revealed that the functions of the LRC stipulated in the policy (Regulations made under the Education Act) were not followed. Schools allocated different roles to the LRC according to their needs. The fact that the school allocated the LRC

different roles to execute, meant that not all the roles given to the LRC in this school corresponded with the LRC functions in the policy. There is a mismatch between the roles of the LRC in the policy in comparison to the roles which the LRC were expected to perform.

The following are the main LRC functions as stipulated in the Regulations made under the Education Act (2002, p. 19).

- a) promote the best interest and welfare of the school and its learners;
- b) liaise between learners and the school management;
- c) with approval of the principal, undertake projects and programmes aimed at
 - (i) improving and maintaining the school environment and facilities;
 - (ii) providing cultural, sport and social activities for learners; and
 - (iii) improving the health and welfare of other learners;
- d) assist the principal and the teachers to ensure adherence to the code of conduct of the school by all learners so as to create and maintain an orderly and disciplined school environment conducive to learning; and
- e) perform any other reasonable tasks assigned to the LRC by the principal.

As discussed in this section, the LRC performed the following roles in the school:

- to supervise and control learners;
- to ensure the adherence and reinforcement of school rules;
- to maintain discipline among other learners;
- to motivate other learners in the school;
- to represent other learners in decision-making;
- to lead co-curricular activities;
- to serve as the voice of other learners.

The mismatch is likely caused by teachers' lack of understanding of the functions of the LRC. Liaison teachers were expected to be the implementers of the LRC policy, but they were not trained based on the LRC functions found in the national policy. The liaison teacher said, "*We find it hard to explain those roles in the policy because we were not trained, yet those roles are not addressing our school needs where we want the LRC to help us in managing the school*" (TLO1, I). The picture emerging from this data showed that the school had its own undocumented roles which they allocated to their LRC every year. They believed that the LRC could execute those roles, even if there was no training offered to all the LRC members.

This section discussed the roles performed by the LRC in the case study school. It can be seen from the data discussed that participants' views on the LRC roles varied. The study revealed a number of factors enabling the LRC to execute the roles discussed above. The next section will present and discuss these factors.

4.6 Enabling factors influencing the development of LRC leadership

Participants had different views to my third question, which sought to investigate factors which enabled the development of leadership within the LRC in the school. Therefore, in this section I present and discuss those enabling factors, stemming from the data. I begin with training.

4.6.1 Training: the most significant enabling factor

Training was mentioned across the data as one of the enabling factors for the LRC to execute their roles. This was confirmed by four learners, when they indicated on their questionnaires that they attended the ‘Leadership Development Training’ at Okahandja, at the beginning of the year (L1, L3, L8, & L12, Q). A learner indicated that *“this was a short training, but it was helpful to me, it changed my leadership skill and I wish all LRC were trained”* (L1, Q). To the response of why the training was not offered to all the LRC, the liaison teacher said, *“The invitation letter we received for the training strictly invited only four LRC members and one liaison teacher”*. She further explained that *“I think they limit the number of LRC to attend the training to cut the cost they incur during the training because they pay for transport, accommodation, food, and other things”* (TLO1, I). Similarly, the HoD confirmed that the training was only attended by a few LRC members. She stressed that *“four LRC were sent to attend the training initiated by the region; it was a one-week training that aimed at educating the LRC on how to assist in school discipline and how to become a better leader”* (I). She also added that *“it is a culture in this region to conduct such training, ever since 2009 if I am not mistaken, that training is only offered to the top leaders in the council”* (I).

Concerning the topic areas the LRC training focused on, the liaison teacher responded that *“I am not aware of topics discussed during the training. We were not allowed to be in the same class with the learners, as learners were not going to be free to participate”* (TLO1, I). The liaison teacher only remembered a few activities practiced by the LRC outside the training hall. The liaison teacher said that *“I saw them having team building activities, and they were given lectures on how to become good leaders”* (TLO1, I). It seems like the liaison teacher was not fully aware of the content of the training offered to the LRC, which could have helped her to follow-up and build on the skills developed during the training. This was a big concern because the liaison teacher could not monitor the implementation of leadership skills acquired by the LRC during the training and give proper guidance related to the content of the training. This was due to the fact that she was not aware of LRC leadership skills needed to be developed further. I understood the reason given for the exclusion of liaison teachers from the training

venue, which was “*to allow the LRC to express themselves freely, without fear of their teachers*” (TLO1, I). Their reasons were valid, because the instructors might want the multi-voicedness of the LRC on aspects surrounding learner leadership, such as challenges and roles of the LRC as representatives of other learners.

With reference to the previous paragraph, the voice of the LRC might not have been heard if teachers were present in the same venue and this might well have affected LRC participation. However, for the training to be successful, the liaison teacher needed to be present as well, to acquire the skills which they could then further develop and instill in the minds of all the LRC members, especially those who did not attend the training. This can be overcome by either training the liaison teacher in the same venue with the LRC or else by training the liaison teacher in a separate room so that they can procure clear guidelines on how they can further support the LRC, especially those who did not attend the training. Even though the training offered was very short and excluded the majority of the LRC, it was fruitful. Confirming this fact was the liaison teacher who noted that “*the training was useful because I noticed a difference in performance between LRC members as those who were trained were more active than those who were not*” (TLO1, I). She thus suggested that the Ministry of Education “*employ a leadership coach to train the LRC*” (TLO1, I). Her idea was for every circuit to have a leadership coach. This was because training was considered as a standard way of upgrading LRC skills to lead other learners in the school. Other LRC who were not trained could not customise the skills needed to lead and as a result they “*felt inferior*” compared to those who were trained (TLO1, I). Furthermore, the principal regretted the limited number of members who received training. In his interview, he expressed the following:

It is only that the school does not have money, otherwise we could just invite someone who is good at coaching upcoming leaders like Mr. X to come and train all our learners. The training has been for so long just like that, that only a few learners used to be trained. You know our learners are not exposed to leadership and they are not really leaders. We need to have them all trained so that they become influential in all works of life, leadership skill is needed everywhere now. All learners more especially the LRC, they need to be exposed to leadership training.

In addition to that, another liaison teacher held a similar view to the principal. He suggested that there be a regional or circuit level training to avoid travelling costs (TLO2, I). By this the liaison teacher meant that instead of the LRC being transported to Okahandja for training which is costly, the money should rather be given to different regions so that they can organise circuit or regional training which can then be attended by all the LRC members. The main point I drew

from this data was that making the training venue more accessible to cut costs, meant that training could be given to all LRC members. Furthermore, the liaison teacher admitted that having training for all the LRC members on leadership skills would “*provide opportunities for all the learners to share leadership roles irrespective of their position in the school*” (TLO2, I). He concluded by saying “*leadership is a skill which everybody needs in working with people at school, at home, at church or in the community at large*” (TLO2, I). There was a sense in participants’ responses that training was not that effective because the majority of the LRC were left out. When I checked through the LRC files, there were no materials given to them at the training. In response to whether the LRC were given some handouts about leadership or the roles of the LRC, the liaison teacher said, “*Nothing was given, not even handouts or leadership books*” (TLO1, I). The fact that no training materials were made available to the liaison teacher or to the LRC, might have contributed to lack of proper monitoring and support, because there were no guidelines to follow in case the liaison teacher might want to guide the LRC on their functions.

Apart from the LRC training, the data revealed another leadership training initiated by the region. However, this training was not specifically for the LRC, but for the Grade 9 learners only. The principal indicated that “*this year we got an invitation to send all our Grade 9 learners for leadership training at the same venue where the LRC used to be trained*” (P, I). Participants revealed little information regarding the training attended by the Grade 9 learners. When asked the question – what was the purpose of the training attended by the Grade 9 learners – the HoD said: “*I am not really sure about that training because no teacher accompanied the learners, but I think it was all about leadership*” (HoD, I).

The principal further expressed that he also had little information on what exactly took place there, as well as the area the Grade 9 learners were trained on. No other reasons/data concerning the Grade 9 leadership training were provided. The reason why only the Grade 9 learners were invited to attend that training and the focus of the training, was not known by participants. Even though LRC training did not include all the LRC members, those who went were able to influence other LRC members in leading the learners. This is because training is needed to help people to become more effective in what they are expected to do. It also “enables people to learn knowledge and skills and to transfer these in to practice” (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 2). This infers that the training attended by the LRC had the potential to equip the LRC with the necessary skills significant to carrying out their roles. However, it seems that areas tackled

during the training excluded crucial leadership aspects which the LRC needed to be trained on, such as meeting procedures, leadership practice, peer coaching and conflict resolution (Uushona, 2012). I therefore support Joyce and Showers (2002) who assert that for the training to be effective, “it is significant to identify outcomes which the training is intended to achieve, and to select those training components such as leadership knowledge and theory, leadership practice and peer coaching” (p. 2). Teachers need to identify leadership components which their LRC need to be trained on, when they think of inviting someone to train their LRC.

4.6.2 Effective communication between the LRC, teachers and the SMT

The questionnaires, observation and interview data revealed that good communication empowered the LRC to carry out their functions effectively in the school. On this note one learner stressed that “*there is a good channel of communication between us and other learners and teachers, when we have problems, we are advised to first talk to our guide teachers, then they advise us where to go next*” (L2, Q). Correspondingly, another learner held the view that they are “*encouraged to report anything we are not happy with which shows a good relationship*” (L3, Q).

The LRC were encouraged to talk to their liaison teachers regarding any initiatives they were planning to host in the school. They were also encouraged to have meetings with their fellow learners, and this helped them to create good relationships with both the teachers and learners. In support of this, a learner stated that, “*I like it when we are given the message to tell other learners. You feel encouraged when you are telling the learners what the teacher says – this gave you a feeling of being an LRC*” (L15, Q). Another LRC said that they feel respected when all learners are “*listening to us like during the morning assembly, we feel proud*” (L14, Q).

