TRANSFORMATION THROUGH ENGAGEMENT: DEVELOPING GRADE 9 LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ACTIVITY SYSTEM USING CHANGE LABORATORY INTERVENTION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OMUSATI REGION OF NAMIBIA

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by

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Declaration

I am aware that plagiarism is a serious offence in academic world. To make sure that I have not unintentionally plagiarised, I have run my work through a text-matching software. **I, Loide Mwasheka Vaino,** hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, written in my own words and the product of my own original research. I have not previously in its entirety or part submitted it at any university.

Where I have drawn on the words and ideas of others, these have been acknowledged according to Rhodes University Referencing Guidelines.

Signature **Date:** December 2017

Abstract

The evolution of traditional educational leadership theory to contemporary leadership theory came as a response to an increased demand for better services in schools by creating platforms for learner leadership such as distributed leadership where learner leadership is located. This study of learner leadership is conducted in a secondary school in Omusati region of Namibia. Drawing on distributed leadership theory, the study sought to promote the distribution of leadership opportunities amongst all educational stakeholders, including learners, as provided for by policy and projected by educational leadership theory.

The motivation of this study was the need to understand the problems associated with learner leadership as identified by past research. In addition, this study hoped to address the gap in the literature by exploring learner leadership development opportunities developing agency in learners through a Change Laboratory (CL) intervention.

This study was as a transformative case study, how the grade 9s in the case study school were involved in leadership, the constraining factors that hindered the involvement of grade 9 learners in leadership, the enhancement of learner leadership at school, the positive contributions of CL workshops to participants and the leadership growth brought about by an intervention. This study generated data through observation, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and Change Laboratory Workshops.

The findings revealed that the grade 9 learners were marginally involved in leadership at the school. The most substantial challenge relates to traditional and outdated views of leadership on the part of teachers and educational managers. Additionally, the findings from the Change Laboratory workshops revealed that despite grade 9 learners being the youngest at school, they have the potential to be learner leaders.

Hence in addition to several practical recommendations, the study recommends a change of mindset towards learner leadership so that opportunities are provided to contribute to the growth and development of learners. Finally, these research study findings will help my professional colleagues and policy makers in education to better understand the significance role of learner leadership involvements in schools.

Dedication

I affectionately dedicate this thesis to my lovely mother, **Kristofina Ndapandula Johannes ya Kapilu** for being a brave mother. Being an unemployed single mother is never easy. She always managed to clothe and send us to school. Because of her efforts, this encouraged me to work hard and reach this academic level. She is my source of inspiration, thus I humble pray that she grows older and healthy to see my future endeavours. My dictum is 'the sky is the limit' as she always encourages us.

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Lastly yet important, kindly accept my apology for not mentioning all of you, who contributed in one way or another to the success of this study. I am forever thankful for all your contributions and support.

Thank you and God bless!

List of acronyms

B Ed	- Bachelor degree in Education
CHAT	- Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CL	- Change Laboratory
CLR	- Change Laboratory Reflection
CPD	- Continuous Professional Development
DoE	- Department of Education
LLA	- Learner Centred Approach
LL	- Learner Leaders
LLC	- Learner Leadership Club
LQ	- Learner Questionnaires
LRC	- Learners' Representative Council
MEAC	- Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
M Ed	- Master of Education
NIED	- National Institute for Educational Development
NIPAM	- Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management
NWU	- North West University
PGDE	- Post Graduate Diploma in Education
PhD	- Doctorate of Philosophy
SAERA	- South Africa Educational Research Associations
SEO	- Senior Education officer
SBM	- School Board Member
UNAM	- University of Namibia

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

> I argue along with Grant and Nekondo (2016) that learner leadership clubs provide platforms from which learners can act. Given the right conditions and concomitant support, learners can enact leadership, particularly when they have conceptualised the initiative. Because learners are central to school life, they are best placed to bring about school change. Participation in decision-making processes related to a change initiative, whatever it might be, is likely to develop learner agency and the competences necessary to lead. (p. 27)

1.1 Introduction

This study is an exploration of the Grade 9 learners' leadership practices at Ngola (pseudonym) Secondary School in the Omusati region of northern Namibia. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the research site and the participants who consented to be part of this study.

According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MEAC, 1993), Namibia has made considerable efforts in addressing the main goals of education: access, quality, democracy, and equity as benchmarks for future education to address the past inequalities. However, in most schools, democracy does not prevail. The limitation of democracy at schools is caused by a leadership style in schools that deprives learners of the freedom to actively engage in the affairs of the school. Similarly, South Africa's Department of Education (DoE) Task Team Report indicates that, "the education system did not encourage staff and students to take responsibility for what was taught and learnt" (1996, p. 18) and calls for schools, as centres of learning and teaching, to be placed at the core of education management rather than at the bottom of a hierarchical and bureaucratic management pyramid.

This study was inspired by Flutter's (2006) words: "An alternative way of investigating the effects of the environment in schools is to ask those who learn in them i.e. the students themselves" (p. 184). In the same line, educational literature agrees with the idea that "school improvement and school effectiveness have a direct correlation with effective leadership development, whether be it teacher or learner leadership" (Mitra & Gross, 2009; Flutter, 2006; Fielding, 2001; Grant, 2012). However, in Namibian schools, learners are not considered as stakeholders with unique ideas to contribute to the smooth running of the schools. The side-

lining of learners is a negative trend, as it prevents them from making contributions in schools and ultimately makes them passive recipients of furnished sets of rules and directives imposed upon them.

It is for the above reasons that I strongly support the idea of considering learners' perspectives. We are in the 21st century; a time where schools encounter many challenges that require informed decisions to be made in order to rescue these establishments from failure and sustain them into the future. It is our responsibility as educators to prepare learners to become active participants in the school, as well as in their communities, and participate in democracy as advocated for by Mitra and Gross (2009) and by the educational policy known as '*Towards Education for All'*. This is in support with Day and Harris' (2002) call for the need to involve learners as stakeholders in the running of the school's affairs.

Having been in the teaching profession for seven years as an educator, I observed that there is a need to distribute leadership in schools by promoting learner leadership. The current leadership style does not allow learners' democracy to prevail; hence this study advocates leadership that is not limited to formal authority. Therefore, this interventionist case study provided a platform for the exploration of how leadership can be developed amongst the Grade 9 learners, with the aim of enhancing their leadership capacity.

This chapter firstly gives a description of the background and context, followed by the importance and relevance of this study. The chapter then introduces the research goals, the aim of the study, and the methodology employed. Finally, the chapter gives a synopsis of the entire thesis.

1.2 Background and context of the study

Prior to independence, Namibia's history was characterised by Apartheid, as is the case for South Africa. The curriculum policy in Namibia "mirrored the Bantu Education curriculum premised on the notion of white supremacy, racial and ethnic separation, centralised control of curriculum decision making and high unequal provision of curriculum resources" (Jensen, 1995, p. 6). By then, leadership and management of the Department of Education, as well as principal positions in schools, were dominated by whites in a hierarchical and autocratic style (Hashikutuva, 2011). As if that was not enough, white peoples' curriculums were different from

that of black people, and the black education standard was very poor and hampered the management and leadership of many Namibian schools, to date. This leadership style showed that people in positions of power were responsible for decision-making.

Namibia gained independence in 1990 and adopted 'democracy' as a guiding principle of governance. After three years of independence, an educational policy document '*Towards Education for All'* was formulated, stipulating that "a democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision making and clear accountability of leaders". '*Towards Education for All'* further contends that "to teach democracy, our teachers and our education system must practice democracy" (Namibia. Ministry of Education, Arts & Culture, 1993, p. 41). As a result, this meant that every educational stakeholder including learners should participate in leadership democratically.

After 11 years of liberation, the Education Act 16 of 2001 was designed to promote learner leadership in schools. Section 60 (1) provides for the establishment of "a body of learners to be known as the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in every public secondary school" (Namibia. [MEC], p. 33). This notion is affirmed by Lambert (as cited in Uushona, 2012, p. 12) who states that learner leadership "forms part of leadership capacity which suggests a broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, and a systematic framework for school improvement". Furthermore, Rudduck and Flutter (2006) suggest that "to manage school improvement, we need to look at schools from pupils' perspectives and that means tuning in to their experiences and views and creating a new order of experiences for them as active participation" (p. 75).

I observed that there is a need to distribute leadership in schools by promoting learner leadership. The concept of learner leadership is not addressed in policy documents (Grant, 2006). Although learners' involvement in decision-making and raising their concerns on what matters to them in schools is limited, this study seeks to promote learner leadership; as Mitra and Gross (2009) believe that involving learners in leadership "highlights ways in which young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working together to improve school conditions for themselves and others" (p. 522). This can ensure that the participation of learners in the leadership of schools is "comprehensive and aimed towards the development of learner leaders for the future" (Archard, 2013, p. 349). My focus thus is on learner leadership, particularly in developing leadership opportunities among Grade 9 learners

in a secondary school in Namibia, as Uushona (2012) emphasises that most most schools' populations are learners, and therefore they need to participate and contribute fully in several aspects of school life, including leadership.

1.3 Research motivation

Learner leadership is a major concern in Namibian schools. I have observed this for the past seven years as a Namibian educator. The findings from data I collected during my pre-course assignment coincided with my observation that little is done at schools to involve learners in leadership. The findings from the pilot study revealed that "there is a need for learners' leadership clubs to be formed at the research school" (Vaino, 2017, p. 12).

Besides this, the study of learner leadership is under-researched in Namibia. Only a few studies were done in this regard. Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008) conducted a study on learners' participation in school governance, while Uushona (2012) conducted his study with a focus on learner leadership in the LRC. Shekupakela-Nelulu's findings reveal that negative perceptions of teachers and parents towards learner leadership in schools are hindering the effective practice of learner leadership structures, while Uushona's findings reveal that "learners cannot lead, as they cannot lead themselves, they are there to be taught and that is why they are named learners" (2012, p. 113). Furthermore, they stipulate that the scarcity of literature on this phenomenon does not bode well for the encouragement of contemporary leadership approaches, thus encouraging interested researchers to comprehensively explore this area in Namibia (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008; Uushona, 2012).

It is against this backdrop that I found a gap in learner leadership related studies conducted, thus my focus in this study was to explore learner leadership development opportunities, focusing on the Grade 9 learners in the school, identifying factors hindering learner leadership, and developing agency in learners through an intervention (Change Laboratory) to bring about changes.

1.4 Potential value of the study

One of the factors that motivated me to conduct this study was the limited number of studies done in Namibia regarding learner leadership. This research is therefore likely to help fill the

gap in literature that exists currently. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the body of knowledge on this topic in general.

In addition, the expected findings of this study will help me, my professional colleagues, and policymakers in education better understand the significant role of learners' involvement in leadership in schools. For instance, this study hopes to inform the policymakers, especially those at the Namibia Institute of Education Development (NIED), Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM), and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) unit in Namibia, in identifying professional needs and developing relevant training programmes about learner leadership (Vaeta, 2015). Hence, this study seeks to explore and promote learner leadership opportunities available in schools.

1.5 Research goals and Questions

The aim of this study was to explore how Grade 9 learners' leadership can be developed through an intervention, guided by this overarching research question: *How can Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities be developed in the school?* The study further brings to light factors influencing learner leadership within the school and analyses the hidden reasons for this phenomenon. To achieve the above goals, the following sub-questions were investigated:

Phase 1 aim: To understand the Grade 9s involvement in leadership at the school

This is the exploratory phase of the study, seeking to surface and consider the learners' leadership involvement, challenges and potential for growth. It is the interpretive phase of the study. These are the questions which guided the phase:

1. What is the understanding of the Grade 9 learners and teachers of the concept of learner leadership at the school?
2. How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school?
3. How can the Grade 9s leadership be enhanced at the school?
4. What are the potential mechanisms / underlying causes that can promote or inhibit Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?

Phase 2 aim: To intervene and bring about change

This phase is critical in the sense that it sought to promote critical thinking and change among learner leaders. The phase is driven by these questions:

5. What potential contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops make to the development of the participants?
6. How did the Learner Leadership Club (LLC) bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders (participants)?

As researchers, the way we view the world influences the way in which we research the world; thus the next section presents the methodological aspects employed in this study.

1.6 Research methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and aimed at prompting information through interactions focused on knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of the participants of their roles in learner leadership in their institution; this was so that I could better understand how learner leadership is practiced at the school. Since I also wanted to intervene and transform learner leadership amongst Grade 9 learners, I further employed a critical paradigm. A critical (transformative) paradigm sees reality as shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and other dynamics (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Thus, a critical paradigm was used with second generation CHAT theory to see how reality was shaped and viewed regarding learner leadership development at the research site.

My research implemented the case study approach to help me create and determine how and why things are happening the way they are, regarding learner leadership. In this research, a case study approach enabled me as a researcher to gain rich understanding of the role of learners in the leadership of the school. Yin (2014) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ('the case') in depth within its real-world context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clear" (p. 16). This links well with the focus of this study, as it aimed to explore and promote leadership development opportunities within Grade 9 learners in a public urban secondary school in the Omusati region

of Namibia. The study investigated the leadership practice of learners in the natural environment of their school.

1.7 Clarifications of the key concepts

Explanations and definitions of key concepts and terms that are central to this study are explained in detail in Chapter Two. These key concepts are: leadership and management, learner leadership, learner voice, distributed leadership, traditional leadership theories, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), expansive learning, and Change Laboratory intervention.

1.8 Synopsis of the overview of the thesis

This thesis is structured in five chapters as follows.

Chapter One introduces the study. It gives the reader an understanding of the context of the study. The chapter further provides research motivation and the potential value for the study. I end this chapter by outlining the overview of each chapter.

Chapter Two offers an overview of how learner leadership fits in within the critical paradigm. It critically analyses and reviews literature on both contemporary and traditional theories of leadership, that shaped and informed this research. It finally provides an important foundation of the analytical framework used in this study.

In **Chapter Three,** I present my research design and the methodological aspects utilised in this study. The chapter describes how I used different data generation techniques, such as interviews, questionnaires, workshops, and observation to explore a case study on how Grade 9 leadership opportunities can be developed.

Chapter four analyses the data generated from various techniques, sorting it into patterns and categories. This chapter aims at answering the research questions stated earlier in this chapter. The chapter further discusses the research findings. It provides an in-depth analysis of the data and yields several matters such as the understanding of the concept learner leadership, involvement of Grade 9s in leadership at the school, the enhancement of Grade 9 leadership

opportunities, inhibiting factors for Grade 9s' leadership, and the potential contribution of Change Laboratories and the learner leadership club that was established.

In C**hapter Five** I conclude the study. The chapter affords a reflection and critical overview of what prompted the study and why the study is considered valuable. This chapter further gives a summary of the key findings. In addition, the chapter outlines valuable lessons learnt and provides tentative recommendations about some of the issues that need to be considered in light of my research in the same field. The chapter further presents the study's limitations, my personal reflections, and ends with a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

> Research may be done alone – but it is never done in isolation. The production of new knowledge is fundamentally dependent on past knowledge. Knowledge builds and it is virtually impossible for researchers to add to a body of literature if they are not conversant with it. (O'Leary, 2004, p. 66)

2.1 Introduction

As indicated earlier, this study is focused on exploring learner leadership opportunities at a state urban secondary school in Omusati Region in Namibia. The following questions drove my research project:

1. What is the understanding of the grade 9 learners and teachers of the concept learner leadership at the school?
2. How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school?
3. What are the potential mechanisms/underlying causes that promote or inhibit Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?
4. How can the Grade 9s leadership be enhanced at the school?
5. What potential contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops make to the development of the participants?
6. How did the learner leadership club bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders (participants)?