Moreover, the liaison teacher said: “*We allow the LRC to communicate with other learners whenever they want to do so especially during the morning assembly. There is good communication*” (TLO2, I). In addition, he said: “*We meet with the two heads once per month just to get a kind of feedback and report concerning their roles*” (TLO2, I). A good channel of communication between the LRC, fellow learners and teachers as an enabling factor, was well supported by the majority of the learners in their questionnaires and only one learner “*strongly disagreed*” with the statement which reads: “*There is good communication between the LRC, learners, and teachers*”. Good communication was also evident at the LRC meeting I attended. My observations identified good co-operation between the liaison teachers and the LRC. The

liaisons “*communicated well with the LRC, they gave them chances to speak and they listened to them as they spoke*” (O/14.06.2017). The meeting took place on the 14th June 2017 and discussions were based on the activities to take place during the commemoration of African Child Day (16 June).

The data revealed that effective communication between the LRC and the school members gave the LRC the courage and confidence to lead. It seems that the school trusted the LRC in conveying messages to the learners and this link strengthened the LRC’s relationship with various role players in the school. The data revealed that the school gave a mandate to the LRC to “*convey messages they want to share with fellow learners on different platforms, such as at morning assembly, provided that, they first shared their ideas they want to convey with us*” (TLO2, I). This practice demonstrated that the LRC raised their voice in communicating important information to the learners on various platforms. This aligns with Gunter (2005), writing on learner voice, who contends that communication fosters the development of learner voice, and it is only when learners are given a voice they can share in school leadership by communicating with their peers. It is through effective communication that the LRC develops a better understanding of their roles and cooperates in carrying them out. It is for that reason that the LRC as leaders in the school need to understand themselves and the value they hold, to enable them to nurture quality communication (Carr, 2005, p. 10), especially as one of their functions is “to liaise between learners and the school management” (Regulations made under the Education Act, 16 of 2001, p. 19).

4.6.3 Strong motivation given to the LRC

Motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) was another aspect the participants thought was a useful practice in helping the LRC to perform their roles. For example, the senior teacher and a liaison teacher revealed that motivation helped the LRC to carry out their roles. The liaison teacher expressed that “*self-motivation is the key behind the LRC commitment. Our learners are not given awards, but this does not discourage them to try their level best in leading others*” (TLO1, I). On a similar note, learners 1, 2 and 8 also indicated in their questionnaires that they were motivated by their teachers to work hard as representatives of other learners in the school. Some teachers gave them the support they needed such as “*disciplining learners*” when they reported such cases to the teachers (L1, Q).

Furthermore, on motivation, the LRC uniform was another means of motivation believed to contribute to LRC commitment in performing their roles. Learner 1, 7, 9 and 10 echoed similar views when they said they are “*motivated by the different uniform they put on*”. During my visits to the school, I observed that the LRC were distinguished from their fellow learners by the different uniform they were wearing. They wore a sky-blue shirt on which their name was written and that of the school with a black skirt for girls and trousers for boys. In contrast, learners in the school wore a yellow shirt with black skirts and trousers. The photo below depicts the LRC uniforms and that of other learners.



Figure 4.2: LRC uniform is distinguished from that of other learners

Finally, on motivation, positive attitudes towards the LRC contributed to their ability to lead others. This included good relationships and respect given to the LRC. Learner 12 indicated in the questionnaire that “*both teachers and learners show respect to me, and I am proud of this because it gives me confidence*” (Q). Two other learners held similar views. They both indicated that they got “*respect from some teachers as well as from other learners and this gives us courage to lead*” (L7 & L4, Q). Despite noting that good behaviour enabled the LRC to carry out their roles, a learner mentioned that “*older learners in the school did not respect us, they shouted and give negative comments and at some point, teachers did not act on that*” (L15, Q).

As the discussion revealed, the LRC are driven by intrinsic motivation in carrying out their roles. It stemmed from the data that there was no awarding of certificates to the LRC in

recognition of their efforts for the whole year. The LRC themselves showed the desire to lead others without expecting an external reward. This reflects intrinsic motivation which is geared toward internal rewards. Motivation helps to enhance good performance and it prompts the person to act in a certain way. Therefore, I agree with Ron (1992), who asserts that “school leaders can influence motivation by shaping the school levels and shape the attitudes of teachers, learners and parents” (p. 2).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the views of participants on their understanding of learner leadership and learner voice. The chapter further examined leadership opportunities existing in the school for the LRC to lead, and then discussed factors that enabled the development of leadership and learner voice within the LRC. Even though the last section of this chapter discussed the factors which were significant in the development of leadership and voice within the LRC, the data also revealed factors that constrained the development of learner leadership and at the same time constrained the LRC, in the execution of their roles in the school. These are discussed in the next chapter using principles within CHAT for the analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF CONTRADICTIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at responding to my last two research questions which sought to examine factors hindering the development of leadership and voice within the LRC, as well as to develop strategies to enhance the development of learner leadership and voice within the LRC. This chapter discusses the factors that emerged from the data, particularly through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), using the principles of contradictions and double stimulation. I begin by discussing and presenting factors that hindered leadership and voice development within the LRC, followed by the discussion on the contradictions surfaced, and last, I discuss finding from the Change Laboratory workshops.

5.2 Threats to leadership development within the LRC in the school

This section discusses the findings regarding what participants believed constrained the LRC from carrying out their roles. I begin with inadequate training as one of the constraining factors.

5.2.1 Inadequate training: Lack of capacity building

Training was considered as a drive to LRC empowerment and, at the same time, a threat to the LRC's ability to lead others. The majority of learners indicated in their questionnaires that *"there was no training for all LRC members"* (L1, L2, L3, L5, L8, L9, L11, L11, L14, & L15). The training was considered unsatisfactory because out of 15 LRC members, *"only the four top leaders in the council received training"* (L1, L2, L8, Q). The liaison teacher echoed that a *"lack of training and exposure are hindering the LRC to excel in their roles"* (TLO1, I). She further expressed that *"our learners came from different cultural backgrounds with little leadership knowledge which needs to be boosted, their personalities also need to be groomed with leadership skills"* (TLO1, I). In support of this idea, the HoD said, *"Yes, our LRC were trained, but this was just a short training to familiarise themselves with leadership skills. I am not really convinced about the outcome of the training, because I am not seeing a big difference in how they carry out their roles"* (I). The principal also confirmed in the interview the

unsatisfactory training offered to the LRC. He expressed his concern about the “*lack of funding*” which made it difficult for the school to pay for a leadership mentor to offer training to the entire LRC (I). Again, the principal added that “*if the school was having enough money, we could do a lot to ensure that our LRC are fully developed as leaders*”. This included “*sending all of them for training, visiting other schools to see the roles which other LRC are performing, visiting prominent leaders in nearby communities and other things just to expose them*” (P, I).

It would seem that the LRC training has been like this for a number of years – only focusing on training the four top leaders and no other training initiated to train the other LRC members. The liaison teacher also confirmed that since he came to the school in 2013, training has been the same: “*Only top leaders used to be trained*” (I). This, interestingly, was not peculiar to the case study school, but something which happens in “*all the regions*” (ST, I). One would expect training for all members of the LRC, but this was not the case. A number of reasons were given for why the school staff could not do the training. In the words of the principal, “*Time constraints and the challenges of the school not having a leadership coach made everything impossible*” (I). During my interview with the principal, I got the clear impression that he did not see himself or his teachers as having the potential to guide the LRC with leadership skills they needed, to execute their roles effectively.

Thus, data from across the data sets indicated that inadequate training was the biggest challenge toward learner leadership development in the case study school. According to Hamatwi (2015), training develops people to improve their understanding, skills, confidence and wisdom, to stimulate people to commit themselves towards achieving goals. One key aspect derived from this quote is that training boosts peoples’ confidence. This is quite true because even one of the liaison teachers (TLO1, I) noted a “*lack of confidence*” among LRC members who did not attend the training. Similarly, the school principal was of the view that “*our learners are not really leaders*” (P, I) and that their confidence needed to be stimulated. Based on the response of the principal and liaison teachers, I sensed a lack of agency because teachers held beliefs that only regional training could shape learners and stimulate their potential to lead. Teachers relied on the regional training and undermined themselves in the role of ‘leader of leaders’; they did not feel confident enough to even offer one day of training to the LRC. Therefore, one can conclude that the absence of teachers’ agency in developing LRC leadership, as well as the

absence of training for all LRC members, affected the LRC's confidence to lead others and this hindered their development of leadership skills.

5.2.2 Misinterpretation of national policy

The second threat to the development of leadership in learners was associated with the (mis)interpretation of national policy (Education Act, 16 of 2001). With this, some participants (P, TLO2 & HoD) expressed how the majority of learners were excluded from playing a leading role in the school because of 'policy' (D2 & D3). From the viewpoint of the HoD, "*The policy only allows learners to become members of one committee and that is the LRC committee. Unless the policy changes, otherwise there is no way learners who are not LRC members can be included in school leadership*" (I). This was confirmed as well by the liaison teachers and in fact, it is what the teacher participants believed. The picture that emerged was that the participants had a narrow understanding of what the policies (Education Act & Regulations made under the Education Act, 2002) advocate with regards to the establishment of committees in which learners can become members.

It is clearly stated in the policy (Regulations made under the Education Act) that "*the LRC may establish committees for specific functions or projects of the LRC, which may include learners who are not members of the LRC as members, and must designate a member of the LRC as chairperson of such committee*" (D3). The point here is that this policy does not limit the establishment of committees in which the majority of learners can become members. That statement has given authority for the establishment of learner committees in the school, as long as one of the members of the LRC becomes the chairperson of such a committee. The establishment of such sub-committees will, ultimately, allow more learners to become engaged in discussing matters affecting them and their learning.

Thus, it can be seen that the adult participants in my study either had not read the policy Regulations made under the Education Act (2002), or they had misinterpreted it. As a consequence of this misinterpretation, only the LRC were involved in leadership activities. Angus (2006) supports the inclusivity of learners irrespective of their ages or their abilities in school leadership. Thus, not only was there a need, at the case study school, for leadership to be developed in all LRC members, it was also important that non-LRC learners could participate in leadership activities in order to become agents of change in the school. Apart from the Education Act and the Regulations made under the Education Act, there were no other

documents specifically on learner leadership to guide teachers on how they could develop leadership among the learners. My argument on this challenge is, that teachers' agency to develop leadership within the learners might be enhanced if there was a policy that could facilitate the development of learner leadership in schools.

5.2.3 Cultural perception: learners cannot be trusted to lead

Another factor that hindered the development of leadership within the LRC was the cultural perception that learners cannot be trusted to lead. For example, the liaison teacher said, *"Learners are not taking their leadership roles seriously, due to community perceptions"* (TLO1, I). Traditionally, learners have been overlooked as valuable resources in the restructuring of the school (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 82). Learners were *"undermined and they are treated like small children who do not have a say in the school governance"* (TLO1, I). LRC members were not allowed to attend the School Board meeting due to *"lack of trust and cultural beliefs"* (P, I). Learners were excluded from School Board meetings because, culturally, this practice denotes lack of respect, as it is a disrespectful practice for young people to take decisions with the parents. One of the reasons why the LRC representatives were excluded from School Board meetings was a lack of trust. Teachers felt that if learners attended and listened to confidential discussions made in that meeting, they would tell their fellow learners about the confidential matters discussed. This was confirmed by the principal as he indicated that *"learners are just learners. We did not trust them with confidential issues we discussed with the School Board members"* (I).

Trust is an essential ingredient in an effective partnership which needs to be established between the LRC and the School Board. In agreement with this factor, Shekupakela-Nelulu's study exposes that cultural beliefs restrict learners to take decisions, because they are perceived to be young and immature. According to Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), *"schools are showing little faith in learners regarding sharing of power and school leaders believed that issues discussed in schools are intellectually rooted, which requires teachers' competencies and practices"* (p. 13). This was also the view of the HoD who pointed out that *"I do not see the need of the LRC in that meeting (SB). Things we discussed are beyond their capacity"*. She also mentioned that *"we know our learners and we cannot trust them with what we discuss"* (I). The perception of the HoD was that LRC members have little knowledge on issues discussed during School Board meetings and also, they could not be trusted with confidential matters discussed during those meetings. This was given as a reason why the LRC were

excluded from discussing crucial issues with the School Board. Therefore, I argue with Shushu et al. (2013) who asserts that “learners need to be educated in responsible membership and accountability” (p. 28). By doing so, the LRC will be developed to become responsible members of the School Board, able to make proposals and to criticise discussions.

5.2.4 Learners negative attitude towards the LRC

Another big challenge that constrained the LRC from executing their roles, was the negative attitude of learners in the school. The senior teacher in the interview indicated that the LRC faced numerous challenges such as “*lack of respect and negative attitudes from some learners*”. Learners in the school “*undermined the LRC and they are ignorant to follow what they are instructed to do by the LRC*” (P, I). The HoD also emphasised that many cases reported to the disciplinary committee involved negative attitudes shown by the older learners in the school, such as “*disrespect of the LRC, insults and criticism imposed on the LRC*” (I). When probed on what caused learners to show disrespect and display a negative attitude to the LRC, the explanation given showed that negative attitudes and lack of respect were a result of the perceived illegitimacy of the voting process. By this the liaison teacher admitted that “*some of the LRC were not the ones nominated by their classmates. Teachers made final decisions on who should campaign based on their attitude and academic performance*” (I). To add to this, in the questionnaire, all learners “*agreed*” to the question when asked whether “*the LRC are chosen on the basis of their good academic performance*”.

It is evident from the data that the LRC members were chosen by the teachers themselves, based on criteria such as positive attitudes as well as good academic performance. This showed that teachers only concentrated on pro-social learners (Whitehead, 2009) to serve on the council and excluded the anti-social learners who might well have had good leadership qualities. Accordingly, Whitehead (2009) states that “adolescent leaders develop from pro-social and anti-social construct. ... It is therefore useful to understand a particular leadership approach known as authentic leadership” (p. 866). Whitehead (2009) distinguished between pro- and anti-social leaders. Pro-social leaders are “inclusive and build affiliation”, while anti-social leaders are “exclusive and they rely on power” (p. 847). Whitehead (2009) further argues that adolescent leaders develop from pro-social and anti-social constructs; educators must recognise the unique power of both leadership funnels (p. 847). Bearing the explanation of anti- and pro-social leaders in mind, teachers in Omukumo Senior Secondary were not considering the unique qualities and abilities of anti-social learners in leading others; their focus was more on

pro-social learners. However, like Whitehead, we know that “leadership is situational implying the possibility that anyone could potentially play a leadership role” (2009, p. 848). Therefore, teachers should allow learners to exercise democratic participation by permitting learners who are willing to contest to be elected onto the LRC to do so, without setting up pre-existing criteria. The fact that learners do not have a final say in who they want to become LRC members, is problematic and undemocratic. That is why the older learners in the school shouted at the LRC members, saying “*we did not vote for you*” (L12, Q).

Certain qualities were particularly valued by the teachers. For example, the HoD expressed that “*we do not just allow any learner to become an LRC member. We choose learners with good personalities such as a good attitude, that are well-mannered and have a good academic performance*” (I). Although this was not a fair practice, the HoD gave an insightful answer on why good academic performance was a requirement for a learner to become a member of the LRC. She (HoD, I) contested that:

Sometimes the LRC used to be given many roles such as supervising study classes and invigilating tests, and this learner might not get enough time to study because they are doing another role. If we are now to consider learners who are already weak academically, how will they cope with the pressure? It is going to be too much for them.

Voting for the LRC by considering the learners with outstanding qualities such as good academic performance and good behaviour, relates closely to the trait theory of leadership. As discussed in the second chapter, trait theory is grounded in the principle of selecting a leader by looking at characteristics such as moral standards and personal qualities that can be observed within the person (King, 1990). Personality, physical, and mental characteristics are valued for a person to be considered as a leader (Horner, 1997, p. 270). It is then apparent from the presentation above that teachers in the case study school still believe and practice the more traditional leadership approach of trait theory, in selecting LRC members.

5.2.5 The personality of the LRC members as a barrier

Another set of views emerged which indicated that the personalities of LRC members present another factor that constrains the development of learner leadership in the school. The liaison teacher said, “*The personalities of learners we have in the council is worrisome. They are shy, they lack confidence and they are not active*” (TLO1, I). She further expressed that, “*sometimes I get reports from the two heads that there are LRC members who do not co-operate well with*

others” (TLO1, I). Another liaison teacher held similar views. He admitted that there was a division in the council as a result of the training. *“Those who went for training see themselves as superior and become dominant, even in the meetings. Teachers are also not fair; some teachers only delegate roles to the top leaders in the council and leave out others, while some teachers keep all roles to themselves, even those supposed to be delegated to the LRC”* (TLO2, I). The liaison teacher felt that *“teachers show more trust in delegating tasks to those LRC who went for training, as they believe they have a better chance of doing better work”* (TLO2, I). The HoD also mentioned in the interview that *“despite the fact that the majority of LRC who are in the committee perform well academically, some have low-self-esteem and lack confidence”* and this did not give them courage to handle pressure from their fellow learners. Apart from LRC members personalities, one learner in the questionnaire indicated that *“some LRC used to gossip about others”* whereas another learner noted that *“only the top heads are entrusted with roles in the school, some of us are not considered”* (Q). One learner gave an insightful answer that *“some teachers play favourites; they only delegate some LRC to perform duties in the school and ignore others”*.

The picture that emerged was that the LRC members behave unethically toward each other and they are also not valued equally by teachers. There was little trust on the teachers’ side in delegating tasks to the LRC members who were not trained. Their belief was that those members had *“limited leadership skills”* to handle the tasks delegated to them (ST, I). The LRC was established to give learners opportunities to influence changes in the attitudes and to become role models, to their fellow learners. Some participants showed dissatisfaction with learners’ attitudes within the LRC. Participants noted a *“lack of co-operation, unethical attitudes, lack of commitment with some LRC members”* and a *“lack of confidence”* (TLO1, L3, L8, L7, & HoD). These unethical attitudes amongst the LRC might be the result of the school not having a national code of conduct for the LRC. The LRC code of conduct could be a helpful guide for the LRC to learn acceptable behaviour for leaders, in relation to fellow leaders, as well as to other learners.

The principal mentioned that learners in the council were *“not really leaders”* (I), and a lot needs to be done to put the LRC at the level of being true and inspirational leaders of other learners. The notion of having a LRC code of conduct was suggested by the liaison teacher in the interview, as she retaliated that *“sometimes we get tired of reminding the LRC on how they need to conduct themselves, as well as how to overcome the challenges they face”*. The liaison

teacher further asked: “*What if the Ministry of Education launched a LRC code of conduct and sent them out to schools with LRC*”? She believed that if schools could have a LRC code of conduct in place, teachers would not have to keep on reminding the LRC on how they should conduct themselves.

5.2.6 Lack of teacher support due to time constraints

Teachers were pointed out as another barrier to LRC leadership development, due to their lack of support for the LRC. By this, the principal noted that “*teachers have a busy schedule which does not allow them to attend to the LRC and offer them the kind of support they might need. So, the issue here is time*”. Two learners also indicated that teachers do not have time, in most cases when learners needed their support, they were told by the teachers that “*we are busy*” (L6 & L15, Q). LRC members were not only lacking support with regards to their roles, moral support was also not given to them. From the viewpoint of the liaison teacher: “*Teachers are not giving the LRC moral support. Sometimes the LRC initiates an event in the school, but you will find only two or three teachers attend that event*”. The role of LRC members in organising activities in the school, was in agreement with their functions stated in the Regulations made under the Education Act, which reads “*to provide cultural, sport and social activities for learners*” (p. 19).