The above sub research questions for this study provided an answer to the overarching research question for this study which is: *How can Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities be developed in the school?*

This chapter reviews some local and international literature on the concept of learner leadership. The purpose is to arrive at an understanding of what other scholars say about it and how it is understood and to view the factors that enhance, or hamper execution of learner leadership as reported in literature. This chapter also presents distributed leadership as the conceptual framework for the study and Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a method and an analytical tool for this study.

I begin with a discussion and definition of the broader terms of leadership and management as the foundations underpinning the concept of learner leadership. These two concepts are often seen as synonymous and usually used interchangeably. Since I use this concepts in my study, it is essential to be clear on what the distinctions are between leadership and management.

I then move on to discuss the phenomenon under study, beginning with the background of learner leadership, followed by the various definitions of learner leadership, learner voice and the benefits of learners' participation in leadership. Factors hindering learner leadership from being enacted are also presented in this section. I then end this section with ways in which learner participation can be improved at schools, drawing from published research and literature. Thereafter, I present distributed leadership, as a leadership theory which forms the conceptual framework of my study and from which the concept of learner leadership is derived. followed by traditional leadership theories where distributed leadership is emerged.

Moreover, traditional views of leadership provide a more mature understanding of contemporary ideas at the same time provides a historical overview of leadership where distributed leadership is emerged. I also discuss CHAT as an analytical tool that framed this study. I then concluded the chapter by summarising the main points.

The next section discusses the concepts of leadership and management. For my study, it is essential to be clear on what leadership is as distinct from management.

2.2 Educational leadership and management

2.2.1 Overview of leadership and management

My study focuses on exploring learner leadership in an urban state school in Namibia. This segment deliberates the background and progression of the two concepts, leadership and management. It further scrutinises their definitions and differences to give a clear understanding of what leadership is, as opposed to management. The relationship of these concepts is presented here to explore the link between management and leadership.

The origins and development of educational management as a distinct discipline began in the United States in the late 1960s (Culbertson, Hughes, Bush & Glatter, as cited in Bush, 2003). During this decade, "leadership has gone through several conceptions which made it a

contested concept, arbitrary and abstract" (Uushona, 2012, p. 12). The concepts of leadership and management are thus derived from business concepts termed by shifting discourses which aim to emphasise the usefulness of leadership and management in education. Now that their overview has been explored, I move on to their definitions.

2.2.2. Definitions of educational leadership and management

This subsection provides the definitions of these two concepts. For my study, I have drawn from the idea that these are different concepts and that both are crucial for school effectiveness. Bush (2003) states that "educational management is the field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organisations" (p. 1). He further added that due to its development taken mostly from other established disciplines, there is no single accepted definition.

The definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective, thus there is no agreed definition of leadership as a concept, therefore Yukl (2002) defines leadership using three dimensions: *leadership as influence, leadership and values, and leadership and vision* as the basis for developing a working definition (p. 3). He however cautions that there is no correct definition, but that some definitions are more useful than others (*ibid.*).

The above notion is supported by Cuban (1988) whose definition "shows that the influence process is purposeful in that it is intended to lead to specific outcomes" (p. 193). On the same note, Bossert (as cited in Bush, 2003, p. 5) sees influence as "an institutional quality flowing through the internal networks of the organisation".

Additionally, "most definitions reflect assumptions that leadership involves social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation" (Yukl, 2002, p. 3). Bush (2003) defines leadership as "the ability to influence the actions of individuals or groups and is associated with vision and the ability to articulate this vision through an organisation, the ability to direct change and being future oriented" (p. 5). Furthermore, Yukl (2002) explains that "leadership involves development and change" (p. 3). To complement the above definitions, "leadership is a relationship of influence directed towards a goal or outcomes" (Christie, 2010, p. 695). Undoubtedly, it is an ability to utilise persuasion.

Furthermore, leadership is often useful when framed in terms of a social relationship with the power to influence others. In most cases, it is directed towards achieving objectives and is thus affiliated with vision and values. It is for this reason that leadership can take place both formally and informally at any institution and can be performed at all levels in an organisation. This is significant since leadership "can be found and built throughout the school" (Christie, 2010, p. 696). To add to Christie's notion, learner leadership in the form of distributed leadership is encouraged at schools.

To sum up the definition of leadership, I agree with Bass and Stogdill (1990, p. 11) who argue that the meaning of leadership may depend on the kind of institution in which it is found. He points out that leadership can be viewed as: a focus group process, as a matter of personality, as a matter of enduring compliance, as an exercise to influence behaviours, as forms of persuasion, as power relations, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, or as a differentiated role.

However, educational management as defined by Bolam (1999) is "an executive function for carrying out agreed policy" (p. 194). Similarly, Sapre (2002) states that "management is a set of activities directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources to achieve organisational goals" (p. 102). Glatter's (1979) definition of management, continues to be applicable as it "serves to identify the scope of the subject" (p. 16).

Glatter (1979) contends that "management studies are concerned with the internal operation of educational institutions and with their relationships with their environment to which they are formally responsible" (p. 16). This means educational institutions must involve communities and school governing bodies in day to day affairs of the school.

Management relates to structures and processes by which organisations meet their goals and central purposes (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997). Unlike leadership, management is tied to formal positions not people. For example, if the school is not managed effectively, the learning and teaching will suffer. This is supported by Christie (2001), Fleisch and Christie (2004), Roberts and Roach (2006) and Taylor (2007) who state that decent management is crucial for the operation of schools.

Moreover, management is concerned with the operation of an educational organisation and "it is directed at the achievement of certain educational objectives" (Bush, 2003, p. 2). This means that management involves dealing with systems, structures and the culture of the school for effective day to day operations (Naidu, 2008).

To conclude the definition of management, I strongly agree with the notion that management in an educational context consists of management tasks to develop conducive circumstances in the school such as : planning, which is used to develop planning schedules to integrate and co-ordinate activities; organising, to bring order, remove conflicts, establish an environment for team work; monitoring, to monitor school work to ensure that it is being accomplished as planned and correcting any significant deviations; leading and guiding, to assist teachers in attaining their goals and targets to provide the necessary direction and support (Gous, Eloff, & Moen, 2006, p. 1).

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that both concepts are of equal significance, in the sense that they are needed by organisations, to perform effectively and achieve their goals. It requires a great leader for effective management to take place. This is supported by Bush (2003, p. 9) who indicates that "organisations which are over managed but under led eventually lose any sense of purpose". This means "managing is doing things, making things happen" and management is an "activity which is engaged in by all members of the educational institutions". Bush and West-Burnham, (as cited in Naidu, 2008, p. 4) further add that leadership is "the ability to articulate visions throughout an organisation, to guide a school through various challenges by achieving a shared vision based on a shared value". The clear distinction between these concepts is now unloaded. Next, is a discussion on how leadership and management are linked to one another.

2.2.3. The relationship between leadership and management

The two concepts can be executed differently but they are "interrelated and inseparable" (Uushona, 2012, p. 11). This view is confirmed by Davidoff and Lazarus (as cited in Thurlow, 2003) who stress that "it is important to note that leadership and management are closely associated functions which cannot be attended to separately" (p. 37). In support of this view, McCrimmon (2007) states that "separating leadership and management in terms of a style is a dead end, simply because leadership can be shown by quiet or forceful arguments based on hard facts" (p. 1). He further argues that an "inspiring leader induces us to change direction

while an inspiring manager motivates us to work harder to get a tough job done on time" (McCrimmon, 2007, p. 1).

It was significant to me to make some distinction between leadership and management and to comprehend what is meant by these concepts, as my study intended to explore the learner leaders' views in the school. With the above explanations in mind, I tried to understand if the notion of learner leadership was fully understood in schools. Thus, the next section clarifies the aspects surrounding the phenomenon under study.

2.3 Learner leadership

The previous section gives us a clear understanding of what 'leadership' is from 'management'. Further to this, it pointed out that leadership can be found and developed throughout the school. So, learner leadership is encouraged to be distributed at schools. It is for this reason that this section discusses learner leadership, the focus area of my study. The section starts with the background of learner leadership. It further gives the definition of the concept learner leadership. Other aspects discussed under this section are: benefits of learner participation, leadership and learner voice and factors that hinder the execution of learner leadership. I begin by sketching the background of learner leadership.

2.3.1 Background of learner leadership

There is a concern raised in the research of Mitra and Gross (2009, p. 525), that there is an "increased demand for accountability and visible results of learner achievement that has narrowed the vision and purpose of schooling in recent years in terms of democratic participation". Westheimer and Kahne (2003) further indicate a decreasing opportunity for pupils to have an independent voice in the education process. Consequently, learner leadership developed to raise learner voice in schools and to answer some concerns which researchers have identified in their studies.

The above concern raises the question: "How do we invoke learner voice and develop their agency as leaders?" (Grant & Nekondo, 2016, p. 16). The progression of traditional educational theories to contemporary theories followed as a response to an increased demand for better services in schools. One such way of responding to the above concern was a need to create opportunities to develop learner leadership to "invoke learner voice and develop agency to

expand opportunities for learners to work in participatory ways with their peers on issues that are of concern to them" (Grant & Nekondo, 2016, p. 16). The need for learners to take up leadership roles became imperative, hence the introduction of distributed leadership theory which underpins the notion of shared leadership, of which learner leadership is an example. This is supported by Grant (2015), that learner leadership clubs give a space for leadership where learners reveal their concerns or learning issues important to them. Uushona (2012) adds that most of the school population are learners, therefore they need to participate and contribute fully in several aspects of the school, including leadership. As a result, leadership is not limited to formal authority, it can be exercised by anyone within the school, be it learners or teachers, other than the principal.

Before moving on to define the concept learner leadership, I first wish to clarify how I will be using the term 'learner' instead of 'student' to refer to school going youth in Namibia. Henceforth, I use the term 'learner voice' in this chapter which contrasts "with the international literature which refers to the voices of learners as 'student voice'" (Grant, 2015, p. 95).

2.3.2 Definitions of learner leadership

There seems to be little agreement on the exact definition of the term learner leadership. Uushona (2012, p. 21) argues that "there is no generic definition of what learner leadership is". Consequently, few studies have been done concerning learner leadership, especially in the Namibian context (Uushona, 2012). However, there are characteristics of learner leadership which some authors, such as Theron and Botha (1990), Mordaunt (2009), Rudduck and Flutter (2000), Clarke (2007) and McGregor (2006), stress in their discussion of this topic and these characteristics are:

- It is a relational process;
- It involves external community;
- It involves interactions and building relationships with other learners, peer leaders and other members of the school;
- It involves many types of leadership;
- It may develop through participation.

In the context of my study, learner leadership is simply defined as providing opportunities to learners at various levels within educational institutions to lead either formally or informally with respect to the day to day school activities. In addition, Theron and Botha (1990) define learner leadership as a "system of learner leadership found in every school by means of which learners take an active part in activities in a directive capacity" (p. 145). Another definition of learner leadership is that of Mordaunt (as cited in Uushona, 2012) who defines learner leadership as "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).

From the definitions above, learner leadership seeks learners' participation in school whereby all learners have rights, and encourages ethical behaviour and personal responsibility towards school affairs. For a definition of the concept learner leadership and a general understanding of the phenomenon one may consider looking at learner voice and the potential value of learners' participation in leadership, which are presented in the next subsections respectively.

2.3.3 Leadership and learner voice

Mitra and Gross (2009) define learner voice 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). In support of learner involvement in leadership, Mitra and Gross indicate that giving students "a voice reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives that adults cannot full replicate without this partnership" (p. 523). On the other hand, Day and Harris (2002, p. 960) argue that:

> The type of leadership required for successful schools' improvement in the 21st century is not simply that associated with a role or function but instead is a dynamic between individuals within or without an organisation in which effective leaders focus on the leadership among individuals within a school and promotion of pedagogical leadership which places an emphasis upon the development of the school through shared purpose and the development of others.

In agreement with Day and Harris, it is only by actively involving learners in the realisation of schools' undertakings, that one can hope to make the kind of commitment necessary to foster continuous school improvement. Hence, the notion of learner leadership needs to be emphasised. To Fullan's question (1982) asking "what would happen if we treated the learner as someone whose voice matters in the affairs of the school", Flutter (2006) responds by saying

that we need spaces of leadership from which young people can 'speak back' regarding what they consider to be important and valuable about their learning (p. 282). Coincidently, Kohl, Neuman and Theodore (1994) find it discouraging to note that in many cases the interests of the learners who are the major benefactors of our educational endeavours are marginalised. These ideas are supported as well by Mitra and Gross (2009), who believe that the participation of learners in decision-making "highlights ways in which young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working to improve school conditions for themselves and others" (p. 522).

I believe that it is a necessity for learner voice to be heard, as there are many benefits involved (Grant, 2015). This is supported by Mitra and Gross (2009) who state that there is a "connection between the types of student voice initiatives desired and the contexts in which student voice is pursued" (p. 522). If learner voice is taken up seriously, this helps to increase the attention and focus on issues that matter to them most, whenever the need arises.

Significantly, giving learners a voice, does not only "offer opportunities to educational stakeholders to realise the unique knowledge they possess and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate without partnership" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524), but it does also "offer opportunities to work with adults to make changes in schools such as collecting data on school problems and implementing solutions" (*ibid.*).

Mitra and Gross further emphasise that lack of learner voice in schools makes them feel less valued and they might not be interested in participating in the affairs of the school. Thus, building capacity for participating in decision-making and questioning issues concerning them around the school, helps schools to re-engage learners in the school community (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Archard (2013) undoubtedly points out that opportunities for students to have a voice regarding their understanding of leadership, will allow their teachers to turn to understand how they construct leadership.

I conclude the learner voice section with closing remarks from Shuttle (2007), whose report concludes that "learner voice needs to be woven into all aspects of the institution, as a network of engagement thus paving the way towards a leadership model that is increasingly student-led" (p. 45). An example of this would be distributed leadership that framed this study and is discussed in Section 2.4.1.

2.3.4 Benefits of learners' participation in leadership

There appears to be many benefits to learner participation in leadership in schools. Here are some of the key thoughts from several scholars.

Archard (2013) views learner leadership as "the opportunity for learners to play an active role in schooling life and acting as a role model for young students in school" (p. 347). Archard indicates that the moment learners get a chance to participate, "it will be for the betterment of most students, it as well gives students the chance to implement their leadership skills" (2013, p. 349). He emphasises that "leadership should be practiced through the influence of others and through the notion of servant leadership, ultimately resulting in a positive outcome for all involved" (*ibid.*). When learners are participating in leadership at schools, they tend to achieve common goals through collaboration.

Moreover, Morrison (2006) identifies the effectiveness of students' leadership participation as having a positive impact on institutional change, providing student feedback and informing governing bodies. In leadership, learners develop leadership skills and "learn how to become citizens prepared to actively engage in their communities and participate in democracy" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522).

Engaging learners in running the affairs of the school is important and it is advocated for by Flutter who states that "an alternative way of investigating the effects of the environment in schools is to ask who learns in them – the students themselves" (2006, p. 184). Additionally, Mitra and Gross (2009, p. 523) made the first stage of their pyramid "to be heard", with the belief that "giving students a voice in such reform conversations reminds teachers and administrators that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools that adults cannot fully replicate without this partnership". Mitra and Gross' (2009) belief reminds us as educational stakeholders that learners can lead and make a difference with the potential skills they have in leading.

Although learners' involvement in decision-making and raising their concerns on what matters to them in their institutions is limited, Mitra and Gross (2009) believe that involving learners in leadership "highlights ways in which young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working together to improve school conditions for themselves and

others" (p. 522). On the other hand, Flutter (2006, p. 182) states that "little is known about the relationship between the physical environment and learning, and the school environment can have a significant influence on students' learning" thus, it is important to foster an environment in which learners are treated with respect, valued and trusted, "cultivating an atmosphere of care built around relationships" (Smyth, 2006, p. 282).