Lack of time was considered just as big a challenge for the teachers to support the LRC, as well as helping them to understand their roles in the school. In some cases, there was time available, but teachers, especially the liaison teachers, might be reluctant and ignore the responsibility of supporting the learners. It also came out in the data, that teachers were willing to support the LRC, but sometimes school programmes interfered with their schedule. This was confirmed by the liaison teacher who mentioned that “*the school has many activities in which teachers are expected to participate. There are committees I head, I am the head of examination for both Grade 10 and 12, I teach NAMCOL (Namibia College of Open Learning) at a nearby center, all these activities leave me with little time to offer support to the LRC*” (TLO1, I). All this data reveals that there were no available chances for teachers to support, to guide and to supervise the LRC.

This section presents different views on what participants believed constrained the development of leadership and voice within the LRC. Based on the data, some of the challenges were caused by the teachers, the structure of the school, fellow learners, and by the system.

Since this study is framed by CHAT, the next section discusses the contradictions that emerged from the challenges discussed above.

5.3 The emergent contradictions

The study surfaced five contradictions of which one was a primary contradiction, while the other four were secondary contradictions. As explained in Chapter Two, primary contradictions occur within the elements of activity systems such as the tools or the community. Secondary contradictions on the other hand, occur between the constituents of the central activity, between tools and division of labour (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 125).

The negative attitudes which existed among LRC members pointed to a primary contradiction. This was because it was located within the *subject* (LRC members) as a single element of the activity system for this study. This contradiction was caused by the tension observed among the LRC as a consequence of a lack of co-operation and gossiping about each other. Without teamwork and cooperation, it would be difficult for the *object* (leadership and voice development within the LRC) of the activity system to be achieved.

The lack of teacher support in helping the LRC to lead, emerged as a secondary contradiction between the *community* (teachers & SMT) and the *object* (leadership and voice development). The data revealed that the LRC had agency to lead, but little was done to support them. Teachers seemed to have no time to listen to the needs of the LRC (one learner mentioned that teachers were busy when they were approached by the LRC members for assistance). This discouraged the learners on the LRC from fulfilling their roles as leaders of other learners

Another secondary contradiction surfaced between the *community* (teachers) and the *rules* (national policies). It emerged that there was a misinterpretation of the policies guiding the establishment and functioning of LRC bodies in schools (Education Act of 2001 & Regulations made under the Education Act of 2002). Teachers believed that the Education Act only authorised the establishment of one learner representative body in schools in which learners could be involved in leadership, and that was the LRC. In fact, the Regulations made under the Education Act outlines that the LRC can establish various committees in the school in which they can involve other learners to execute their functions. As a result of this misinterpretation,

the majority of learners were left out from being developed as leaders of committees which could be established in the school.

Furthermore, the cultural perception which says children cannot lead, emerged as another secondary contradiction. Culture, being part of the rules in the activity system of this study, contributes to the tension between the *rules* (cultural beliefs and practice i.e. young people cannot lead) and the *object* (learner leadership development). The cultural conception of children as individuals who cannot lead and make decisions in collaboration with their elders, reflected a lack of trust between LRC members and adults (School Board and teachers). With reference to Mitra and Gross's (2009) student voice pyramid, collaboration with adults sits at the second level of student voice. According to Mitra and Gross (2009), this level seeks to strengthen the engagement of learners with parents to identify problem areas in school and implement solutions. This tension limited learner (LRC) collaboration with parents, something which could have strengthened communication between learners and parents on academic and social matters in the school.

The challenge of excluding the LRC (the head boy and head girl) from attending the School Board meeting due to lack of trust constituted two secondary contradictions. The first contradiction surfaced between the *rules* (national policy) and the *community* (SMT). The data revealed that despite the policy providing for the head boy and head girl to attend the School Board meetings (Education Act, 16 of 2001), the SMT did not always implement that provision. These SMT members believed that learners were too young and sometimes the School Board discussed sensitive and confidential matters which only needed adult attention. The second contradiction in this regard was between the *division of labour* (the LRC role not implemented) and the *object* (learner voice development). One of the LRC roles as per the Education Act (2001) is to represent fellow learners during the School Board meetings. As a result of lack of trust as discussed above, this role was not acknowledged and implemented. With reference to Mitra and Gross's (2009) third level of student voice pyramid, chances are created for learners to participate in school decision-making that shape their lives and those of their peers by re-engaging learners in the school. The voice of the learners remained silent at this level at the case study school because the school had very few platforms to engage learners in decisions taken. School Board meetings were supposed to be a platform where the role of the LRC to represent their fellow learners in taking decisions could be realised, but this did not turn out to be the case.

Basically, culture and tradition played a major role as the causal mechanism for some challenges and contradictions, which I discussed above. Traditionally, children are believed to be incapable of leading. In addition, children in many African cultures are not allowed to perform a leading role, neither in the community nor at school. This could therefore be one of the reasons why teachers and SMT members (as adults) in the case study school appeared to have little faith in the LRC and, as a result, they tended to exclude them from certain aspects of school leadership like School Board meetings.

My last research question sought to examine the views of the participants on what could be done to overcome the challenges that surfaced, hindering the LRC from executing their roles. In the next section, I discuss the data gathered from the Change Laboratory workshops which offer a comprehensive account in response to my final question.

5.4 The findings from three Change Laboratory workshops

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, three workshops were conducted to provide answers to my last research question, which sought to examine strategies to develop learner voice and leadership development in the case study school. The workshops were necessary for participants to discuss and corroboratively work together to address the factors constraining the development of learner voice in the school. By so doing, participants were basically acting to resolve the surfaced contradictions. I used video recordings, photographs and field notes to capture the data during all three workshops. Below I discuss each Change Laboratory workshop session separately.

5.4.1 Change Laboratory workshop (CLW) 1

This was the first workshop conducted on the 26th June 2017. Due to limited classrooms in the school, I used the school library for my workshops. All the LRC, one liaison teacher and the senior teacher attended this workshop. The content of the first CLW was the introduction of the participants to familiarise ourselves with one another. Secondly, the purpose of the other CLWs to be conducted was discussed. We also allocated responsibilities to participants during the workshops; we discussed issues related to ethical considerations and lastly a brief on researcher expectations from the participants. The focus of the CLW was mostly on resolving experienced factors hindering the development of leadership, which gave rise to the contradictions discussed in the previous section. Those factors included: insufficient LRC

training, lack of LRC motivation, and poor communication as a result of the lack of a LRC year plan.

5.4.2 Change Laboratory workshop (CLW) 2

The second CLW was conducted on the 27th June 2017 in the same venue, the school library. At this workshop all the LRC were in attendance, as well as the senior teacher and one liaison teacher. The content of this workshop was to mirror the data and to suggest solutions to challenges hindering leadership development within the LRC.

The findings on mirror data presentation showed that all the participants agreed with the factors hindering leadership within the LRC. Training was mentioned by many participants as a constraining factor and the majority of the participants criticised the manner in which the training was offered. One learner claimed that *“it is true some of us never attend the training”*, while another learner mentioned that *“if we cannot all be trained, why can we not be given LRC job descriptions in copies to see what we are expected to do”*. Another learner said: *“That is discrimination, why only some and not all of us are trained”*. All the LRC were not happy about the training, which only considered the top four LRC to have their leadership skills shaped. However, the liaison teacher was not in full support of training as a challenge to the LRC. In his own words, he pointed out that, *“I am not in agreement with that contradiction because to me training has nothing to do with carrying out your role as an LRC. Do you want to tell me that if you were all trained you can become effective leaders? Those are just excuses”* (TLO2). Furthermore, the majority of the LRC confirmed that poor communication between the LRC and the SMT, as well as limited means to motivate the LRC, were among the constraining factors. The participants also confirmed that there was *“no LRC office”* to allow them to discuss crucial matters in a confidential place. The liaison teacher agreed with a *“lack of a LRC calendar of activities/year plan”* as a barrier which needed to be solved. Participants also agreed that the *“LRC were excluded from the SB meetings”*.

The second activity that took place during this CL workshop was modelling and vision. This was used as a *“second stimulus for elaborating conceptual models of the activity under scrutiny in order to analyse its inner contradictions”* (Sannino, 2011, p. 590).

With regards to lack of training, all the LRC said, *“We want training for all LRC”*. The head boy suggested that *“the school should just invite Mr. X to come and train us”*. The liaison

teacher reminded the learners that *“the school does not have enough money to pay for Mr. X”*. The senior teacher further pointed out that *“the training you attended in Okahandja was paid by the Ministry of Education, not by us”* (ST). The head boy was very active in this discussion and he gave a great idea which surprised some participants. He suggested that *“the school should fund-raise and look for rich people from this community to give us money to pay Mr. X to train us”*. The head girl mentioned that *“we really need training, even for one day only even by our teacher”*. To me this was an indication that the LRC had an agency/desire to bring about change in the school, but they lacked capacity which could be built through training. Finally, on this contradiction, the senior teacher gave an idea for the liaison teacher to *“offer short training to the LRC once at the beginning of every term”*. This was the final suggestion on this constraint which all the participants agreed to. The discussion moved to the next challenge associated with poor communication.

The participants struggled to suggest a solution to overcome poor communication between the LRC and SMT. After a long pause, the liaison teacher said this could be overcome if they drafted a *“LRC calendar of activities/year plan”*. He further elaborated that *“we need to have a plan of all activities we want to do and submit it to the SMT”*. This suggestion was supported by all the participants. One LRC member added that another way to have good communication in the school is to have *“a notice board so that the teacher pastes the message they always ask us to tell our fellow learners”*. The deputy head boy added that *“this will be nice because every learner will read for themselves”*. I asked the participants if they had ever had a LRC year plan/calendar of activity. The senior teacher said, *“No, we never had one. I believe if there was a calendar of activity specifically for the LRC those years, it was supposed to be communicated to all of us and combined with the school calendar of activity”*. The liaison teacher also confirmed that they never had a LRC calendar of activity. He then added that, *“even if it is a new idea, I have a plan on how it will look like. We can try it and see”*. The LRC were not contributing to the discussion, so I asked them if they were in support with the idea of drafting a LRC calendar of activity. They all supported that idea. One LRC claimed that, *“I think the idea is worth trying”*.

The third discussion sought to find a solution to overcoming lack of motivation amongst the LRC. Participants were quick to reach consensus on this challenge. The head girl was the first one to mention that *“we want to be given awards when we are ending with our term”*. All participants agreed to this suggestion as the majority alluded that, *“yes, it’s true, certificates*

will do". The senior teacher added that *"giving awards will even encourage all LRC to work hard because those who will not be serious will not be given awards"*. The liaison teacher also claimed that *"since I came to this school in 2013, I did not find LRC being awarded, but we will initiate it this year, we need to change our system"*.

The last constraining factor revealed that the LRC members never attended any School Board meetings. The head boy confidently said, *"Since we were elected we have never attended the meeting with the SB"*. *"We only attend the parents' meetings, but only the four of us"* (head boy, head girl, deputy head girl and boy) said the head girl. One LRC questioned: *"Why are we not considered if there is a policy saying the head boy and the head girl should attend the SB meeting"*. There was no proper answer to this question. The senior teacher gave an excuse when she said, *"Unfortunately we are not members of the School Board to give you the correct answer. Your point is correct anyway"*. The liaison teacher claimed that *"we do not really know what reasons the principal had to exclude the top leaders of the council"*, the head boy and the head girl. Another LRC questioned: *"Is it because we are young?"*.

In response to the question, I asked the teachers if they remembered any SB meetings attended by the LRC. The liaison teacher said the following: *"I cannot remember. It is hard for me to know that because I have never been an LRC facilitator"*. The liaison teacher also stated that *"since I came to this school I never heard about the LRC being involved in the SB meeting. I really do not know what the reasons for their exclusion were"*. The senior teacher suggested that the liaison teacher find the time and discuss this issue (excluding the head boy and girl) in the SB meetings as there might be reason, so that the next year there could be changes. *"If something is stated in the policy it should be followed"* said one LRC member. In support of this idea of the senior teacher, another member agreed that *"this issue should be discussed with the principal"*. All participants agreed with the suggestion given to the liaison teacher to find out from the principal *"what are the reasons for excluding the LRC from SB meetings"*.



Figure 5.1: Mirror data and discussion of constraining factors to LRC leadership

5.4.3 Change Laboratory workshop (CLW) 3

This was the last workshop which took place on the 29th June 2017. The focal purpose of this workshop was to implement two solutions which were priorities for the LRC. These were the training on their documented roles and the drafting of the LRC calendar of activities. The first activity which was conducted was the training. This was done with the help of the liaison teacher. The liaison teacher started with the training by encouraging learners to *“listen attentively, and make use of the training by asking questions which are useful to bring changes in their leadership”*. LRC members were given copies of their expected roles as indicated in the policy (D3). The liaison teacher explained the roles such as: *“promote the best interest and welfare of the school and its learners; liaise between learners and the school management; improving and maintaining the school environment and facilities; providing cultural, sport and social activities for learners; and improving the health and welfare of learners”* (CLW#3, field note, 29.06.2017).

The last action that took place in this workshop was the drafting of the LRC calendar of activities. I facilitated the process with the help of the liaison teacher. The liaison teacher gave his idea on how the calendar should be drafted. He said: *“Every LRC member needs to propose*

an activity they want to organise/practice/present/initiate and suggest the date". My role was to help the LRC to think of leadership roles they could initiate, focusing on their portfolios and for them to prioritise activities which were worth doing within the remaining four months before the start of the Grade 10 and 12 final examinations. LRC members came up with many activities such as: *cleaning campaigns, class tournaments, debating, gender talks, academic motivational talks, launching of a tuck-shop, a culture day, LRC meeting, one-on-one with the principal, one-on-one with the liaison teachers* (CLW#3, field note, 29.06.2017), just to mention a few. Both the liaison and senior teachers were happy with the LRC initiatives. The senior teacher suggested that *"those planned activities should be typed and each LRC will have his/her own calendar"*. The layout of the calendar of activity included the date, activity planned and responsible person (CLW#3, field note, 29.06.2017). As per the suggestion of the senior teacher, I typed the drafted LRC calendar of activities and gave copies to the liaison teacher and the senior teacher for editing. I also briefed the school principal about all the discussions that took place during the CLW. The principal did not get chance to attend due to other commitments. I also presented him with a LRC calendar of activities after which he said, *"I will look at this and discuss it with the SMT"*. He acknowledged the results of the workshops and he appreciated much about the training and the developing of the LRC calendar of activities. On this the principal said *"These are visible outcomes of your study, and it is an eye opener to all of us who deal with the LRC. We will try to implement all the suggestions and plans which came out from your study to develop leadership among our LRC"* (P) (Field note, 30.06.2017).

According to Lund and Juujärvi (n.d.) the collaboration and learning in the Change Laboratory is based on **double stimulation** (p. 72). According to Sannino (2011), double stimulation refers to the "mechanism within which human beings can intentionally break out of a conflicting situation and change their circumstances or solve difficult problems" (p. 584). Lund and Juujärvi (n.d.) assert that double stimulation "enables human beings to use volition and agency for transforming the contradictory circumstances with the help of the external artifacts providing meaningful tools" (p. 72). This happened as participants gained agency to resolve the contradictions in response to the first stimuli (the mirror data) by using the second generation of the activity theory. The mirror data was the ethnographic data collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires and document analysed (*ibid.*).

Even though the aim of the CLW was to bring changes both in the agency and mindset of the participants, these changes could not be observed right after the intervention. This is due to the fact that time could not allow me, as the interventionist, to see how the initiated activities and solutions discussed were implemented. However, I am positive that participants learned new things as seen from their responses, reasonings, actions and solutions discussed to overcome challenges. I also believe that the workshops changed participants' way of thinking since they were able to suggest intelligent solutions and to develop their arguments based on the discussion under investigation. I am therefore optimistic that when all the solutions to overcome factors hindering learner leadership development are implemented, changes in the leadership of the LRC will be observed.

Underpinning the series of workshops, was the expansive learning cycle. Participants were guided by the expansive learning cycle during the second and third Change Laboratory workshops. Participants were questioning and criticising leadership development in the school. They also analysed the challenges hindering leadership development and suggested solutions to overcome those contradictions and this was the modelling of new ideas to the problematic situation. Contradictions become actual driving forces of expansive learning, when they are dealt with in such a way that an emerging new object is identified and turned in to a motive: "the meeting of need with object in an extraordinary act" (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7). Additionally, expansive learning leads to the formation of a new, expanded object and pattern of activity oriented to the object (*ibid.*). These were the development of the LRC year plan, LRC training and the formation of new concepts, which participants picked up during the Change Laboratory workshops. Due to limited time, I only managed to complete the first three stages of the expansive learning, namely: questioning, analysing and modelling.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed factors that hindered the development of leadership and voice within the LRC, which were then analysed through the lens of CHAT. The data in this chapter were gathered from participants through questionnaires, interviews, observations, CLWs and also data from documents analysed. The data were presented and discussed with reference to literature. Furthermore, data gathered from documents analysed and from observations, were used to confirm and verify participants' responses. It is worth mentioning that not all data obtained from those tools were in support of participants' responses. In some

cases, there were tensions between the data from the documents and participants' responses. Lastly in this chapter, I discussed data gathered from the CLWs. CLWs served as proof that participants were able to identify challenges of leadership development and come up with solutions and recommendations to the challenges identified. An intervention took place, and this led to the formation of new concepts and transformative agency both in the LRC and the liaison teacher.

In the next chapter I present the conclusion of the study and recommendations for further research, specifically in the arena of learner leadership.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I identified my research goal which was to develop leadership and voice within the LRC of one secondary school found in the northern part of Namibia. It is now appropriate to give the summary of what came from the data, in an attempt to achieve the study goal. In this chapter I present the summary of the main findings, as well as the reflexivity of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the theory which framed this learner leadership development study. Furthermore, I discuss the value of my study, as well as offer some recommendations both for good practice and for further research. Finally, in this chapter, I present the study limitations and offer an evaluation of my research before the final conclusion.

6.2 Summary of the study findings

The findings revealed that the school had an LRC body consisting of 15 members, elected at the beginning of the year to help teachers control and manage the school. The establishment of the LRC in this school is guaranteed in the Education Act, 16 of 2001 with the prescribed functions. The findings indicated that the case study school has national policies (Education Act, 16 of 2001, & Regulations made under the Education Act) in place which outline the functions of the LRC. The data which captured answers to my first research question, showed that participants had limited conceptual awareness of learner leadership and learner voice. Consequently, this led to few platforms being created in the case study school, to develop leadership and voice in learners. The picture elicited from the findings revealed that participants' understanding of learner leadership varied. In the main, participants understood learner leadership in terms of LRC leadership and the associated LRC roles in the school.

The second question interrogated participants' understanding of learner voice. Participants understood learner voice from two standpoints namely: 'being heard' and as a democratic participation of learners in school decision-making. Despite democracy being one of the Namibian educational goals (as discussed in Chapter One) "organised around a broad participation of all educational stakeholders to participate in decision-making" (Namibia.