Finally, learner participation increases youth attachment to school and that may yield improved academic outcomes (Mitra, 2004). This can then ensure that the practice of leadership by learners in schools is "comprehensive and aimed towards the development of learner leaders for the future" (Archard, 2013, p. 349). Although there are several benefits of learner leadership practices in schools, challenges hampering the participation of learner leadership are also encountered and presented below.

2.3.5 Factors hindering participation in learner leadership

Much as there is broad agreement on the benefits of learner leadership, literature also identifies many challenges and inhibiting factors. Here are some of the key ideas drawn from literature.

2.4.5.1 Traditional views on learners as leaders

Traditional views on leadership are that "it is parents who have the responsibility to think and take decisions on behalf of their children" (Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008, p. 13). She further points out that culturally, it is "taboo to have children around the table when adults discuss important issues, and this hampered the development of learner participation in school governance" *(ibid.)*. The perception of 'kids are just kids' and that they are not capable of leading, is still dominant in schools, thus hindering their participation in learner leadership.

Teachers and parents generally speak too readily on behalf of learners and often misunderstand or disregard their perspectives (Fielding, 2001). As Mabovula (2009) claims "when learners are given a voice, it is often a mere 'stamp of approval' rather than a commitment to democratic participation" (p. 220). Thus, learners might not play an active role in leading others due to how they are perceived in the school by teachers and their peers and this type of behaviour wears away at the learners' self-confidence.

2.3.5.2 Policy limitations

Amongst several educational policies in Namibia, the *Education Act 16 of 2001*, Section 60 (1) provides for the establishment of "a body of learners to be known as the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in every public secondary school in accordance with the prescribed guidelines which must determine the composition, duties and functions of such council" (p. 33). Further to this, is the *Regulations made under Education Act (Act 16 of 2001),* Clause 29 (c) stipulates that "only a learner who will be in one of the two highest grades at the school in the following year may be nominated". The LRC replaced the prefect body. This council is limited to around 12 learners only, from the two highest grades at the school that need to represent the entire learner population of their schools. Since the said regulation provides this opportunity to learners in senior grades only, there is a need to consider all learners in school leadership and not just those who are limited to existing structures. In agreement, Angus (2006) supports the inclusivity of learners regardless of their age or their skills, in school leadership.

2.3.5.3 Lack of training

Although the Namibian *Education Act 16 of 2001* provides for the establishment of the LRC, there are no proper guidelines that stipulate the training of LRC either regionally or nationally. This is pointed out by Shekupakela-Nelulu (2008, p. 56) who states, "that there seems to be no regional or national training programmes in place nor any form of induction to prepare learners for their new responsibilities". This hinders the leadership roles within the LRC as they have little guidance on what is expected from them.

2.3.5.4 Distrust

Distrust implies the absence of trust of one person by another. For learner leadership to flourish, school principals as hierarchical leaders need to trust learners with leadership responsibilities across the school. Trust is commonly defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Lee, Gillespie, Mann, & Wearing, 2010, p. 4). As Moose (2012) puts it "trust is likened to energy, it creates the conditions and mobilises people to actions" (p. 29). I can argue that without the principal's trust in the learners, the distribution of leadership will be inhibited, let alone of power and authority. Harris (2010) made a point that "a successful distribution of leadership depends upon the firm establishment of mutual trust" (p. 552). This means that a

leader should trust the other leaders, therefore a principal needs to trust learners to lead, for learner leadership to progress in the school.

There might be more factors that inhibit learners in leadership not yet uncovered, as only a few studies have been conducted that I came across regarding learner leadership. It is therefore our responsibility as scholars to explore them further. Although there are challenges which schools might encounter, parents, teachers and learners need to work together and encourage learner leadership both at home and in schools. The next section following discusses a few possible ways on how learner participation in schools could be improved.

2.3.7. Ways in which learner participation in leadership can be developed at schools

As most researchers advocate the inclusivity of learners in leadership participation, below are ways that could encourage learner leadership at schools.

2.3.7.1. Enhancing learner voice

Fullan's (1982) question posed: "What would happen if we treated the learner as someone whose voice matters in the affairs of the school?" generated another question – how are we going to make sure learners' voices are being heard?

In answering these two questions we can draw ideas from the pyramid of Mitra and Gross (2009) who suggest that the involvement of learners begins at the bottom with the most common and basic form of student voice 'being heard', whereby school personnel listen to students to learn about their experiences in the school (p. 523). It is therefore against this backdrop that this study promotes learner leadership involvement, evolving with the primary purpose of hearing learners' voice on what matters to them in their institutions, as well as to enhance leadership capabilities; something that is heavily influenced by the first stage of Mitra and Gross' pyramid presented below (Figure 2.1). Contrary to that, Flutter (2006) advocates for inclusivity of people at grassroots level, as opposed to generalising the effects of the environment in schools. He further says that" the great thing is to ask those who learn in them – the student themselves" (p. 184). Shuttle (2007) concludes that learner voice needs to be woven into all aspects of the institution, networks of engagement, thus paving the way towards a leadership model that is increasingly student-led.

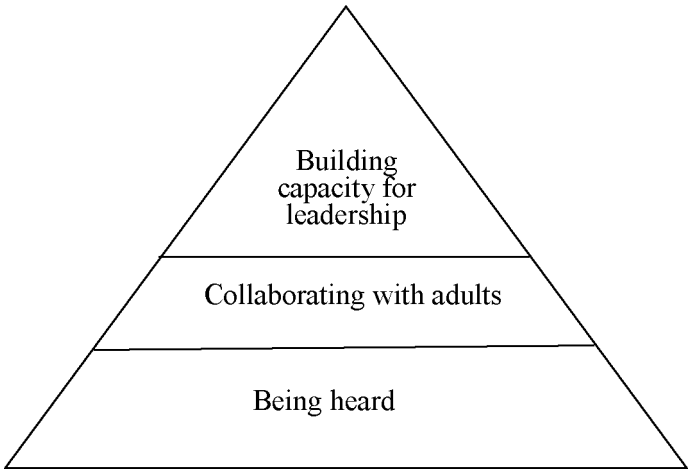


Figure 2.1: Pyramid of student voice (Adapted from Mitra and Gross, 2009, p. 523)

The learner voice is further enhanced through 'collaborating with adults' which results in learners' 'capacity for leadership being built', as illustrated by both the second and third stage of Mitra and Gross' student voice pyramid above. In a nutshell, the second stage advocates that learners create partnerships with teachers and administrators to "improve in curriculum and assessment development, such as by students offering instant feedback during staff development sessions" (Fielding, 2001; Ruddock & Flutter, 2000 as cited in Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). The collaboration can also "improve classroom practice directly by teachers working with students to co-create curriculum and to engage in dialogues about ways to shape the learning occurring in the classroom" *(ibid.)*. At the third level 'building capacity for leadership', research has found that offering learners opportunities to participate in school decision-making "will shape their lives and the lives of their peers, increasing student voice in schools offers a way to re-engage students in the school community".

2.3.7.2. Establishment of learner leadership clubs

Establishment of learner leadership clubs provides opportunities for leadership to be distributed among learners. Spillane (2006) defines distributed leadership as a "collective interaction among leaders, followers and their situation" (p. 4). He further emphasises that it is about leadership practice, not simply roles and positions and it is not just the actions of heroes (p. 4). It is through distributed leadership in schools that learners are afforded a voice and involvement in their institutions. In support of Spillane's ideas, Smyth (2006) argues that to pursue the forms of leadership that listen to and attend to the voices of the most informed, yet marginalised witnesses of schooling, the learners, should be the most crucial issue of our times.

He further says that the disengagement from schools by learners, has equal negative effects as the educational policy regimes have made schools an unpleasant environment to both educators and learners (Smyth, 2006). I agree with Smyth's idea that when students feel their involvement goes unnoticed by the school, they develop resentment and feel that schooling is simply not worth the emotional and psychological investment necessary to warrant their serious involvement *(ibid.)*. Hence, the concept of learner voice needs to be realised.

Indeed, the voice of learners needs to be enhanced, as Smyth calls for "courageous forms of leadership that fearlessly promote the importance of student ownership and student voice in respect of learning" (2006a, p. 282) and this can be done through dispersing of roles and responsibilities of learners in school leadership. This is known as distributed leadership, which is discussed below.

2.4 Distributed leadership

There are various contemporary educational leadership theories out there, but I only focus on distributed leadership as it frames my study. In the following section, I present contemporary theories of leadership which are considered to be informative and supportive of learners' participation in leadership in schools, as learner leadership is the focus of my study.

For my study, contemporary theories urge leadership as a relational function, a process of social influence and consent, where one or more persons can solicit the aid and support of others in accomplishing a common task. I deduce this from van der Mescht and Grant (2014) that "leadership is detached from person, it is not positional, and it is infinite and can spring from anywhere, outside or inside of school" (p. 16).

The current literature that is impacting educational leaders within public education, can be traced back to Burns (1978) and his theory about organisational leadership of the late 20th century. A range of researchers concur that transformational leadership theory and distributed leadership theory has had a tremendous impact on educational leadership theory and practices in the 21st century. This is supported by Cooper (2012) who explains that "the educational era in which one person leads whether they are a gifted orator or an effective manager, has become archaic" (p. 55). He further adds that "in order for educational leaders to be successful in closing the educational gaps for all students, they must strategically collaborate with followers"

(Cooper, 2012, p. 55). Cooper (2012) further emphasises that "educational leaders must interact with followers in a fashion that encourages and utilises the strengths for the greater good of student enhancement and achievement, while guiding them to the necessary resources, professional development, and leadership opportunities to emerge as aspiring educational leaders" (p. 55).

The section below presents distributed leadership with relevance to the phenomenon of learner leadership under study. It provides a view of leadership as stretched over the learners in schools for learners to have access to leadership. Their voice needs to be heard because learners know what matters to them.

2.4.1. Distributed leadership theory

2.4.1.1. Overview of distributed leadership theory

Distributed leadership theory surpasses the traditional managerial leadership style and continues to build on Burns' transformational leadership theory. Educational researchers define distributed leadership theory as the interdependence of the individual and the environment, showing how human activity is distributed among the interactive web of actors, artefacts, and the situation as the appropriate unit of analysis for studying practice. The leadership practice and behaviour are distributed among material and cultural artefacts of the environment and through other people in collaborative efforts to complete complex tasks (Spillane, 2006).

My study is framed by distributed leadership theory because it is a concept within which learner leadership is made possible. I argue along with Grant (2005) that "one person can no longer be expected to lead and manage a school effectively" (p. 46). Instead, for a school to be effective, "the authority to lead needs to be dispersed within the school between and among people" (Muijs & Harris, 2003, p. 437).

2.4.1.2. Definition of distributed leadership

There are various understandings of what distributed leadership is. Muijs and Harris (2003) view distributed leadership as "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture" (p. 31).

Gamage (2006, p. 113) defines distributed leadership as:

> A form of collective agency incorporating the activities of many individuals in a school, who works towards mobilising and guiding other teachers in the process of instructional change. It extends the boundaries of leadership significantly to increase the levels of teacher involvement to encompass a wide variety of input, skills and expertise.

In a South African context much like a Namibian context, Grant (2005) views distributed leadership as leadership that involves the distribution of leadership across the organisation rather than restricting of leadership to people in formal management positions. This means that distributed leadership is a process in which all stakeholders are involved in leadership roles with the aim to bring change in the institution. It is thus "a form of collective leadership where all people in the organisation including learners can act as leaders at one time or another" (Grant, 2005, p. 44). In addition, distributed leadership is "a group of activities where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where leadership is fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon" (Grant, 2008, p. 87).

Moreover, distributed leadership has a visionary strategy of improving working together as a team and achieving better pupil outcomes at the end (Coleman, 2005). This view is supported by Silins and Mulford (2002, as cited in Harris, 2008) who stress that "student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them" (p. 180). Similarly, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) concur and explain that "the more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes" (p. 5). Therefore, the distribution of leadership roles amongst learners can improve learners and the whole school's achievement. Next, I discuss the characteristics of distributed leadership.

2.4.1.3 Characteristics of distributed leadership

Gunter (2005) contends that the distribution of authority and responsibility depends on power sources and interaction. She suggests that distributed leadership is currently in research, characterised variously as authorised and democratic (p. 51). For her, distributed leadership is "authorised" when the principal distributes leadership roles to teachers in the form of a hierarchical system. This characterisation is also termed delegated leadership. 'Dispersed' distributed leadership promotes the private interest of the individual in the form of collective actions. 'Authorised' distributed leadership is NOT distributed leadership – it is simply

delegation. Gunter further states that under the latter system, "the work goes on in an organisation without the formal working of a hierarchy" (p. 52). 'Democratic' distributed leadership opens the doors for learners to take initiative, while engaging with the goals and values of the organisation (Gunter, 2005). These characterisations are useful to my study because they offer a framework for describing and explaining the various practices of leadership, as they play out in my study. Next, I discuss the significance of distributed leadership in schools.

2.4.1.5 Why is distributed leadership needed in schools?

Research indicates that there is a strong need for distributed leadership in our current educational context to bring about change in leadership activity. Hopes that the transformation of schools lies with extraordinary leaders have proved both non-realistic and unsustainable. The idea of leadership "as distributed across multiple people and situations has proven to be a more useful framework for understanding the realities of schools and how they might be improved" (Timperley, 2005, p. 1). On the same note, Harris and Spillane (2008) agree that due to the dynamic nature of our world, new responsive approaches to leadership are required. Therefore, the theory of distribution is useful to understand how power is distributed in organisations such as schools, due to the following reasons.

Firstly, distributed leadership is an interactional process that is socially and culturally situated using tools to accomplish an object. This is supported by Harris (2007, p. 323) who argues that there is "the need to connect shifts in leadership practice to more explicit emphasis on the effects of distributed leadership on schools and students". She further stresses that "leadership ought to be distributed or shared amongst all stakeholders of an organisation to achieve the desired outcomes of schooling" (*ibid.*).

Secondly, distributed leadership can be applied in schools by involving learner voice in formal and informal activities. Distributed leadership is a lens to develop individuals such as teachers and learners so that they can be agents of change. Whitehead (2009) relates that "leaders are found at all levels of society and are important figures who initiate, integrate values, facilitate change, as well as broker, distribute and share power" (p. 848). More than one leader in an organisation relates to a positive outcome (Spillane, 2006). In distributive leadership practice, collaboration is the most significant aspect where individuals need to take on leadership positions through interactions and relationships, rather than aiming for individual development

and change (Spillane, 2006; Harris & Spillane, 2008). These interactions should rather focus toward learners and their own 'voice' in decision-making (Flutter, 2006).

Thirdly, another aspect to an effective means of distributed leadership that needs to be encouraged and initiated, is the concept of 'authentic leadership' (Whitehead, 2009; Williams, 2011). Whitehead (2009) defines an authentic leader as "one who is committed to organisational success within the construct of social values. It is not enough to be genuine or authentic in nature, they are effective and committed to organisational success" (p. 849).

Authentic leaders can be developed through informal and formal activities through active participation (Whitehead, 2009). This study intends to develop authentic leaders amongst learners through an intervention to develop leadership capacities in them. Thus, I agree with Harris and Spillane (2008) who believe that "in distributed leadership there are multiple leaders in an organisation and the leadership activities are widely shared within and between organisations" (p. 31).

Lastly, in a Namibian society that is committed to democracy "a core purpose of education must be to instil in learners the principles and value of democratic citizenship" (Grant & Nekondo, 2016, p. 15). As Angus explains, the moral purpose of education and educational leadership must be "to promote in schools, as social institutions the core values of social justice, democracy, and equity" (2006, p. 374). Admittedly, "a democratic society requires citizens who are willing to participate, competent enough to think critically, able to distinguish right or wrong, make wise civic choices and have a social conscience" (Nodding, 2005, p. 11). This is since "democracy is a way of life that is essential for the well-being and growth of individuals and societies" (Luff & Webster, 2014, p. 139).

Although distributed leadership signifies a tendency towards openness, sharing and participation of learner leadership in schools, it is of significance to look at distributed leadership's criticisms or shortcomings from literatures.

2.4.1.4 The 'dark side' of distributed leadership

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) assert that a distributed leadership perspective recognises that in any organisation there are multiple leaders where leadership activities are widely shared within the organisation. This means that there needs to be a redistribution of

power to create space for the distribution of leadership. In Hamatwi's view "such a shift may not come cheaply and without negative implications" (2015, p. 21). Despite the solid desire to distribute leadership, principals remain held responsible for whatever transpires in schools (MacBeath, 2005). It has been extra contended by Van der Mescht and Tyala, (2008) that some school heads strongly feel that they are the ones who are answerable to the external authorities and therefore hold on for fear of losing control and end up failing as individuals and as a team. This shift in terms of exercising power and authority from the hierarchical leader to any other possible leader in schools is bound to weaken accountability of principals, hence Harris (2013) refers to this dilemma as "a dark side of distributed leadership" (p. 551).

A further criticism of distributed leadership is that the literature lacks clarity on the power re-distribution within the school where the distinctions between followers and leaders tend to blur. In addition, there is "no mention made of the kinds of structural barriers such as gender and race that might provoke questions about including a wider range of people in leadership" (Lumby, 2013, p. 583). Distributed leadership literature usually does not explicitly spell out how the issues of power re-distribution, gender, race and age are accommodated within the school structures and what enables or constrains leadership practice therein. Thus, as Lumby (2013) points out, "the assertion that everyone could lead is not generally accompanied by deep reflection on the implications of this stance and what inclusion of more in leadership might imply" (p. 583).

Despite the criticisms above, contemporary theories demand democratic participation in decision-making in organisations. There is a need for learners to be represented and get involved in decision-making at school level. It is therefore that the next section delineates distributed leadership as a socio-cultural practice.

2.4.1.5 Distributed leadership theory as a socio-cultural practice

School leaders must be successful in the process of practising distributed leadership characteristics which enable them to share and surrender power to proficient individuals who will carry out the educational leader's vision and goals for the school community.

Green (2010) states that consequently, if distributed leadership is to be effective, school leaders must create a trust-based culture wherein teachers and learners are satisfied to the point that

they collaborate with the school leader and assume leadership roles and responsibilities for enhanced student achievement and growth.

Leadership practice from a distributed perspective is a product of the joint interactions of the school leader, followers, and their educational situation, which includes tools and routines. Distributed leadership is not just a form of shared leadership, but it is a collection of interactions among leaders, followers and their situation that is vital. The "situation of leadership isn't just the context within which leadership practice unfolds; it is the defining element of leadership practice" (Spillane, 2006, p. 4). The figure hereunder shows constituting elements of distributed leadership practice.

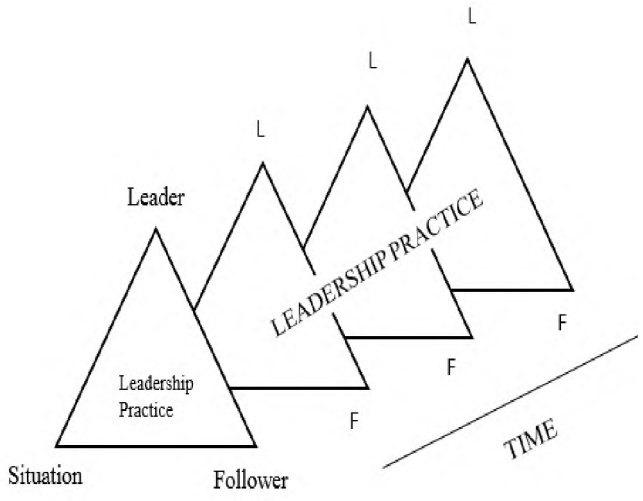


Figure 2.2: Leadership practice from a distributed perspective (Adapted from Spillane, 2006, p. 3)

The next section is about traditional leadership theories that provide a more mature understanding of contemporary ideas, at the same time providing a historical overview of leadership theories.

2.5 Traditional leadership theories

This section presents traditional theories that provide a more mature understanding of contemporary ideas. This section picks out the key leadership theories that have formed the pillar of our understanding of leadership. They are connected to each other and within each theory, there are several leadership styles and characteristics that help us create a well-rounded understanding of leadership. More importantly, these theories can be used to help develop our skills as leaders.

According to Penn (2015, n.d.) "An overview of leadership theories is intended to provide a synopsis of some of the research conducted on leadership theories about the last five decades". The overview will help us to learn more about theories that might resonate with the reader, since the study focus is learner leadership. Every leader is unique thus no solitary theory is suitable for each leader. By learning more about different theories, "one begins to develop their own leadership approach" (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, "traditional leadership theories are those which were originally formulated in the 1960s or earlier, focusing on the relationship between the leader and his or her subordinate (junior) in terms of predicting outcomes such as performance" (Bryman, 1992, n.d.). Bryman (1992) in addition makes a distinction between these traditional theories of leadership and 'new leadership theories', which emerged in the 1980s. Traditional leadership theories include the trait approach which focuses on the physical appearance of a person, behavioural leadership style approaches which emphasise leaders' behaviour, contingency theory which acknowledges the importance of situational factors and transformational leadership. These are some of the traditional leadership theories discussed below.

Understanding leadership processes can help illustrate the limitations of current theory, as it can assist in the development of a more wide-ranging agenda for leadership research in the new era with direct significance to administrative practices (Knott-Craig, 2007).

2.5.1. Trait theories

In the early 1900s, the trait theory was developed to test the relationship between specialisations and productivity. It was introduced during the industrial revolution when many industries and factories were established. Knott-Craig (2007) points out that "several studies that have been carried out were unable to identify a set of traits that were common to all leaders" (p. 25). Similarly, Coleman, (as cited in Knott-Craig, 2007) says that the most effective leaders are similar in one crucial way in the sense that "they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence, coupled with self-regulatory, motivational, empathetic, self-awareness capabilities and exceptional social skills" (p. 25). This notion is in opposition to other research that everyone can become a leader regardless of their personal characteristics.

Penn (2015) suggests that the characteristics of the personality of a person make them effective leaders. This view is complemented by several academics that potential leaders can be

identified by studying the personality traits of individuals and corresponding them to the physical appearance and characteristics of actual leaders.

Trait theories of leadership identify specific personality traits such as being articulate, intelligence, social status and many others that distinguish leaders from non-leaders. They are based on the principle that leaders are born not made. Many researchers oppose this idea that one can develop such characteristics as part of one's personal leadership approach.

One of the major criticisms of trait theory is its simplistic approach and no consistent traits could be found. It fails to take account of other factors that can influence the development of a successful leader (Penn, 2015). Thus, situational leadership was introduced and that is discussed hereunder.

2.5.2 Leadership style (behavioural theory)

Behavioural models are based on a leader to follower hierarchy and are dependent on what leaders do. Knott-Craig (2007) believes that relationships in any organisation should be an extension of social life-styles, mirroring what society imagines. This theory contradicts the perspective that leaders are born. Penn (2015) indicates that behaviours must vary from situation to situation, in other words, one can learn how to act like a leader. In addition, it is not something that "needs a set of accepted traits, it depends on the right behaviours" (Penn, 2015, n.d.).

These theories of leadership recognise that leaders might be usefully described in terms of what they do (their behavioural style), rather than just the traits that they possess. The underlying distinction in the behavioural style approach is between two different styles of leadership: task orientation (where the leader is concerned with tasks and setting deadlines) and relationship-orientation (where the leader is concerned with the juniors such as being friendly and approachable, developing communication and encouraging participation) (Knott-Craig, 2007).

Further research (Fiedler, 1967) reveals that these leadership roles are reliant on conditions that exist in the work place. "Conditions could arise which nullified the need for leadership, for instances when extremely experienced subordinates or an unambiguous task is involved" (Knott-Craig, 2007, p. 27). Since this theory is based on categories of behaviours and

leadership styles, it created the myth that external behaviours were enough to establish leadership. This opened the door for contingency theory which is introduced next.

2.5.3 Contingency theory

Contingency leadership theory was developed by Fiedler (1967), who considered that the leadership style might be successful in the context of favourable and unfavourable situations for leaders. Penny (2015, n.d.) states that "contingency theory recommends matching a leader's style to the right situations which involves matching to the team of people and goals". For instance, leaders provide coaching, motivation, rewards and more to followers to accomplish their goals depending upon their abilities. Moreover, leaders change their style depending on the ability of their followers.

One of the main criticisms of both trait and behavioural theory with regards to leadership is that they fail to consider situational and organisational factors. Contingency theories consider both individuals and situational factors together in determining leader effectiveness. Fiedler (1967) predicts that leadership effectiveness will depend not only on leadership style, but also on several contextual factors: the relationship between the leader and subordinate; the degree of power held by the leader; and the structure of the task.

Many of these theories reviewed in this section have explanatory power – they help us to understand what makes a leader effective. Whilst "there is empirical evidence that supports the theoretical proposals of these models, they can be very difficult for occupational psychologists to apply in practice" (Penn, 2015, n.p.). Contingency models have been largely discarded as old-fashioned by new leadership theories such as transformational theory sketched below.

Traditional theories focus on the solo leader. These theories are based on a leader to follower hierarchy and are dependent on what leaders do. This implies that leadership has had a positional quality and was often equated with the person at the top of hierarchy. The traditional bureaucratic approach is no longer suitable in this new competitive global environment and organisations such as schools need to change to adapt to the new paradigm (Jamali, Khoury, & Sahyoun, 2006). It is for this reason that transformational leadership theory as a new traditional leadership theory was introduced.

2.5.4 Transformational theory

This is a traditional leadership theory that recognises leadership as an interactive process, which transforms both leaders and followers, resulting in positive organisational outcomes.

Transformational leadership theory defined by Burns (as cited in Goertzen, 2012, p. 83) "as a process that involves both leaders and followers interacting and working together to achieve common interests and mutually defined ends". Undoubtedly, "leaders play a major role in shaping the relationship of followers" (Goertzen, 2012, p. 83). In addition, (Northouse, 2001, n.p.) refers to transformational theory as a "process in which the leader engages others, builds trust and creates a connection that increases the motivation and morality in both the leaders and the followers".

Penn (2015) alludes that transformational theory is about a leader's ability to create a vision related to a goal that has meaning for both the leaders and followers. He additionally states that it focuses on others and their needs to help them reach their potential. Similarly, transformational leaders do more with their colleagues and behave in superior ways to achieve superior results.

The view of Burns is that a transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organisations. Moreover, there are significant studies that disclose sufficient results and evidence in favour of transformational leadership having a positive impact on how schools should be led, and this resulted in the distributed leadership theory presented earlier in this chapter.

Although a transformational leader creates enthusiasm, builds confidence, inspires followers and is concerned with personal and professional development of subordinates, transformational leadership theory does not consider the need for transferring and extending the leadership roles, duties, and responsibilities, to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the educational process and improvement of schools (Cooper, 2012, p. 44). Spillane (2006) states that instead of leadership being known as actions and reactions, leadership must be carried out through interactions amongst various stakeholders which offers a distinctively different perspective on leadership practice.

In traditional theories, leadership is centered on hierarchy, being born a leader and being task-centred as explained earlier. These theories are concerned with the central tension between task and person. This caused a shift in leadership evolution from being associated with trait thinking to contemporary leadership theories such as distributed discussed earlier.

Having discussed issues around contemporary and traditional educational theories regarding leadership, I now turn my attention to Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a method and an analytical tool for this study. The next section gives a review of some local and international literature regarding CHAT. The aim is to arrive at an understanding of what other scholars say about CHAT.

2.6 CHAT as an analytical tool for this study

2.6.1 Introduction

As indicated earlier in this chapter, this study is framed by distributed leadership that focuses on "an interaction of leaders, followers and their situation in the enactment of leadership tasks" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 11). Spillane et al. (2004) further state that distributed leadership draws largely on Engeström's activity theory and distributed cognition. It is for these reasons that CHAT's second generation was used to make sense of the data.

2.6.2 CHAT overview

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) originated in the work of Lev Vygotsky in Russia in the 1920s and early 1930s. Vygotsky's work into human development and learning was further developed by his co-workers and followers Alexei Leont'ev (1978, 1981, as cited in Masilela, 2017) and most recently by Yrjö Engeström (1999). CHAT is defined as "a learning development and agency theory which encompasses intergenerational knowledge transmission, learning from those who know more and collective generations of knowledge and innovation" (Mukute, 2015, p. 25). Like Spillane's distributed leadership model, CHAT is based on dynamic relationships and interactions (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). CHAT is understood to have developed through three generations of research known as activity systems (Engeström, 1999). Before I deliberate on the three generations of CHAT, I first wish to explain what an activity system is and its elements.

According to Sawchuk (2003), an activity system is the minimal meaningful context for understanding individual actions. Through activity systems, communities of practice plan and organise developmental programmes in context. Engeström (1987, p. 78) presents the elements of an activity system in CHAT and summarises them as follows:

> **Subject** in the activity system refers to an individual or a group of any size, pursuing a goal of the activity system in a purposeful way. The subject's relation with the object is mediated by four elements namely; rules, tools, community and division of labour. All these elements carry cultural meaning and historical development. **Object** is the orientation of the action being undertaken by the subject (s) while **Instrument** can be the artefacts or tools (including material, conceptual, language and symbols) which have socio-historical implications in their development. Additionally, **Rules** mediate the interaction between the subject and the community and between the subject and object, C**ommunity** refers to a group of people who share the same object. **Division of labour** refers to allocation of responsibilities to individuals or groups within the community of practice which mediate the relationship the community and the object. **Outcome** refers to the desired outcome of working on the object.

In this study, the *subject* refers to the research main participants (Grade 9 learners) and the *object* in this case is learner leadership development. The *mediated artefacts* include: prior knowledge, meetings, language, training, charts and others that contribute to the subject's action experiences within the activity system. The *division of labour* is shared responsibilities among the subjects and the *community* are other learners, teachers, principal and School Board members. The *rules* refer to policy, school rules, norms and tradition of the research site. Having explored what an activity system is, I now move on to the three generations of CHAT.

2.6.2.1 The first and second generations of CHAT

Activity theory has three generations. Since this study has drawn the second generation of CHAT, I will only discuss the first and second generations of CHAT, since the second generation is an extension of the first generation. Furthermore, the first generation of CHAT provides a foundation and overview to the presentation of the second generation of CHAT.

2.6.2.1 The first generation of CHAT

The first generation of CHAT, known as a triangular model of a 'complex mediated act' (Engeström, 2001), is where learning takes place through internalisation of knowledge; it was where Vygotsky introduced the concept of mediated action. According to Yamagata-Lynch (2010), mediated action is viewed as a means of interpersonal communications through interactions among **subjects, mediated artefacts** and **object** while the subject develops new

signs that help them make meaning of the world. Figure 2.2 below illustrates Vygotsky's first generation of CHAT known as a triad of subject, object and mediating artefacts (Engeström, 2001).

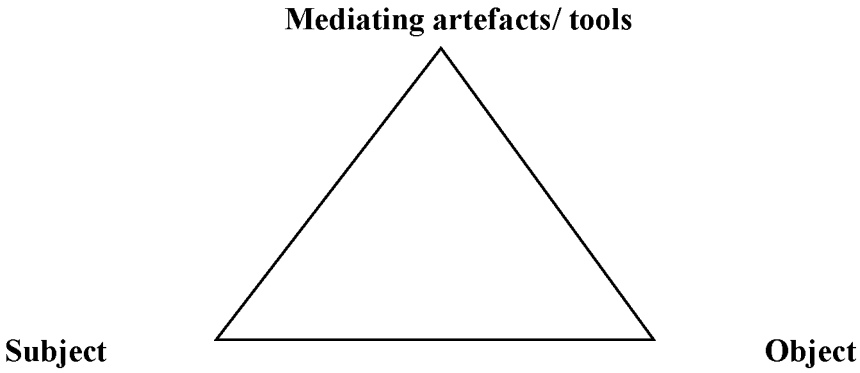


Figure 2.3: First generation of CHAT (adapted from Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 21)

Some of the shortcomings of the first generation of CHAT is that it was goal directed and that Vygotsky's work was too focused on the individuals and did not explain the progression of human activity and cultural evolution which themselves acted to organise and limit the activity itself (Daniels, 2004), thus Engeström created the second generation of CHAT discussed next.