MBEC, 1993, p. 41) the data revealed little evidence of democracy in this case study school. Learners in the case study school were less involved in school decision-making. With reference to Mitra and Gross's (2009) pyramid of student voice, being heard is one of the three levels that illustrate youth development opportunities for learner voice. This level gives assurance to teachers and administrators that learners possess unique knowledge which cannot be ignored. Learner voice was practiced through a few platforms created in the school, such as meetings initiated by the LRC in which they discussed matters affecting them with other learners. Another platform used was the suggestion box, introduced so that learners could write down and communicate their educational concerns to teachers. However, the suggestion box was removed because learners used it for other purposes. Furthermore, the data revealed that there were limited possibilities for the learners of the LRC to collaborate with adults and there was little capacity building for learner leadership offered. This was only done through parents' meetings attended by four LRC members. Collaboration with parents, as well as capacity building for leadership are levels of learner voice in the Mitra and Gross (2009) pyramid. Stemming from the data, the LRC members in the case study school were given very little chance to re-engage with and participate in school decisions that shaped their lives.

In relation to the second question which interrogated participants' views on leadership opportunities existing for the LRC in the school, the responses indicated that the LRC were assigned with many roles and responsibilities by teachers and their fellow learners. The overall function of the LRC in this school was to oversee the adherence and implementation of the school rules by their fellow learners.

With regards to the third research question, the findings indicated numerous factors that enabled the development of leadership and voice within the LRC. These included training of four LRC members, self-motivation and effective communication between the school members and the LRC.

On the fourth research question, the study examined participants' views on factors constraining the development of leadership and voice within the LRC. The participants pointed out numerous factors: the most hindering factor being that the majority of LRC members were not trained. This came as a result of a lack of funds to cater for the training of the entire LRC. However, it became apparent from the data that this was not only the case in this particular school. This financial constraint was experienced by many schools in this particular region of

Namibia. Misinterpretation of national policies facilitating learner leadership in the school was also considered to hinder learner leadership development in the school.

6.3 Reflection on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT): An analytical tool for my study

This study was framed by the second generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. The development of learner leadership through enhancing learner voice within the LRC was understood and analysed through a CHAT lens. CHAT was not only an ideal tool for surfacing contradictions, but it also created a platform for LRC leadership and voice to be developed to a certain extent. The development of agency was evident in this study. First, learners had agency to lead but they needed support, and when this support was given through the Change Laboratory workshops, agency was developed in learners. Second, the intervention transformed the agency of the liaison teacher. To remind the reader, a formative intervention is defined as “purposeful action by a human agent to create change” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 15). This definition makes it clear that the researcher does not have a monopoly over interventions (*ibid.*). The intervention that took place helped the liaison teacher to get an idea on how he might, in future, help the LRC to understand their roles and develop as leaders. Throughout the study, the liaison teacher became aware of the constraining aspects which had the potential to limit LRC leadership in the school.

As argued, in formative interventions, the design is driven by historically formed contradictions (Engeström & Sannino, 2011). This study surfaced some contradictions of which one was a primary and a few were secondary contradictions. I highlight some contradictions here. The primary contradiction occurred within the subject element (the LRC) because of negative attitudes that existed among themselves. The cultural perception that young people cannot lead pointed to a secondary contradiction between the rules (cultural beliefs) and the object (leadership and voice development). Another secondary contradiction occurred between the community (teachers and SMT) and object (leadership development).

The most important outcome of the Change Laboratory process conducted was the concept formation and construction of new instrumentalities. This reflects on the strength of this intervention study, as argued by Daniels (2008), who asserts that interventions enable “the construction of new instrumentalities and as bringing about, through externalisation, the

transformative construction of new instruments and forms of activity at collective and individual levels” (p. 131). Similarly, Sannino et al. (2016, p. 599) support the strength of intervention when they argue that:

During the last intervention, learners expansively transformed the object of their activity. This learning process included productive deviations from the researchers’ instructional intentions, leading to significant outcomes, both practical and theoretical, that were not anticipated by the interventionists.

Expansive learning led to the formation of a new, expanded object and pattern of activity oriented to the object. This involves the formation of a theoretical concept of the new activity, based on grasping and modelling the initial simple relationship, the germ cell that gives rise to the new activity and generates its diverse concrete manifestations (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 7). The new instruments constructed were the LRC year plan and the training offered to the LRC by the liaison teacher in assisted by myself, the researcher-interventionist.

Throughout the entire three Change Laboratory workshops conducted, the LRC collaborated with the liaison teacher and the senior teacher. As a consequence of the Change Laboratory process, there was collaboration between the LRC members and the two teachers who were in attendance. The fact that these two teachers were not directly part of the LRC activity system suggests the potential for boundary crossing. According to Daniels (2008), boundary crossing offers “a potential means of conceptualising the ways in which collaboration between workers from different professionals’ backgrounds might generate new professional practices” (p. 128). The LRC developed a better understanding of their roles through their collaboration with the liaison and senior teachers, who seemed to have the experience to guide them through their roles as leaders.

6.4 The value of the study

There seems to be few CHAT studies conducted on learner leadership and learner voice in the ELM field. The studies by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008), Uushona (2012) and Strydom (2016) were all interpretive studies. Therefore, this study adds to the literature of learner leadership in the field of ELM and to the body of knowledge in using CHAT as an analytical tool for a leadership intervention study. The study provides a theoretical and practical understanding of how CHAT surfaces contradictions. It is worthwhile reiterating that this study transformed the agency of both the teachers and the LRC members through the intervention, which took place

in the form of training to develop leadership and voice within the LRC. This study was of great value in the way that it invoked a strong sense of learner voice through the two different phases of the study, particularly during the second and third Change Laboratory workshops where I got to really hear the voice of the learners on what mattered to them, as elected representatives of learners. Another great value of this study was that the Change Laboratory workshops conducted offered platforms for a safe space where I could listen carefully to what the LRC argued constrained the development of their voice and leadership.

6.5 Recommendations for practice

The study provided sufficient findings which showed that learner leadership in the case study school was not fully developed, it was still developing. Learners were not really seen as authentic equal participants in school decision-making at the case study school. The power relations between LRC members and teachers was still significantly unequal. Based on my findings, I recommend the following good practices to both the policy makers and teachers in schools with LRCs.

Firstly, the picture which emerged revealed limited leadership opportunities within the LRC which needed to be expanded. There seem to be few platforms in schools which persuade the form of leadership that listens and attends to the voice of the learners, as argued by Smyth (2006). In some cases, platforms for learners to lead are well stipulated in policies, but they are being ignored, if not misinterpreted. It is therefore against these conditions, that I suggest the Ministry of Education comes up with workshops to train and monitor teachers on the implementation of policies, as a way to overcome misinterpretation of educational policies. It is typical that if policies are not well understood, the possibility for them to be implemented effectively will be very limited.

Secondly, the data revealed the absence of LRC members (the head boy and head girl) during School Board meetings. I therefore suggest that teachers acknowledge the statement in the Education Act which authorises two LRC members to attend School Board meetings. This is one of the platforms where LRCs have to raise their voice on matters affecting learners and the only platform the LRC can collaborate with adults to identify problem areas in school and implement solutions. Schools need to create more platforms to realise the intention of democracy.

The last recommendation is linked to training. The data revealed lack of capacity building as a result of what was referred to, as insufficient and inadequate training for all the LRC and their liaison teachers. Based on that, I suggest training to be an ongoing and compulsory practice for both LRC members and their liaison teachers. My suggestion on this point is that training should be done free of charge through the regions/circuits, for I believe there are some competent people within these regions who can offer such leadership training.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

My first recommendation is in regard to the use of CHAT generations. My study was framed by the second generation of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory, whereby I only focused on one activity system of the LRC. I am therefore recommending that future researchers on learner leadership use the third generation of CHAT. As argued by Mukute (2014, p. 93), third generation of CHAT is appropriate because the nature of interaction in this generation is “shifted from the central activity system interacting with others to multiple activity systems that are in interaction and have a shared object”. Moreover, the prime unit analysis in third generation is a “collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system” (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). Similarly, I am recommending future researchers to complete the expansive learning cycle to evaluate the extent to which new models were implemented.

My second recommendation stems from the research on learner leadership that has triggered the interest of many scholars, both nationally and internationally. The reason for this emerging investigation on learner leadership is to contribute to the body of knowledge and to fill the gap in the literature of learner leadership. My study focused on developing leadership and voice in the LRC of one secondary school. It is against this milieu I suggest future scholars conduct a comparative study focusing on how learner leadership and voice are developed in LRCs and RCLs of two African countries (Namibia & South Africa) using CHAT as the framework for transformative agency. These comparative studies will be necessary for people to understand the complexity of learner leadership from diverse perspectives. It will as well be necessary to inform policy makers, so that they improve and adopt strategies that have potential to enhance the development of learner leadership and voice.

6.7 The study limitations

The limitation I encountered was associated with generalisability of case study findings. Rule and John (2011) argue that case study research “is not fit for the purpose of statistical generalization” (p. 105). The findings for the study reflect only on the understanding and practice of learner leadership and voice development of the participants in the case school. This denotes that findings of this study cannot be generalised to suit another school in the region. Even though the findings of a case study cannot be generalised, I am optimistic that the findings for this study can be generalised through other forms of generalisations. Rule & John (2011) suggest the use of transferability as an alternative to generalisability. Transferability is “the extent to which the research can be transferred to another context, setting or situation” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 209). Admittedly, readers can claim transferability of the findings if the researcher provides a thick description of the case and its context and the researcher allows the findings and conclusion to gain a level of transferability which the reader may determine (*ibid.*, p. 105). As a critical researcher, I collected quality data which made a greater contribution to obtaining rich findings which I believe enabled the reader to make links and arrive at the same conclusion with that of the study.