2.6.2.2 The second generation of CHAT

After Vygotsky and Leont'ev had died, Yrjo Engeström developed the second generation and third generation of CHAT (Engeström, 2000; Yamagata- Lynch, 2003; Mukute, 2010). Daniels (2001) indicates that the importance of second generation CHAT is that it made real the interrelations between the subjects and their community. In acknowledgement of this, Engeström added relational concepts to Vygotsky's mediational triad which were community, rules and division of labour. The difference between these three elements of an activity system from each other is their object (Daniels, 2001).

Furthermore, Engeström (2001) explains that an activity system is diverse and multi-voiced as subjects construct the object of the activity system in different and conflicting ways, due to perspectives which are informed by their past and status in the division of labour. The shift to the second generation of CHAT was more concerned with the object of activity and how interpretations of the object give rise to a way of acting (Masilela, 2017). Furthermore, the activity system is identified and differentiated by its object or purpose and the division of labour

was introduced which he saw as a shaping thought (Foot, 2001, p. 9). As I stated earlier, this study is framed by the second generation that allowed me to work together with people at the research site, to investigate issues related to learner leadership, to share ideas, resolve problems and engage in expansive learning through Change Laboratory workshops. The second generation of CHAT illustrated below helped me to identify and analyse the central activity system and its elements.

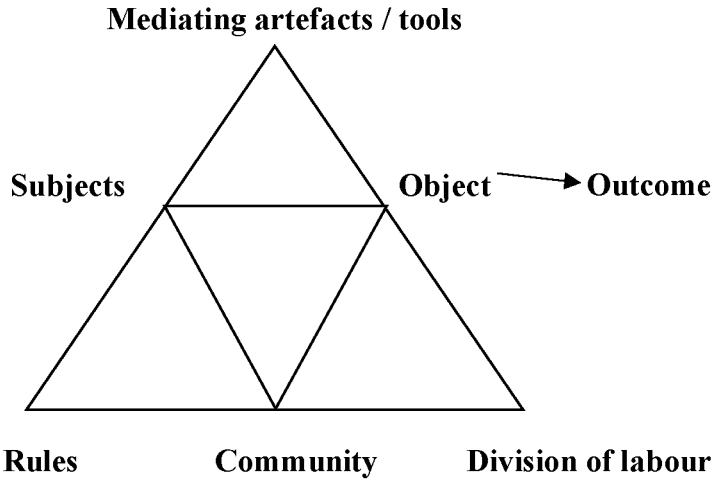


Figure 2.4: Second generation of CHAT heuristic (Adapted from Daniels, 2004, p. 89)

According to Sewell (1992), the above elements are material and social resources that have the potential to constrain or enable human action in an activity system. Moreover, Engeström (2007, p. 363) contends that Vygotsky's "double stimulation" in the first generation "is aimed at eliciting new, expansive forms of agency in subjects" [second and third generations]. The first stimulus is the problem itself and the second stimuli are external artefacts that the participants turn into significant meaning to gain control of their actions; and "construct a new understanding of the initial circumstances or problem" (Sannino, 2011, p. 585). Moreover, double stimulation "shows how individuals can gain the power to use outside resources to determine his or her own behaviour" (*ibid.*). This kind of stimulation is referred to by research participants as being "masters of their own lives" (Mukute & Lotz-Sisitka, 2011, p. 6) thus my interest in the second generation because I only have a single unit of analysis. Having discussed the two generations of CHAT, I now turn to the principles of CHAT.

2.6.3 CHAT principles

Engeström (2001) and Daniels (2008) indicate that CHAT is characterised by five principles however, I will only discuss the following four principles that are applicable for this study.

The first principle is the **multivoicedness of** activity systems. An activity system represents a community of multiple points of ideas, traditions and interests. In this study for example, for me to understand the practice of learner leadership at the school, I considered the different views and traditions of participants. The second principle is **historicity.** Activity systems take shape and get transformed over a long-time period. This means their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history. To illustrate this in this study context, to understand the challenges that the Grade 9s learners face regarding learner leadership practices, the history of what shaped their present understandings need to be considered.

The third principal is the central role of **contradictions as sources of change and learning.** Engeström (2001) defined contradictions as "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems" (p. 137). Engeström further explains that "contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovate attempts to change the activity" *(ibid.)*.

Kuuti (1996) explains that activity systems are not isolated units, but they are influenced by other activities and changes in the environment. Kuuti (1996) further indicates that external changes may cause imbalances (contradictions) between or within elements, between different activities or between different development stages of a single system.

Engeström (1987 as cited in Masilela, 2017), contends that with any human activity, contradictions emerge and evolve within and between the six elements of the activity system and between networked activity systems. He recognised four levels of contradictions. Please note that with a single activity system *[second generation that framed this study]*, only the first two levels of contradictions may occur within or between its elements in a single activity and these are discussed hereunder.

Primary contradictions are those that may occur within one element of a single activity, for example is if there is tension amongst the subjects in the activity system. **Secondary**

contradictions are contradictions that take place when two or more elements of a single activity system are against one another. For example, the community does not recognise the Grade 9s in decision-making at the school. See Chapter Four for more detail.

The fourth principal of CHAT declares the **possibility of expansive transformation** (discussed next) in an activity system. As the contradictions of an activity system "are aggravated, some participants begin to question and deviate from the established norms and in some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberative collective change effort which is called expansive transformation" from where the concept expansive learning was drawn (Engeström, 2001, as cited by Masilela, 2017, p. 32).

Furthermore, solving contradictions and tensions that arise during the mediation provides the opportunity for learning, what Engeström (1999) calls 'expansive learning.' This is in line with Edwards (2005) who says, that when contradictions are resolved, learning happens, and a more advanced activity system emerges.

2.6.4 Expansive learning

Expansive learning "refers to processes in which an activity system resolves its pressing internal contradictions by constructing and implementing a qualitatively new way of functioning for itself" (Engeström, 2007, p. 24). In this study, second generation CHAT presents an activity system that is in "constant movement and internally contradictory, where systemic contradictions are manifested in disturbances and innovations which offer possibilities for expansive developmental transformation" (Engeström, 2000, p. 960). Transformative opportunities are established through seven steps of expansive learning cycles; starting with actions of **questioning** the existing standard practice of learner leadership, proceeding to the action of **analysing** the contradictions and **modelling** a vision for the zone of proximal development (*ibid.*). It then follows with the action of **examining the new model** and **implementing the new model.** The last two steps are **reflecting the process** and **consolidating the new practice** (Mukute, 2010). The diagram hereunder illustrates the processes of the expansive learning cycle.

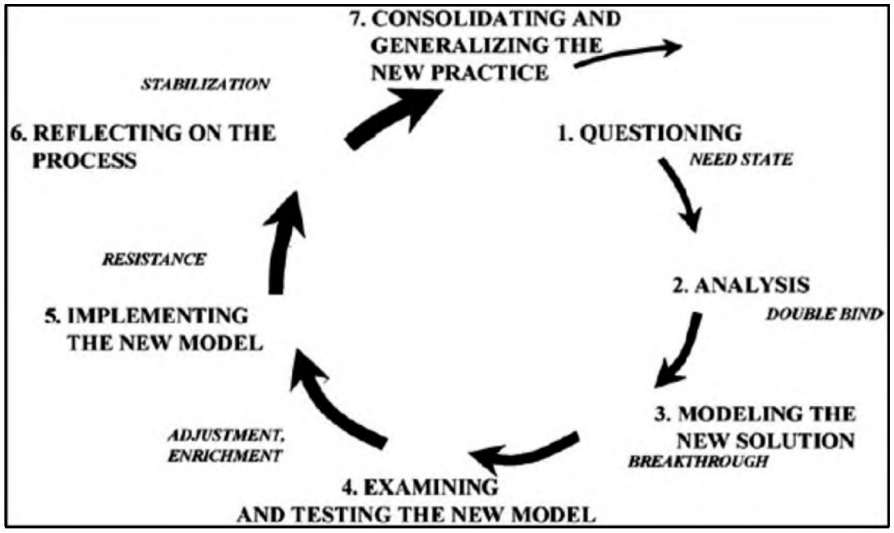


Figure 2.5: The expansive learning cycle or process (adapted from Engeström, 2000, p. 970)

The expansive learning process enabled me as a researcher to intervene in a way that gave the subjects of the activity system a 'safe space' (Jickling, 2005) to address and begin to settle some causes of contradictions that were surfaced through the research, within and between elements of the activity system. The participants agreed to come together to construct, and implement new and doable changes in practice to improve the collective system (Engeström, 2007).

During this process, I was an observer as well as an interventionist since I was leading the Change Laboratory workshops. Mukute (2010) explains that the role of the researcher in CHAT and expansive learning is to get a systematic view of what is going on in the participating activity system; and in due course reflect the observation back to participants using mirror data which occurs initially between stage 1 and 3 in the Change Laboratory (CL) discussed next. This process of learning (expansive cycle) was facilitated by CL workshops and stages from 1-6 were completed during this study.

2.6.5 Change Laboratory intervention

Engeström (2007) defines Change Laboratory as an interventionist method for transforming work used by researchers within the broad theoretical and methodological framework of

Developmental Work Research in organisations such as schools. During the Change Laboratory sessions, participants (practitioners) and the researcher (interventionist) depend on a "set of representational tools for joint analyses and for developing new practices" (Sannino, 2011, p. 590). The purpose of Change Laboratory workshops is to expand the understanding of the practitioners' activity through experimenting and reflecting, promoting people's possibilities to act on growing understanding (Engeström, 2009).

Moreover, Change Laboratory workshops encourage the recognition of areas in which there is a need for change in working practices such as learner leadership and suggest possibilities for change through re-conceptualising through the *object* that learner leaders are working on; the *tools* that learner leaders use in their multi-agency; and the *rules* in which leadership practices are embedded (Knott-Craig, 2016).

The Change Laboratory method is based on the theory of expansive learning through overcoming existing contradictions and resolution of tensions and contradictions in a system that involves objects, artefacts and perspectives of the participants (Engeström, 2009). Change Laboratory has a layout structure presented next.

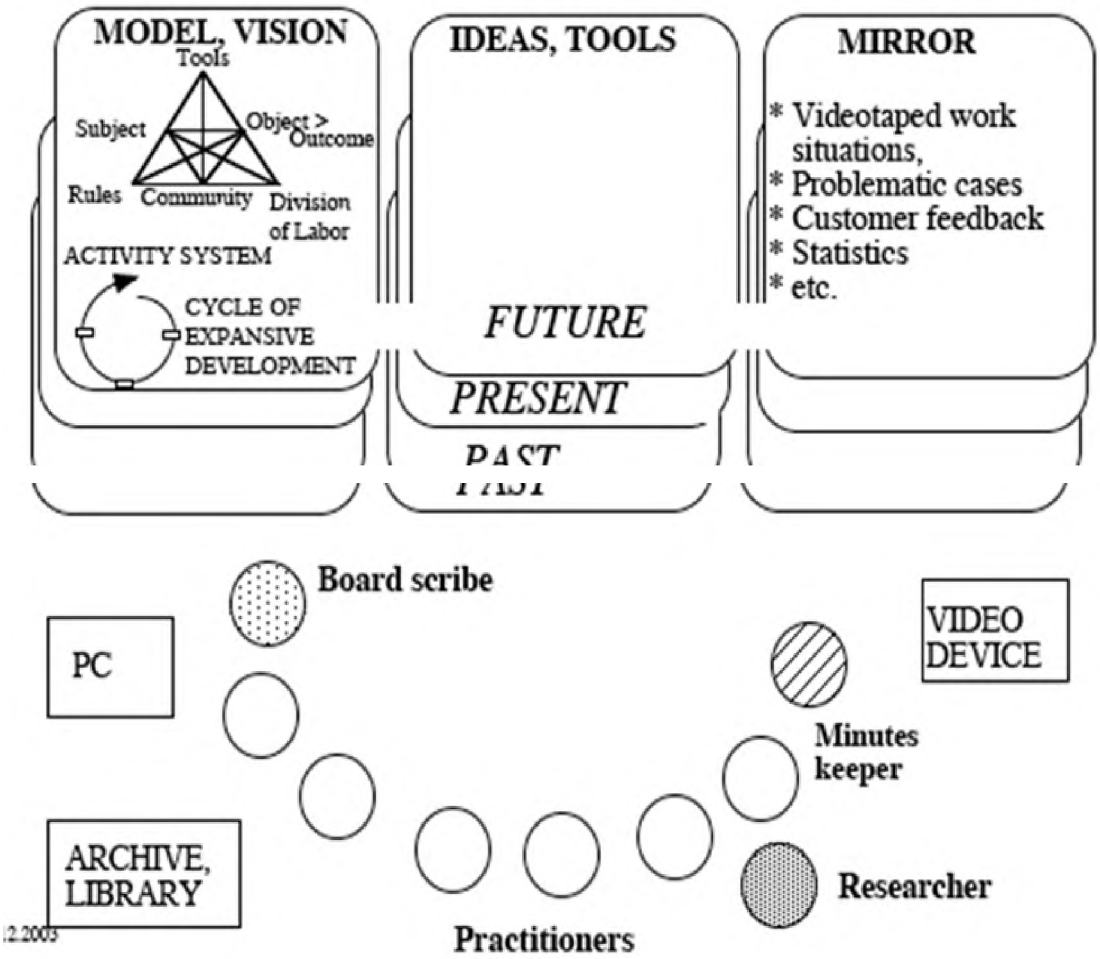


Figure 2.6: Layout of Change Laboratory workshop (Adapted from Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 18).

According to Virkkunen and Newnham (2013), the Change Laboratory is a set of three areas with three overlapping surfaces representing the *past, present and future* work practices as shown in the figure above. The **first area** represents the 'mirror' which represents daily work practices and experiences from work practice particularly problem situations and disturbances, but also novel innovative solutions. "Videotaped work episodes as well as photographs, stories, interviews, quotes, narrative accounts are used as mirror data" (p. 15).

The **second area, the** 'model/vision', is reserved for theoretical tools and conceptual analysis. In this area, the second generation of CHAT (figure 2.3) is used to analyse the development and interconnections of the work activities under scrutiny (Masilela, 2017). Moreover, in this area the expansive learning cycle is used to enable practitioners (participants) to analyse current and projected stages of their activities and design new models *(ibid.)*.

The **third area** in the middle is reserved for ideas and intermediate cognitive tools in analysing problem situations (Engeström, 2007). These developmental activities explained above were completed in three Change Laboratory workshops to facilitate transformations through the setup process discussed next.

2.6.5.1 The Change Laboratory process

The change laboratory process starts with discussions of mirror data of the existing activity, whereby participants observe the mirror data and narrate it to their own practices and opinions. **(1. Mirror/ Present)** (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 18). After the gathering of observations, questionnaires and interviews, discussions move to the identification of the most important problem area that requires additional investigations and possible solutions after participants interpret and engage in modelling **(2. Ideas/ Tools/ Present)**. Afterwards, for the participants to understand how the problems developed, they need to gather data and observations regarding transformations that happened in the systemic structure of the activity and noted them **(3. Mirror/ Past)**. The notes are then analysed to find the degree of transformation and to explore origins and influences amongst observed changes **(4. Ideas/ Tool/ Past)**. The model of the previous form of the activity is done in this process by characterising the specific nature of the elements of the activity system present **(5. Model/ Vision/ Past).**

Moreover, the model of the existing activity system is then created by identifying elements of the activity in which major changes have taken place and those in which there has been little change (*ibid.*, p. 19). The relationship amongst the transformed and unchanged elements of the activity system is then analysed to identify contradictions and disturbances **(6. Model/ Present)** (Masilela, 2017). To afford resolutions to the identified contradictions and disturbances, a vision of a new form of activity is developed (Daniels, 2008). **(7. Model/ Vision/ Future)** as well as new forms of action and artefacts within which participants may begin to experimentally realise the decided vision **(8. Ideas/ Tools/ Future).** Virkkunen and Newnham (2013) further indicate that continued data about the feasibility of the new tools and forms of action decided in step 8 above is then collected from the first experiments **(9. Mirror/ Future)** and identified problems in the data will be used as a mirror for the current activity **(step 1. Mirror/ Present)** *(ibid.)*.

The figure hereunder illustrates a possible course of the analysis and design process in a Change Laboratory as reflected in the matrix of the surfaces of representation discussed above.

	Model /Vision	**Ideas/ Tools**	**Mirror**
Future	**7** Visioning the future structure of the activity system in which the current contradictions would be overcome.	8 Modelling the new tools and ways working necessary for realising the vision. Designing first experiments with new tools and new ways of working.	**9** Follow-up data about the feasibility of the designed new tools and ways of working as well as about need for their further development.
Present	**6** Modelling the most important changes taking place in the elements of the activity system as well as historically evolved inner contradictions the changes have created within the activity system.	**2** Shared concerns, identified problem areas in the joint activity. Ideas for further analysis. Solution ideas to identified problems.	**1**Samples of problem situation in the practitioner's daily work with the object of the joint activity (for instance disturbances and ruptures in serving clients or in central processes of the joint activity). Videos, interviews, documents.
Past	**5** Modelling the central features of the past structure of the activity. Analysing the nature of the current phase of the transformation of the activity.	**4** Identification of periods and turning points in the development of the activity.	**3** Data concerning important historical changes in the activity system.

Figure 2.7: The use of the surface of representations in a possible course of analysis in the Change Laboratory (Adapted from Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 18)

Although CHAT was used to frame this study analytically, I acknowledged its limitations and these are discussed next. Critiques were made to reform CHAT and possibly these critiques might help to restructure the use of CHAT in educational intervention studies.

2.6.7 The 'dark side' of CHAT

Although CHAT seems to be a strong analytical tool that considers the complex nature of historically established cultural mediating tools, it is still not very sensitive to complex power relationships between subjects and their influence on social interaction in the activity (Engeström, 2014). Moreover, Daniels and Warmington (2007) also contend that there is an absence of a theoretical account of social relations and positioning. However, in my study, CHAT helped me to analyse that Grade 9s were treated differently by those holding power positions in a hierarchical system at the school, in terms of their involvement in leadership; the Grade 9s did not have any power to make decisions at the school because of the fact that they held no formal positions in leadership.

Edwards and Daniels (2012) point out that the focus in CHAT is on the problem being worked on with the knowledge of subjects, instead of on the knowledge in use. On this note, this study focuses not only on the knowledge of subjects but on the knowledge of community too, hence the development of learner leadership amongst the Grade 9 learners was viewed as a collaboration with other educational stakeholders. Daniels (2012) adds that using activity theory as a data generating tool tends to focus on what is said. However, in this study, CHAT was used as an analytical tool rather than a data generating tool. CHAT enabled me to make sense of the data generated.

Lastly, Avis (2007) contends that the concept of contradiction used by Engeström in CHAT, has much in common with conventional systems theory. I agree with Avis in the sense that schools are systematic, and any changes occurring in one of the activity systems affects other activity systems. However, this does not detract from the value of CHAT.

Besides the above shortfalls of CHAT, I opted to use it because the study uses CHAT as an analytical framework to organise the research activities into an activity system (second generation), providing a framework for a formative intervention investigation of the kind of learning that happens within and between the different elements of an activity system as discussed in Chapter Four. The study further used CHAT as an analytical tool to examine and understand the way the participants act when they engage, interact and learn in developing alternative solutions during the Change Laboratory.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter was a review of literature locally and internationally which informs my research study. It presented a discussion of what other researchers have studied and published around learner leadership and forms the conceptual framework of my study. The chapter also reviewed literature regarding CHAT.

I started with the introduction of the chapter, followed by the two concepts, 'leadership and management', followed by the focus of this study, learner leadership. I then looked at distributed leadership as the conceptual framework that shapes this study. I further discussed traditional theories of leadership that gave us an overview of the theory that underpins the contemporary leadership theories which frame this study. Finally, I concluded this chapter with CHAT as a framework underpinning this study.

The literature review presented me with some drawbacks uncovered by other scholars and I will return to these issues during the discussion of data findings.

The next chapter will focus on the methodology used and will reveal the orientation of my study, the research tools, how the data was generated and analysed, as well as validity and ethical issues which will be addressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research design and methodological framework I employed to conduct this study are what is generally presented in this chapter. I commence with the research aims and research questions. I then move on to present the methods in terms of paradigm, approach, and tradition adopted in the research. Thereafter, I discuss the research and participants, data generated techniques, and data analysis. Finally, the issues of validity and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

The aim of this study was to explore how Grade 9 learners' leadership could be developed through an intervention, guided by this overarching research question: *How can Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities be developed in the school?* To achieve the above goal, the following sub-questions were investigated:

Phase 1 aim: To understand the involvement of Grade 9s in leadership at the school:

1. What is the understanding of the Grade 9 learners and teachers of the concept of learner leadership at the school?
2. How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school?
3. What are the potential mechanisms / underlying causes that can promote or inhibit Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?
4. How can the Grade 9s' leadership be enhanced at the school?

Phase 2 aim: To intervene and bring about change:

5. What potential contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops make to the development of the participants?
6. How did the learner leadership club bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders (participants)?

As researchers, the way we view the world influences the way in which we research the world; thus, the next section presents the paradigm and approach employed in this study.

3.2. Research paradigm and approach

Bertram and Christiansen (2015) define the term 'paradigm' as ways of viewing the world and conducting research. These authors uphold that, "a research paradigm represents a particular worldview that defines, for the researchers who hold this view, what is acceptable to research and how this should be done" *(ibid.,* p. 22). In the same vein, Bassey (1999) describes a research paradigm as a "network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions" (p. 42). Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state that there are three kinds of paradigms applicable in educational research and these are: the post-positivist, the interpretivist, and the critical paradigm. They further explain that in post-positivism, the purpose of the research is to define, control, and predict how the natural and social world works. In interpretivism, the aim of the research is to gain a greater understanding of how people make sense of the situations in which they live. The critical (transformative) paradigm sees reality as shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and other dynamics (*ibid.*). Additionally, Bertram and Christiansen (2015) postulate that working within a specific paradigm regulates choices of the kind of questions that need to be asked, what is to be observed or investigated, ways of gathering data, and how to interpret the results.

Thus, this study is located within the interpretive paradigm, with the use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Interpretivists "aim to understand the social world. Results are created, not found. Interpretations are informed by theory" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015, p. 26). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), an interpretive paradigm helps researchers to understand the subjective nature of human experiences. I consider the interpretive approach most suitable for my study because the study sought to construct meaning from observable interactions amongst learners and their environment. Lotz-Sisitka, Fien and Ketlhoilwe (2012) indicate that the interpretive approach seeks to understand social perspectives, make sense of them and develop a deeper understanding of a specific situation. Thus, this paradigm allowed me to understand the situation and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting of this research study, particularly the practice of learner leadership

amongst Grade 9 learners. However, the study further aimed to bring about change in the form of developing opportunities for learner leadership, which suggests a formative intervention.

Formative intervention has been defined as "purposeful action by a human agent to create change" (Midgley, 2000, p. 113). The epistemological approach was defined by Change Laboratory workshops, which Mukute (2011) affirms enables the researcher to intervene in ways that allow for research participants to address some of the contradictions they may be faced with, within the activity system. The role of the researcher is to obtain a systemic view of what is happening in the activity system and reflect that back to participants. As a result, this study empowered change, investigated artefacts, and disclosed the underlying assumptions of learner leadership amongst Grade 9 learners.

In this sense, this study has a critical component. I am aware that critical and interpretive paradigms have an ontological difference. The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism. "Relativism is the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). The ontological position of the critical paradigm is historical realism. "Historical realism is the view that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; reality that was once deemed plastic has become crystallized" *(ibid.)*. Hence, the study is both interpretive and critical because the goals of this study are firstly to understand the practice of learner leadership at the school, and secondly to emancipate the disempowered learners.

3.3 A case study as a research method

The research embraced the case study method since it has the key opportunity of offering an in-depth and expansive understanding of a phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, Yin's (2014) description of a case study, namely that it examines a phenomenon within its context, relates well to my since it explored and promoted leadership development opportunities within Grade 9 learners in a public urban secondary school in the Omusati region of Namibia. The study investigated leadership practices of learners in their natural environment of their school; and it is certainly the case that the boundaries between learner leadership and the school as an organisation were blurred, since leadership was emergent in a dynamic context.

Similarly, Simons (2009) defines a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. 19). A case study helped me to create and determine how and why things are happening the way they are in regard to Grade 9 leadership practices (*ibid.*). In this research, a case study approach provided me as a researcher with a rich understanding of role of learner leadership at the case study school.

On the same note, Nieuwenhuis declares that the case study "opens the possibility of giving a voice to the voiceless and powerless like children or marginalised groups" (2007, p. 75). I chose this specifically because the focus of this study was on learners (the voiceless), aiming to enhance their voice through leadership practices in their learning environment. Admittedly, the case study method helped me to develop a deep understanding of learner leadership and its participants within their context. Next, I discuss the research site, sampling methods, and participants of this study.

3.4 Research site, sampling and participants

3.4.1 Research site

This research was carried out at an urban public school, Ngola Senior Secondary School (pseudonym), in the Kalox circuit (pseudonym) of the Omusati Education Region, situated at the heart of the town of Kota (pseudonym). It was established in 1975. The school has about 800 learners (Grade 9-12), 32 qualified teachers, and 30 non-teaching staff members. It has four Heads of Departments, 28 teachers, and a principal. In the year 2000, the school was renamed Ngola Senior Secondary School (pseudonym) after a late community activist and national hero who played a significant role during the liberation struggle of Namibia. He has been described by many as instrumental in the establishment and subsequent growth of the school. There is a library, internet, and computer laboratory. Since it is a boarding school, it admits learners from different parts of the country. The school has several committees, of which only two accommodate the involvement of learners: The School Governing Body and Learner Representative Council.

I chose the school for a variety of reasons. The school was very conveniently situated for me and staff members were willing to participate. The fact that it is labelled a poorly performing school with ill-disciplined learners, also aroused my interest; the question of what leadership

could/should be done to bring about improvement came to mind. I also wondered how the fact that the school was named after an activist and hero may influence understanding of leadership, if at all. Next, I present the sampling process and participants involved in this study.

3.4.2 Research sampling

Sampling is a significant deliberation in both qualitative and quantitative research, because the quality of research depends partly on the suitability of the sampling strategy that was adopted. Mertens (2005) points out that "the sampling process is a method used to select a given number of people (sample) from a population" (p. 69). In addition, Hamatwi (2015) indicates that it is a "small proportion of the population made up of individuals who are referred to as participants or respondents selected for observation and analysis of their behaviours and actions to make conclusions which will help to describe the case under investigation" (p. 37). I decided on sampling in the planning of research, because factors such as expense, time, and accessibility commonly prevent researchers from gaining information from the whole population (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 143).

The selection of the main (focus group) research participants in this study was informed by purposive sampling. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007), purposive sampling means that "participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study" (p. 79). I handpicked the sample that fitted the specific needs of this research, since this study promoted learner leadership opportunities among learners from the lowest grade at the school, with no formal leadership portfolios.

3.4.3 Research participants

I was interested in the views of learners who held no leadership position in the school. I specifically conducted my research with Grade 9 learners, since it is the grade at which students enter the school. This means they will potentially have opportunities to exercise leadership skills they have gained from this study for the remaining three years of their schooling. There was only a single class of Grade 9s and all learners voluntarily participated in this study. A total of 24 learners from Grade 9 participated in this study through questionnaires, Change Laboratory workshops, and a focus group interview. Working with both boarding and non-boarding learners was very convenient as they were all available after their afternoon studies.

In addition, the principal, two Heads of Departments, three teachers, and one member of the school governing body also agreed to provide their experiences and understanding on learner leadership. These participants were chosen purposively to access their in-depth knowledge about issues regarding learner leadership. The school principal selected the teachers, Heads of Departments, and the School Board member that participated in this study, although it was explained in detail that their participation was voluntary. These seven participants took part in the study through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. I believed 31 participants in total was a suitable number as it provided rich, controllable data. Since the case study's findings cannot be generalised, this less complicated sampling suited the study's goal.

Having described the research participants, my attention now turns to the process of the research.

3.5 Research process

I wish to give a brief overview of the research process before discussing the data techniques used. Prior to data generation, I thoroughly planned the type of data I needed through each method. Firstly, I worked out and prepared an interview guide consisting of several specific questions that I wanted to ask all the participants. Secondly, I worked out an observation schedule that would give me an opportunity to observe and record. I then designed a questionnaire that I administered to the main participants (Grade 9 learners). Lastly, I worked in some guiding questions that helped me evaluate the Change Laboratory workshops.

These techniques were tested as follows. I piloted my interviews and observation in Grahamstown with my supervisor. I piloted the interviews for the second time with non-participating teachers at the research site, while the questionnaires were tested by the Learner Representative Council members. The piloting helped me to rephrase, remove, and add certain questions.

The use of the following data generating tools was employed in this study during the two phases of the data collection process.

3.6 Data generating tools

The key data generating techniques used were questionnaires, observation, interviews, and workshops. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that the aim for using different data generation techniques ensures trustworthiness and validity of data collection. Trustworthiness ensures that there is reliability in the findings, even if the enquiries were replicated in a similar context by a different researcher.

Phase 1: To understand the involvement of Grade 9s in leadership at the school.

3.6.1 Administered questionnaire

A questionnaire "is a list of questions which the respondents answer" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015, p. 73). I administered the questionnaires to 24 learners from Grade 9 during the first phase of the data generation process. It was a combination of a few open questions, and dominant closed and long questions. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that open and long questions enable respondents to answer in their own words and are therefore suitable for sensitive topics. Another reason for choosing the questionnaire was that they can be administered to many people. The questionnaires provided information on what was happening at the school regarding Grade 9s' leadership practices.

Questionnaires have the disadvantage that "respondents may not understand the questions asked" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015, p. 78). However, participants answered the questionnaires during a contact session in my presence. This was done for two reasons. Firstly, I helped the participants when the need arose, and also to help prevent participants from misplacing the questionnaires. Moreover, questionnaires were piloted with non-participant learners at the research site to assure me that the questions were clear and related to the research purpose. This technique provided answers to these research questions: *How is the concept of learner leadership understood by Grade 9s and teachers? How are the learners currently involved in leadership at school? And, what are the factors that hamper learner leadership in the school?* (See Appendix A).



Figure 3.1: (a) Piloting questionnaire with LRC (b) Participants answering the questionnaires

3.6.2 Observation

Observation "is the systematic process of recording behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 83). I observed during both phases of data generation and collection. I observed the practical participation of learners in leadership by observing their interactions in meetings and Change Laboratory workshops. With this technique, the researcher can gain a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). I used two types of observation, of which one is discussed hereunder, and the other is discussed under phase 2 of the data generating process.