6.8 Researcher reflexivity

The journey I embarked on in coming up with this thesis, exposed me to new aspects in writing up the research. This included the theoretical framework (CHAT), the intervention method which was the Change Laboratory workshop and analysing and discussing of data using CHAT. I had never come across these aspects before and I still have an interest to apply them in my further studies. Looking back to where I started with this study, the whole journey was tough, and the time has passed by quickly. Having a complete thesis required commitment and the support of the supervisors and this is what helped me to reach my goal in the end. My success in this study was driven by proper guidance from the three supervisors I worked with in the development of my chapters, as well as the structured sessions we had on how to approach the research topic and do the research. Another factor that contributed to the completion of this thesis was my own effort which I dedicated to this study. The whole process was a very powerful learning journey.

6.9 Conclusion

To conclude, Smyth (2006) argues that “learners voice has been kept off the official agenda for too long in the educational circle” (p. 279). Similarly, the findings of this study revealed limited platforms for learner voice and leadership development. With this in mind, my argument is that until the goal of democracy in education as advocated by *Toward Education for all* (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education and Culture [MBEC], 1993) is fully integrated into school leadership, the voices of learners continue to be silent in schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Documents analysed

No.	Documents to be analysed	Comments
1.	Education Act, article 16 of 2001	
2.	One set of parents meeting.	
3.	The LRC meeting agendas’.	
4.	School rules and regulations.	
5.	LRC portfolios.	
6.	School calendar of activities.	
7.	Regulations made under the Education Act	
8.	Any other relevant documents available.	

Appendix B: Observation schedule

Observation schedule for the LRC members based on their leadership roles in the school.

Date.....Week no.....Day.....

Activity	Leadership roles
During the morning assembly: (Eg. lead others to stand in their lines, give announcements, conduct prayers etc.)	
Study session: (e.g. monitor fellow learners, take note of learners who are disturbing as well as those who escape study sessions, control the movements of fellow learners during study time)	
Extra-curricular: (eg. their participation in leading others, the support they give during activities, the role of the LRC for sport and entertainment)	
LRC-teacher interactions: (are LRC delegated with roles by teachers, do the teachers invite the LRC to attend staff briefings, do they interact with teachers during spare time in the school)	
Out door and break time: (do the LRC engage with their fellow learners, do they isolate themselves from others, do they supervise others during break time, do they monitor other learners not to move out of the school during break)	
During the LRC meeting: (do all member raise their voices, the role of the secretary and the chairperson during the meeting, how do they collaborate, decision-making, reaching consensus, the role of the mentor teacher)	
Classroom: (Keeping order in the class, motivating fellow learners, gives instructions in the class, role model, advice etc.)	
LRC-LRC: (share leadership roles in various portfolios, planning and organising of activities)	
LRC-fellow learners: (support, respect, collaboration, guide, interaction)	
Leadership capacity: (leading fellow learners without being instructed to do so, raising their voices in to meetings, representing others in decision-making)	

Appendix C: Teacher interview questions

1. What is your understanding of the concept learner leadership?
2. In your view, what is learner voice?
3. May you share with me leadership opportunities that exist in the school for the LRC?
4. What would you say are the enabling factors that promote leadership and voice within the LRC?
5. Can you please share with me about the meeting you conduct with the LRC? (What discussions, when did it take place? How many times do they meet in a term?)
6. What leadership opportunities exist in this school to develop leadership within the LRC?
7. Is there any difference you have observed in leadership of the current LRC members in comparison to the LRC of previous years? Please elaborate on this.
8. Are there any factors you can share with me which in your view are hindering leadership and voice development within the LRC members?
9. What recommendations do you have to address the challenges hindering the development of leadership and learner voice within the LRC?

Thank you for your time and for your contribution toward my study.

Appendix D: LRC questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed by Vistorina Haipa, a Masters student in the field of Education Leadership and Management at Rhodes University. The questionnaire will be administered to the members of the LRC. The aim of this questionnaire is to help in an investigation on how learner leadership and learner voice can be developed within the LRC. The research will be a case study in a secondary school found in the northern part of Namibia. Please note that the information you are about to give will be used for research purposes only and it will be treated with confidentiality. You are therefore kindly requested to complete the following questionnaire by giving your honest opinion based on your understanding of the questions.

Instructions for the questionnaires

- Do not write your name.
- Use either a blue or a black pen.
- Answer on the space provided.
- The questionnaires consist of two sections and you are required to answer them all.

Section A

Place a cross in the column which best represent your views in regard to learner leadership and learner voice development within the LRC.

No.	Statements	Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly disagree
1.	Members of the LRC are chosen by fellow learners every year.				
2.	The LRC members get adequate training in leadership at the beginning of their (reign) term.				
3.	There is a mentor in this school who guides the LRC.				
4.	Members of the LRC conduct their meetings in every term of the school.				
5.	The LRC secretary always takes minutes during the LRC meeting.				
6.	Some members of the LRC attend meetings with the School Governing Body and they are seen as equal participants.				
7.	Both teachers and fellow learners in this school support the leaners in the council to carry out their roles.				
8.	The LRC are allowed to make their decisions in regard to the activities which they want to organise.				
9.	There is a good channel of communication between the LRC, fellow learners, parents and the school board members.				
10.	The LRC members are given platforms to speak on issues concerning their learning environment without fear and criticism.				

11.	Members of the council are involved in the decisions made in the school				
12.	The members of the council are given opportunities to facilitate extra-mural activities in the school.				
13.	The LRC are chosen on the basis of their performance by their fellow learners.				
14.	Members of the LRC are allowed to enforce law and order in their classroom.				
15.	LRC are expected to achieve a higher level of discipline and academic performance than other learners in the school.				
16.	More training and support needs to be given to the LRC to improve learner leadership and learner voice.				
17.	The body of LRC in the school make positive contributions to the school in academic activities.				
18.	The LRC members are motivated by being given certificates of appreciation at the end of their reign.				

Section B

Answer the following questions by writing your answer in the space provided.

1. What is your understanding on the following concepts?

A) Learner voice

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B) Learner leadership

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2. What leadership opportunities exist in the school for the LRC?

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3. What are the mechanisms enabling leadership and learner voice development within the LRC?

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4. May you please share the support which the school offers to the LRC with regards to their roles?

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5. Are there any factors which you believe are preventing the development of leadership and voice within the LRC? Could you please elaborate your answer?

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6. Is there any support you get from your fellow learners when you are carrying out your leadership role? Please motivate your answer.

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7. May you please share any platform in this school in which the LRC are free to discuss about matters concerning their learning.

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8. What are you suggesting be done to improve the current leadership in the LRC?

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Thank you for your time and for your contribution toward my study.

Appendix E: Ethical clearance certificate


RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

EDUCATION FACULTY • PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140
Tel: (046) 603 8385 / (046) 603 8393 • Fax: (046) 622 8028 • e-mail: d.wilmot@ru.ac.za

PROPOSAL AND ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

Ethical clearance number 2017.06.02.08

The minute of the EHDC meeting of 1 June 2017 reflect the following:

2017.06.02 CLASS B RESTRICTED MATTERS
MASTER OF EDUCATION RESEARCH PROPOSALS (FULL)

To consider the following research proposal for the degree of Master of Education in the Faculty of Education:

Vistorina Haipa (17H4911)

Topic: Developing leadership and enhancing learner voice within a Learner Representative Council in a Secondary School in Namibia.

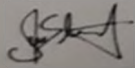
Supervisors: Professor H van der Mescht
Professor C Grant
Ms F Kajee

Decision: *Approved*

This letter confirms the approval of the above proposal at a meeting of the Faculty of Education Higher Degrees' Committee on the 1 June 2017.

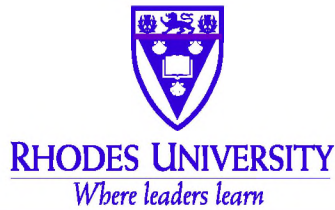
The proposal demonstrates an awareness of ethical responsibilities and a commitment to ethical research processes. The approval of the proposal by the committee thus constitutes ethical clearance.

Sincerely



Prof Marc Schäfer
Chair of the EHDC, Rhodes University
8 June 2017

Appendix F: Permission from the supervisors



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383

Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028

23 May 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms. Vistorina Haipa (student number 617H4911) is a registered Master's student at Rhodes University, currently pursuing research in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Education, Educational Leadership and Management*. Ms. Haipa has made excellent progress in the course so far, and has successfully submitted a research proposal to the Higher Degrees Committee. She has now reached the stage where data collection is necessary, which necessitates spending a period of about two months at the school of her choice. The purpose of this letter is to obtain your permission to allow the student to conduct research in your region, circuit or school, and to assist the student as much as possible to gain entry to institutions and access to people and documents.

Ms. Haipa's research involves learner leadership at a school, and to conduct the study the student needs to interview staff, learners and in some cases parents. The student will also need to do observation, administer questionnaires, and study relevant documents. The university has a strict ethical code which applies to research in education. The code includes guarantees of confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for the context of the study. As such, the student may not in any way interfere with the smooth running of the school, and needs to take into account the culture and norms of the institution. The student will obtain permission from all participants in writing, and where learners are involved, permission will be sought from their parents.

Research is a difficult and challenging enterprise, and we would therefore really appreciate anything you can do to make the student's data gathering as smooth and effective as possible. Your cooperation is highly appreciated. The student's research is likely to constitute a valuable contribution to the small body of literature on this important phenomenon in education, and thus serve a broader purpose of uplifting educational standards in Namibia.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact any of the supervisors listed below.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hennie van der Mescht', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht (h.vandermescht@ru.ac.za)

(Supervisor)

(Prof) Callie Grant (c.grant@ru.ac.za)

(Supervisor)

Ms Farhana Kajee (f.kajee@ru.ac.za)

(Supervisor)

Appendix G: Request for access to the research site - the Director

Hillsview 11 st
Grahamstown
South Africa
29 May 2017

Enq: V. Haipa
Cell: +264812987503/ +2774410355
Email address: vistohaipa@gmail.com

To: The Director of Education Arts and Culture
Director of Education, Oshana region
Cc: The Inspector of Education
Oluno Circuit
Att: Mrs. Amukana

RE: REQUEST FOFR A RESEARCH SITE

I am Vistorina Haipa, a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, the Republic of South Africa studying towards a Master's Degree in the field of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM). My research interest is based on developing learner leadership, targeting developing leadership and voice within the Learner Representative Council structure. I want to base my study at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Secondary School because it is where I have piloted my study.