3.6.2.1 Unstructured observation

I used this type of observation during phase one of the data generation process. I was looking for patterns of behaviour in the school, so I could understand the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the participants and make sense of the dynamics. I used running records whereby I was not only focused on the actions but also the situation, trying to describe the action in the context in which it occurred. I used field notes which are defined by O'Hanlon (2003) as the researcher's record of "what has been observed and include descriptions of the context, locality, participants, what took place and what was said" (p. 76). In recording my observations, I was capturing two aspects: my description of what I had observed, and my reflection about what happened. My observation was guided by participants' perceptions about learner leadership in the sense that questionnaire and interview data guided my gaze, so that I was consciously looking for what had been mentioned by the learner leaders.

The advantages of using this type of observation discussed above are that I could record things I witnessed myself, as opposed to things participants would tell me. Through observation, I

saw the context of the phenomena and things regarding learner leadership that teachers and learners did not talk about in interviews and questionnaires.

I acknowledge the challenges of observation: that it requires time, it limits the researcher from asking questions, and sometimes issues of language might contribute to limited understanding of the interactions between individuals (Cohen et al., 2000). However, the advantage of using observation as a tool to collect data is the fact that as a researcher, I would see things *in situ* (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 9).

3.5.3 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Cohen et al. (2011), the research interview is defined as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information" (p. 411). The advantage of interviews is that one can collect much more detailed and descriptive data (*ibid.*). The study further highlights that the "interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multisensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard" (p. 409). Considering this, I used two types of interviews, of which one is discussed next and the other one discussed last in this section.

This study utilised individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a verbal exchange of ideas, views and information where an interviewer attempts to obtain information from another person by asking prepared questions (Cohen et al., 2011). It enables the participants to express themselves using their own opinions. The advantage of using an interview is that it is a flexible tool for collecting data, and that they help to provide an opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to "discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and express how they regard situations from their own point of views" (Cohen at al., 2011, p. 409). This provided me an opportunity to probe deeper.

I conducted individual semi-structured interviews using a voice recorder during the first phase of the data generating process with seven participants (2 HoDs, three teachers, a member of the school governing body, and the principal). Each participant decided on the time slot of the interview session as per their preference. This allowed participants to provide in-depth views on learner leadership and provided me with an opportunity to investigate further with follow-up questions when the need arose to fully answer these questions: *How is the notion of learner leadership understood at the school? How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at*

the school? And what factors hamper or enhance Grade 9s' leadership at the school? All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. This helped me with data analysis, and member-checking was done by all participants for validity purposes. The average length for these recording was 30 minutes.

Simons (2009) cautions researchers that recording equipment can fail, leaving you with no data, I therefore used two devices at a time in case one malfunctioned. The semi-structured interview questions are attached (See Appendix B).

Next, are the three techniques, namely Change Laboratory workshops, structured observation, and a focus group interview, that were employed during phase 2 of the data generating process.

Phase 2: Intervention to bring about change regarding Grade 9 learner leadership

This case study research was conducted in such a way that sufficient data was generated. This study moved beyond the level of the interpretive; thus, it used an interventionist approach framed by CHAT, and was therefore transformatory. I used the second generation of CHAT to explore the significant features of the learner leadership activity system. The Change Laboratory intervention was used to study the conditions of change, drawing on participants' observation, questionnaires, and interviews, on the practices of leadership amongst Grade 9 learners.

3.6.4 Change Laboratory workshops

A Change Laboratory (CL) is a CHAT-based method for a formative intervention in an activity system. The Change Laboratory method relies on collaboration among practitioner (participants) and interventionist (researcher) research approach. The purpose of the workshops was to expand the understanding of the practitioners' activity through experimenting and reflecting, thereby promoting people's ability to act on growing understanding (Engeström, 2001). The intervention workshops draw up the developmental work research methodology described by Engeström (1999) as a methodology for applying activity theory in organisations such as schools.

I conducted three Change Laboratory workshops during the second phase of the data generation process. All participants from Grade 9 attended the CL workshops. Due to power relations

which existed, the teachers, Heads of Departments, the School Board member, and the principal were not allowed to attend the sessions.

The **first** CL workshop was conducted on Wednesday, 12th July 2017 from 14:30 to 16:30. The aim was to introduce the study and mirror data to the participants. The **second** workshop was conducted the next day (Thursday, 13th July 2017) and lasted for three hours. During this session, the contradictions that were surfaced were resolved by the participants in their respective groups. The **third** workshop was for the presentations of solutions and recommendations that emerged from group discussions. This was done on Monday, 17th July 2017 and took about three hours. For detailed information regarding the Change Laboratory workshops see Chapter Four, Section 4.7.

I wrote notes during workshops and, with permission granted by their parents, participants volunteered to record the workshops and take photos. During the second and third workshops, I acted as an observer, focusing on the interaction of participants using Mitra and Gross's (2009) pyramid of student voice, which is discussed next. The Change Laboratory reflection was conducted using an evaluation form after the three workshops (see Appendix C).

3.6.5 Structured observation

During phase two of data generation I became part of the research process, working with the participants during the workshops and developing intervention strategies. During this phase, I used structured observation where I was recording the data observed using Mitra and Gross's (2009) 'pyramid of student voice model' below. Using observation is in keeping with Gillham's (2000) point that observation is "the most direct way of obtaining data, you see what people actually do" (p. 46) (see Appendix D).

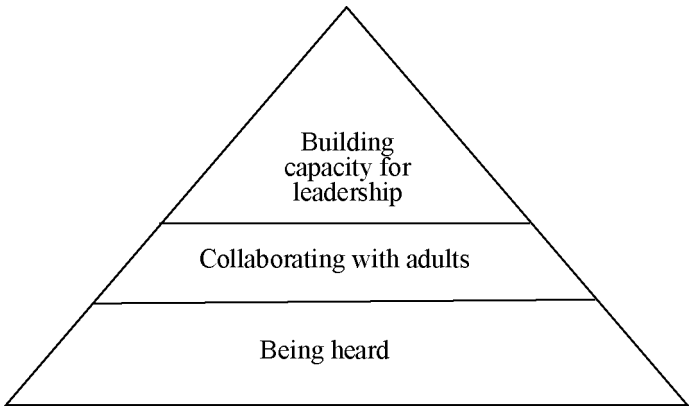


Figure 3.1: Pyramid of student voice (Adapted from Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 523)

3.6.6 Unstructured focus group interview

A focus group is, according to Thomas, MacMillan, McColl, Hale and Bond (1995), a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they can provide much more detailed and descriptive data. Similarly, Morgan (1997) defines a focus group interview as "a form of group interview between interviewer and a group whereby the data obtained is collective rather than individual" (p. 436). Participants in this type of research technique are therefore selected on the criteria that they would have something to say on the topic and would be comfortable talking to the interviewer and each other (Richardson & Rabiee, 2001).

I conducted a focus group interview two weeks after the establishment of the Learner Leadership Club with twenty members from Grade 9 only. The reason I chose the club members from Grade 9 is that they had been part of the study from the initial stage and they are the main participants. Levine and Zimmerman (1996) suggest that using focus groups with children acknowledges the participants as experts. Indeed, the Grade 9s had expertise in this study as they alone established the Learner Leadership Club. This provided an opportunity to discover children's' view of their world, regarding the intervention they had established. Considering this, their responses were likely to have high face validity and could be useful in the development of programmes regarding learner leadership practices in schools.

The focus group interview was conducted to find out information regarding their experiences about the study and to reflect on the leadership club they had established. Another reason I conducted this interview was to have collective and multiple answers to the same questions. Hyden and Bulow (2003) describe its merits by mentioning that it yields insight that might not otherwise have been available in a straightforward interview. As Lewis (1992) points out, the focus group does not have to end when an individual does not respond, hence removing the pressure from a child who might otherwise be tempted to respond to a question that was not fully understood. The session lasted for approximately 90 minutes because learners were actively engaging in the conversation.

The challenge I experienced in using a focus group interview was scheduling time and finding a location convenient to all participants. I also experienced how learners in focus groups were adopting themes previously raised by other children rather than offering their own opinion.

This is in line with Lewis (1992) who points out that there is always the possibility that intimidation within the group setting may inhibit open interaction. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and this helped me with analysing the data which is discussed next.

In a nutshell, the process of data generation lasted for nine weeks. During week nine, I remained on site to validate the data generated, do follow-ups on any issues that arose, and probe for more data when I needed to.

The table below summarises the entire data generating process.

Table 3.1 Data generating process:

Stage / Phase	Tools used	Data generated	Purpose
Phase 1	Semi-structured Interviews Questionnaires Observation	Teachers, HoDs, Principal and SBM's perceptions and views about learner leadership	To get insight on the understanding of the concept learner leadership and Grade 9 involvement in leadership at the school.
Stage 1	Piloting of the questionnaires and semi-structured interview	Learners' and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding grade 9 leadership	To assess the suitability, quality, clarity, reliability, and validity of the questions in both interviews and questionnaires.
Stage 2	Transcribing of interviews and questionnaires	The extent to which the questions were answered.	To find areas for follow-up questions as well as to identify needs for an intervention.
Stage 3	Member-checking by all participants Analysed data generated from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observation using second generation CHAT	Factors hindering Grade 9 leadership development	To surface the contradictions that emerged.

PHASE 2 **Stage 4**	Change Laboratory Workshops, Observation	Solutions and recommendations on the contradictions that emerged.	To bring about change (Intervene)
Stage 5	Change Laboratory Reflection	Learners' views and experiences regarding the workshops Establishment of Learner Leadership Club emerged.	To reflect on the positive contribution of Change Laboratory workshops
Stage 6	Focus group interview	Learners' experiences on the leadership club established.	Reflecting on experiences and views of learners being learner leaders.
Stage 7	All data techniques (Semi-structured interview, questionnaires, observation, CL workshops, CL reflection, Focus Group Interviews)	The understanding of the notion of learner leadership, involvement of Grade 9s in leadership, factors inhibited Grade 9 leadership development and enhancement of Grade 9 leadership development.	To remain on site, validate data, do follow-up sessions, and observe the participation of learner leaders in their club.

3.7 Data analysis

Cohen et al. (2011) define data analysis as an approach that "makes valid inferences from data by analysing data using both pre-existing categories and emergent themes" (p. 476). As for Creswell (2007, p. 148):

> Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organising the data (i.e. text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in the figure, tables, or a discussion.

In addition, Simons (2009) defines data analysis as "procedures like coding, categorising, concept mapping, theme generation which enables the researcher to organise and make sense of the data to produce findings and an overall understanding" (p. 217). I analysed the data in two stages as discussed hereunder. I coded data as precisely as I could because Miles and Huberman (1994) remind researchers that "codes drive the retrieval and organisation of the data for analysis thus they must be precise, and their meaning shared among analysts" (p. 63). Firstly, I started analysing the data during the earlier stage of this study while the data generation was still on going. This helped me to redesign my questions to focus on the phenomenon under study as I continued with generating data. During this stage, I used the second generation CHAT activity system to analyse manually the raw data generated from various techniques. The activity system was used as a lens to extract tensions and contradictions between and within various elements, and how they affected and influenced learner leadership. I then used the information to analyse the data with research participants, where I would present the findings as mirror data to surface contradictions and tensions in the activity system and prepare mirror data for representation during CL workshops. Three CL workshops were conducted during this study. The data from all CL workshops addressed the overarching research question, which is: *How can Grade 9 learners' leadership be developed*? The essence of CL workshops was to work collaboratively with members of the activity system, and to build and develop new practices, tools, and models (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). I reflected on the intervention workshops by issuing evaluation forms to all participants attending the CL workshops (see Appendix C). Chapter Four, Section 4.7 details the CL workshops.

At the final stage, I analysed data inductively, sorting them into categories and then themes (Cohen et al., 2000). The emergent themes were then transcribed into analytical statements interpreted and discussed. I adopted three categories for strategies of qualitative data analysis which included: categorising strategies, connecting strategies, and memos and display.

In summary, the second generation activity system of CHAT [Cultural Historical Activity theory] was used as a lens that helped me to analyse factors hindering the development of Grade 9 leadership. Data generated from questionnaires, observations, workshops, and the interviews were analysed both inductively and deductively. Categories and themes emerged, and the data were then colour coded (Cohen et al., 2011). The coding was done to produce a new understanding that explored similarities or differences across all data sets.

Below is the photograph illustrating the process of coding and creating categories.

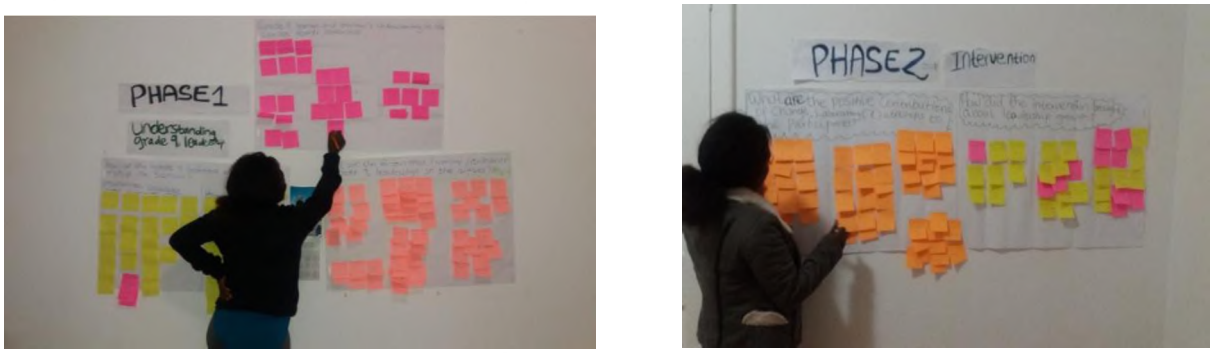


Figure 3.3: (a) coding data generated during phase 1 (b) coding data generated during phase 2

3.8. Ethical Protocols

Carr (as cited in O' Hanlon, 2003) highlights some special ethical awareness of research practices in education as he emphasises that "the educational character of any practice can only be made intelligible by reference to an ethical disposition to proceed according to some more or less tacit understanding of what it is to act educationally" (p. 88). This study involved human participation, in which participants were asked to participate in the study. Thus, there is a need to exercise ethical considerations based on these four guiding principles; respect, justice, do no harm, and do good – beneficence. Therefore, the following ethical considerations were adhered to during the execution of this study.

3.8.1 Respect and dignity

Prior to data collection, I firstly received the letter from my supervisor (see Appendix E). I then negotiated to get permission to conduct my research from the Educational Director of Omusati region, (see Appendix F), and did the same with the inspector and the school principal of the research site. In addition, I negotiated to get permission from the parents or guardians of the participants (see Appendix G). The letters indicated the aim and benefits of the study clearly. I organised the meeting with the participants together with their parents/guardians and all other stakeholders participating in the study. I explained their right of refusal or withdrawal without any intimidation or harm, and that their participation was voluntary. In agreement with Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 193), who state that "confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure", I assured them that the privacy and confidentiality of their identity was protected, and their autonomy respected. No third party had access to the information except my supervisors and critical friend.

3.8.2 Transparency and honesty

The aim and benefit of the study were explained to each participant prior to data collection. Signed consent letters were obtained from each participant, and their guardians or parents in the case of the learners. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntarily and they could withdraw from the study at any time. The estimated time required for interview sessions and answering questionnaires were discussed with each participant. In addition, during the first week of the data generation process, I piloted the semi-structured interviews with teachers at the research site that did not participate in the study, and the questionnaires were piloted with non-participating learners at the research site to make sure that the questions were clear and caused no harm or confusion to participants. At every stage of my data gathering and analysis processes, findings were shared with the participants.