The research period for collecting data at the site will commence beginning in June (on the 5th) until the 28th of July 2017. My programme will not disrupt the school daily learning activities, as I will negotiate the time to collect data with the participants, preferably after school hours. The study will not only be beneficial to me as a researcher, but it is likely to make a huge contribution to the development of the field of Educational Leadership Development. The study will also be of utmost important to schools with LRCs by helping them to gain a deeper understanding of how they can develop learner leadership through enhancing learner voice within the LRC body. The purpose of this letter is to seek permission from your good office to allow me to conduct my research study at the above-mentioned school.

I am hopeful that this letter will receive your outmost attention and consideration thereof. Kindly find a copy of the confirmation letter from my supervisors, Ms. Farhana, Prof. Callie Grant and Prof. Hennie van der Mescht herewith attached. Should you have any question regarding my request, please reach me at any of the contacts provided above. I am looking forward for your positive response.

Thanking you in anticipation.
Yours sincerely

Vistorina Haipa (a researcher)

Appendix H: Permission from the Director of Oshana Region



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**OSHANA REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE**
Aspiring to excellence in Education for All

Tel: 065 229800
Fax: 065 229833
Enquiries: Gerhard S. Ndafenongo
E-mail: ndafenongogs@gmail.com
Ref no: 11/1/1

906 Sam Nuyoma Road
Private Bag 5518
Oshakati, Namibia

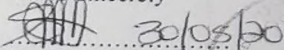
HILLSVIEW 11ST
GRAHAMSTOWN
SOUTH AFRICA

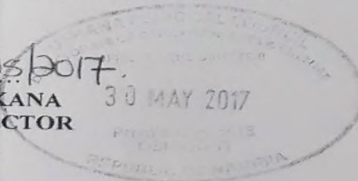
Dear Ms V. Haipa

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT [REDACTED] SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OSHANA REGION

1. I acknowledge receipt of your letter 29th May 2017 and therefore it bears reference;
2. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted to conduct the study entitled: **Developing learner leadership at [REDACTED] Secondary School in Oshana Region**. You are hereby requested to present this letter of approval to the principal to ensure that the research is authorised, authentic and procedures are adhered to.
3. This permission is subject to the following strict conditions; (i) There should be minimal or no interruption on normal teaching and learning, during a class or scheduled afternoon session, (ii) Ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity should be respected and retained throughout this activity i.e. voluntary participation, and consent from participants, and (iii) the permission is valid for entire academic year 2017.
4. Both parties should understand that this permission could be revoked without explanation at any time.
5. Furthermore, we humbly request you to share with us your research findings with the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture_ Oshana Region. You may contact Mr GS Ndafenongo, the Deputy Director: Programs and Quality Assurance (PQA) for the provision of summary of your research findings.
6. I wish you the best in conducting your study.

Yours Sincerely


..... 30/05/2017
HILENI M. AMUKANA
REGIONAL DIRECTOR



All correspondence should be addressed to the Director of Education, Arts & Culture

Appendix I: Request for access to the research site - school principal

Enq: Vistorina Haipa
Cell: +264812987503/+27744105355
Email address: vistohaipa@gmail.com

11 Hills view st
Grahamstown
South Africa

To: The Principal
XXXXXX SSS
Oshana Region
Namibia

25 May 2017

Dear Mr. XXXXXXXXXXX

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH STUDY AT YOUR SCHOOL.

I am Vistorina Haipa, a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, the Republic of South Africa studying towards a Master's Degree in the field of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM). My research interest is based on developing learner leadership, targeting developing leadership and voice within the Learner Representative Council.

I have an interest to base my study at XXXXXXXXX Senior Secondary School, XXXX Circuit because it is where I have piloted my study. I plan to carry out the research from 5th June until 28th July 2017. Please note that I will not be visiting the school every day to collect the data. For the purpose of the study, I intend to do the following:

- Conduct interview sessions with the school principal, one Head of Department, two senior teachers and a mentor teacher.
- Administer questionnaires to all the current members of the LRC and five former members of the council.
- Observe at least one LRC meeting.
- Observe the participation of the LRC in school leadership activities.
- Finally, I will conduct three Change Laboratory workshops (with the participants and members of the schools who will be interested to partake) in which the discussion of the data collected will be examined and discussed further.

Additionally, I would want to analyse documents such as the Educational Act, article 16 of 2001, the Regulation made under the Educational Act 2002, LRC training manual, four sets of LRC minutes for 2016 meetings and at least two sets of the LRC minutes for the current year (2017).

Please note that, all activities that will take place during my stay in the school will be used for the purpose of the study, not for performance evaluation. They will help me to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of learner leadership and learner voice within the LRC body in your school.

As a researcher, I will uphold the autonomy of the study participants and maintain confidentiality with all the data I will collect from the school. The study participants will be

asked to complete a consent form to which they will testify their willingness to partake in the study.

Against the above backdrop, I sincerely would like to request your permission to conduct a research study at your school.

I am hopeful that this letter will receive your outmost attention and consideration thereof.

Kindly find a copy of the confirmation letter from my supervisors Prof. Callie Grant, Prof. Hennie van der Mescht and Ms. Farhana herewith attached. I can be reached at the contact details provided above.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely
Vistorina Haipa (a researcher)
Student number: g17h4911

Appendix J: Permission from the principal



SECONDARY SCHOOL
CIRCUIT
P.O BOX
ONDANGWA



Enquiries: [redacted]

15/05/2017

+264 ([redacted]

REF: 17/2/1

To: Ms Vistorina Haipa

Rhodes University

South Africa

Dear Madam,

SUBJECT: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF YOUR REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT [redacted]

This is to inform you that the school has received a letter of request to carry out your Research in Field of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM) at the above mentioned Institution.

The school will appreciate so much for you to do it here as it will also benefit the school from the knowhow and some experiences you have to share with our learners and teachers as well.

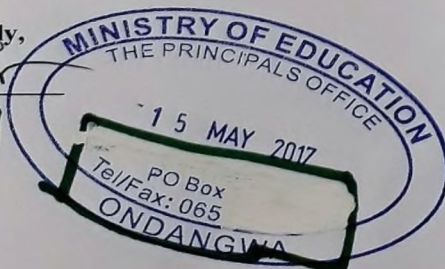
This will also boost the team building with the Learner's Representative committees (LRC) within our school especially in Leadership aspects.

Once more we still thank you for choosing our school to come to share the knowledge and not only for study purposes. Please you can still contact the school for more information you may need to make your dreams come true.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]
Principal



Appendix K: Consent form for the learners

Enq: Vistorina Haipa
Cell: +264812987503/+27744105355
Email address: vistohaipa@gmail.com

11 Hills view st
Grahamstown
South Africa
05 June 2017

Mr. / Mrs.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION OF YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am Vistorina Haipa, a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, the Republic of South Africa studying towards a Master's Degree in the field of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM).

My interest in this study will focus on investigating how leadership and voice can be developed within the LRC of a secondary school found in Oshana region, Namibia. I am hereby sending out this invitation and request for your permission to allow your child to participate in a research study which will be conducted at your child's school. I would like to bring it to your attention that, this investigation is not an evaluation of your child's achievement in school activities. Please note that the study will not interfere with the school work, a programme will be set to decide the appropriate time we are going to have our discussions. I will uphold confidentiality and anonymity of your child throughout the study. This is a voluntarily participation, if your child wishes to withdraw from participating in the research, she/he will be free to do that without any consequence or restriction.

It is against this back drop that I am sincerely requesting you to allow your child to participate in this research study. Please reach me at the above contacts given above, should you have any further enquiries.

Regards

Vistorina Haipa (a researcher).

DECLARATION

I (Full name of the parent/ guardian) hereby declare that I understand the nature of this study and the content of the document. I understand that the researcher will uphold anonymity and maintain confidentiality. Moreover, I understand that my child has the right to withdraw from this study. I have therefore granted permission to

..... (Learner's full name) to participate in this study.

.....
Signature of the parent/guardian

.....
Date

Appendix L: Teachers' consent form

Enq: Vistorina Haipa
Cell: +264812987503/+27744105355
Email address: vistohaipa@gmail.com

11 Hills view st
Grahamstown
South Africa
05 June 2017

Dear Mr. /Ms.

Invitation to take part in a research study

I am Vistorina Haipa, a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, the Republic of South Africa studying towards a Master's Degree in the field of Educational Leadership and Management (ELM). My research topic is based on the investigation of learner leadership and learner voice development; a case study, in a secondary school found in the northern part of Namibia. My interest in this regard is to develop an insightful understanding of learner leadership development in the case study school. I would like to engage with you in order to contribute to the formation of new knowledge on this phenomenon.

Please note that this study is not an evaluation of your performance. As a researcher, I undertake to uphold your autonomy and maintain confidentiality with all data you will contribute to this study. You have the right to withdraw from the study any time you may wish to do so without any consequence. You will be asked to complete a consent form.

It is for the above claims that I am sending this invitation to you as a teacher who might be interested to participate in my research project, to invite you to be amongst the research participants. Please feel free to reach me at the contact details given above.

Yours faithfully
Vistorina Haipa (a researcher).

DECLARATION

I (teacher's full name)
hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of the research project. I understand that the researcher will uphold autonomy and confidentiality. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study without any consequence. Bearing all this in mind, I am willing to participate in the study.

.....

.....

Signature (Principal/ HOD/ Teacher)

Date