3.8.3 Accountability and responsibility

I obtained permission from the Director (see Appendix H), teachers including the principal, Heads of Departments, and the School Board member (see appendix I). Both Oshindonga (vernacular) and English were used to accommodate those who were not comfortable enough to express themselves in English. The translations and transcribing of data to English were done by those who were experts (language teachers) in vernacular. As McGarry (2017, p. 5) emphasises that translations and interpretation processes "require trust as well as rigour", I got assurance from transcribers and a critical friend that the resources remained confidential. I made sure no names or personal details were revealed or written in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms, however they instead preferred the researcher to do it for them. I did this using codes as presented in the next chapter. The findings of the research were presented using participant's coded names e.g. principal (P).

3.8.4 Integrity and academic professionalism

I filed all original completed and used questionnaires, semi-structured interview transcriptions, and notes. I also had a research journal in which I kept records of observations and other details of the stages and pieces of data gathered through the data generation processes. The records of the participants in the interviews were saved both on discs and Google Drive. All participants did member-checking to validate the data (See Appendix J).

3.8.5 Researcher's positionality

McDowell (1992) highlights that researchers must take account of their own position in relation to the participants and research setting. This provides the reader with an understanding of the dynamic relationships within and across a culture (Merriam, 2009). It was very important as a researcher to acknowledge my own subjectivity.

My positionality at the research site may have had some influence on the data. Firstly, learners know me as a teacher from a school located within the region (Omusati). To minimise this influence, I negotiated my current position as a researcher in their school. Even though power relations might have been the case during interviews with the principal and Heads of Departments, I am positive that they knew me as a researcher from the MEd pre-course assignment. As a result, this might have created a relationship of trust between teachers and learners. In addition, I am a former learner from a decade ago, and most of my former teachers have moved. Nevertheless, I did ensure that learners were not pressured into feeling that they had to participate, since my position as an adult (and teacher) did not pose a threat to them.

3.9. Validity of the data

Validity in qualitative research refers to "the factual accuracy of the researcher's account that they are not making up or distorting the things they saw or heard" (Maxwell, 2007, p. 285). In qualitative research, rigour is linked to evidence; authentic data gathered systematically and accurately, and organised in ways that inspire sureness.

Rigour is thus connected to the richness of data since, as Kearney (2001, p. 145) argues,

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

Similarly, Marshall (1990), Eisner (1991), and Golafshani (2003) propose truth, value, credibility, trustworthiness, authenticity, and goodness to be more suitable criteria to judge the quality of qualitative research. I ensured that the data and its interpretations led openly and

fairly to valid authentic findings. The following were acknowledged and considered during the process of data generation.

- Firstly, my supervisor checked and approved my data generating tools before leaving to generate the data.
- The **piloting** for the semi-structured interviews was done first at the campus with my supervisor and secondly with non-participant teachers at the research site. The questionnaires were piloted with the learners at the research site who were not participating, to help identify problem areas in the questionnaire as proposed by Bertram and Christiansen (2014).
- **Triangulation** was used, as I used a variety of data generating tools to cross-check the teachers' responses with learners' views and compare the two with the real situation on the ground. I also used document analysis as a means of triangulation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).
- **Member checking** was done by all the participants. This was done to enhance validity by showing what I had recorded to the relevant participants to give them opportunities to confirm and verify the accuracy of my data descriptions.
- Lastly, I was aware of validity threats that I kept in mind for the entire data generation process.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter presents the methodology aspects that were employed to answer the sub-research questions that were stated earlier in this chapter. Construing various literature about research design and the data collection process, enlightened me with regard to how research should be conducted using different data collection methods and tools, as I have described. In support of the purposes of this chapter, Creswell (1998) indicates that methodology is an encompassing term that discusses the way scholars approach a case under study, in their search to understand it and seek solutions. In the next chapter my attention turns to data presentation and the discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed how the data were generated using a variety of data generating tools. This chapter presents the data collected followed by a discussion of the research findings related to the research questions that guided the study. Data were analysed in two phases (explained below) to explore, describe and identify issues around the development of leadership among Grade 9 learners at an urban Secondary School in the Omusati Region in Namibia.

The main aim of **phase 1** was to understand what was happening at the research site regarding Grade 9 leadership and to build on pre-course work, using a variety of data generating tools. During this phase, I used the second generation of CHAT to analyse the data generated and to surface the contradictions emerged within and between the elements of the activity system that led to the intervention.

The main purpose of **phase 2** was to bring about change through Change Laboratory (CL) workshops. The Change Laboratory intervention was used to study the conditions of change drawing on participants' observations, questionnaires, interviews and the recording and videotaping of the workshops. During this process the learner leadership club established a specific focus, namely English Debating. From this point where I refer to the leadership club it is in fact the English Debating Club.

The data are set in themes which developed as issues, as my understanding from the data emerged through repeated readings. The data are drawn primarily from the questionnaires, Change Laboratory workshops and interviews. Data from the observations are included where suitable. References to relevant documentation and literature completed my effort at triangulating findings.

As indicated by the previous chapters, this study was guided by the overarching research question: *"How can Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities be developed in the school?"*

In answering the above overarching research question, six research sub-questions were used as guidelines to data generated tools.
These questions were:

Phase 1 aim: To understand the involvement of Grade 9s in leadership at the school

1. What is the understanding of the Grade 9 learners and teachers of the concept learner leadership at the school?
2. How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school?
3. How can the Grade 9s leadership be enhanced at the school?
4. What are the potential mechanisms / underlying causes that promote or inhibit Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?

Phase 2 aim: To intervene and bring about change

5. What potential contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops make to the development of the participants?
6. How did the learner leadership club bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders (participants)?

Due to the ethical protocol in regard to the identity of the participants, I begin the chapter with data coding followed by the descriptions of the research participants' profiles. Thereafter, I present my findings comparatively across the data sets. Hereunder is the table coding system to identify both the data generated and research participants.

Table 4.1: The coding system for this study

Types of data	**Code**
Learner Administered Questionnaire	**LQ**
Teacher Interview	**T1, T2, T3**
Principal Interview	**P**
Head of Department Interview	**HoD1, HoD2**
School Board Member Interview	**SBM**
Focus Group Interview	**FGI, followed by date e.g. FGI, 26/06/2017**
Observation	**O followed by date e.g. O, 25/ 06/2017**
Change Laboratory Workshops Reflection	**CLR**
Learner Leader	**LL**
Learner Leadership Club	**LLC**

Having summarised how the data were coded, I now move on to give a description profile of each research participant.

4.2 Descriptive profiles of the research participants

The descriptions of the research participants give the reader a comprehensive view of the types of participants who were involved in the study, in terms of their learning and teaching interests and experiences. The data revealed that there was a difference in terms of the perception on learner leadership amongst the research participants. Although the School Board member and some teachers appeared to have a great understanding on the phenomenon, before this study was conducted there had been no Grade 9 learners in leadership roles at the school.

4.2.1 Grade 9 learners (L1- L24) – main participants

There is a single class of Grade 9s at the school. There are 24 learners in total of which 16 are girls. Twenty learners are staying in the hostel and all learners volunteered to participate in the study including day scholars. Most of the Grade 9 learners are 15 years of age with about three learners at the age of 17 or more. They have been at the case study school since Grade 8. Although most of them were not participating in extra-mural activities because senior learners usually called them "*young and you know nothing*" (LQ), they are the most disciplined learners at the school and the favourite class for most teachers at the school. One teacher confirmed in the staffroom that they like the grade 9s because they "*always do what you are telling them to do*" and they hardly make noise (O, 13/06/2017).

4.2.2 The school principal (P)

The school principal is 45 years of age with 15 years of teaching experience, and the principal at the case study school for five years. Although her specialisation is the junior primary phase, she does teach English second language to Grade 9 and10. Her highest qualification is a BEd Honours Degrees in Educational Leadership and Management with North-West University. Her Grade one teacher and her love for kids inspired her to become a teacher. She enjoys presentation of lessons more especially when she is well prepared (I).

4.2.3 The School Board Member (SBM)

This is a parent serving on the School Board with no portfolio. He is 50 years of age and has served for about three years. He was a former learner at the research site where he obtained his

Grade 12 certificate, the highest qualification he has. He was motivated to become a School Board member because he likes to participate in educational affairs. He was born in the area and has served on different committees both at constituency and congregation level. During the interview, he revealed that he works at the research site as a cook and at the same time is a supervisor for the boys' hostel. He loves helping people out especially in education related aspects.

4.2.4 Head of Department 1 (HoD1)

She is a female teacher in her late 30s. She has been in the teaching profession for 15 years and became the Head of Department five years ago. She holds a Bachelor degree in Education with University of Namibia (UNAM) and specialised in commerce. During the interview, she confessed that she only enjoys teaching when learners excel in her subjects. She further added that it just happened that she became a teacher because her initial choice was to become a nurse but unfortunately, she did not perform well in Biology (I).

4.2.5 Head of Department 2 (HoD2)

She is an energetic 50-year-old lady that has been teaching for over two decades. She teaches Mathematics and Physical Science of which she enjoys teaching Mathematics. She is a war veteran who studied Master of Engineering in Petroleum Chemistry with the Academic Moscow Institution. Upon her return from abroad, she could not get employment with her qualification and thus enrolled with UNAM to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) that qualified her to become a teacher (I).

4.2.6 Teacher 1 (T1)

He is a very hard working, well-prepared and very committed man in his early 40s whose subjects have been performed exceptionally well each year (O, 26/06/2017). He recently graduated from Rhodes University where he obtained his BEd Honours degree in Educational Leadership and Management. He has been a teacher for 10 years and he enjoys teaching because one can become knowledgeable in almost every aspect in life (I). Additionally, teaching is his calling and passion as he strives to uplift children in his community. He serves on different committees and is the chairperson of the organising committee.

4.2.6 Teacher 2 (T2)

This teacher is a male of 36 years who has been teaching for 13 years. His highest qualification is the Higher Diploma in Education and his specialisation is History and English Grade 7-12. He obtained his Diploma through distance learning through the Institute of Open Learning in Ongwediva. He never wanted to be a teacher (I), but his unemployed parents could not afford his career choice and he was left with no choice to study education because the Government funds were available. However, he is also a soccer fanatic and he is the chairperson of the sport committee.

4.2.7 Teacher 3 (T3)

Finally, this female teacher is 37 years old who is passionate about teaching and has been teaching for eight years. She is the registered class teacher for Grade 9s and is very supportive, friendly and hardworking Oshindonga teacher (O, 28/06/2017). Her highest qualification is a Bachelor Degree in languages obtained at the then Ongwediva College of Education. She is a School Board member at this school and serves in different other school committees.

Having described my research participants, I now here below present and discuss the findings in response to my first sub-question on how the notion of learner leadership is understood by both all participants at the case study school.

As discussed in the literature chapter, a distributive leadership perspective was used as a lens to explore how leadership practices were constructed by Grade 9 learners in their collaboration with one another and their environment. From a distributed leadership perspective, leadership is viewed as "a product of joint interactions of school leaders, followers and the situation comprised of the tools, routines and artefacts" (Spillane, 2006, p. 3) where anyone including learners have the capacity to lead.

In the next section, I investigated the '*what, how, why*' of Grade 9 learners' leadership through the lens of distributed leadership. I will now present and discuss the findings in response to my first research question on how the concept learner leadership was understood by the participants described above at the case study school.

4.3 Phase 1 aim: To understand the leadership involvement of Grade 9 learners at the school: The notion of learner leadership at this school

Since the interest of this study was on how learner leadership can be developed among Grade 9 learners, it is significant that I explored how the notion of learner leadership was understood in the school and if the Grade 9 learners were involved in leadership at the study school. I therefore asked both the learners in their questionnaire and in the interviews of the participants how they understood the concept learner leadership.

Teachers, HoDs, the principal and School Board member viewed it differently with a variety of ideas and this is not surprising, as Uushona (2012, p. 21) argues that "there is no generic definition of what learner leadership is" – thus the definition of leadership as a concept is arbitrary and very subjective. I have categorised the different views regarding the definition of learner leadership into sub-themes namely: giving a voice to voiceless; learner leadership as leadership qualities; learner leadership as managerial skills; and learner leadership seen as the LRC structure. These are discussed hereunder.

4.3.1 Giving a voice to the voiceless

Giving a voice to the voiceless means that someone is speaking on behalf of those who cannot be heard and those who lack the power to speak. During the interview with the School Board member, he defined learner leadership as "*giving learners opportunities to contribute in affairs of the school"* (I). Some participants defined learner leadership as a commitment to democratic participation in leadership (HoD1, T2). Similarly, other participants viewed it as providing opportunities for learners' voice to be heard, an ability to voice their concern on what matters to them and learners' participation in different clubs at the school (P, HoD2). In addition, another teacher (T1) defined learner leadership as *"one would be responsible to see that everyone's view is welcomed on board"*. He further said that it, *"is when learners are given opportunities to take part in the school's matters so that they are able to voice their concerns and what matters to them is for them to be heard*" (I). Some respondents illustrated that learner leadership is when they give their ideas to the LRC, as then they will be taken seriously by the teachers (L9, L20, L22, L23). Specifically, they had a problem with their classroom leaking during the rainy season. Although they attempted reporting it several times to the office of the principal through their class captains, the problem was resolved only after the LRC reported it to the office (LQ). These views show that Grade 9s were not taken seriously because they held

no formal leadership positions. Added to this, another learner (L7) defined learner leadership as "*when learners are given chances to choose what they what to do at school*". On the same note, one learner (L16) defined learner leadership as "*when a chosen learner is chosen by others to talk on their behalf, like motivate others or advise other learners not to do nonsense things and to give them information about different activities that have to be done at school*" (LQ).

The above views correlate well with that of Mitra and Gross (2009), who explain learner voice as different ways in which learners have opportunities to share in school decisions that shape their lives and that of others. As one of the teachers (T1) further indicated, learners are complete individuals who can come up "*with great ideas to turn around the school*" (I) – learner voice reminds educational stakeholders of their uniqueness and the need for them to work in partnership *(ibid.)*.

To conclude this sub-theme, although some participants seemed to understand what learner leadership was as discussed above, my observations revealed that leadership development of Grade 9 learners was not happening at the school before this study. I now move on to the next theme which is learner leadership as leadership qualities.

4.3.2 Learner leadership as leadership qualities

As indicated in the literature review chapter, leadership qualities included influence, empowering, inspiring and motivating. During the interview, one of the HoDs perceived learner leadership as *"an ability to influence"* and further added that leaders should "*inspire not only others but their followers too"* (I). Additionally, one of the teachers (T1) perceived it as "*learners empowering others at a certain time and certain place*" (I). By the same token, some Grade 9 learners defined learner leadership as to motivate, advise, inspire and empower others instead of breaking each other down (L6, L11, L16, L18, L22 & L24). Even more so, "*leading by example"* was another thought brought up by the School Board member (I). The School Board member further added that "*learner leadership is about learners being involved in leading the affairs of the school*" (I). The ideas expressed by respondents resonates with leadership literature such as Yukl (2002), who defines leadership using three dimensions: "leadership as influence, leadership and values and leadership and vision" (p. 5). Moreover, leadership as influence involves development and change. By this I mean that influence and leadership are elements of power as Christie (2010) mentioned, hence leadership is directed

towards achieving a goal and can happen both formally and informally at school and can be performed at all levels in institutions.

4.3.3 Learner leadership as managerial tasks

Management is the art of getting things done through and with people, by implementing the managerial functions and these include controlling, planning, organising and monitoring. Although leadership and management can be executed differently, they are "interrelated and inseparable" (Uushona, 2012, p. 22). This view is confirmed across all the data sets by some participants who perceived learner leadership as managerial tasks such as controlling, leading, managing, monitoring, planning and organising (SBM, P, T3, L14 & L19). One teacher (T2) believed that "*learner leadership is when learners are able to 'organise' themselves to do school work without supervision from anyone*". One of the Heads of Department (HoD2) also viewed learner leadership as the *"art of showing learners the way of doing things, directing them towards the right path to do things at the right time in the right way*" (I). As a matter of fact, these concepts are management functions which are geared towards preserving and maintaining discipline and order around the school.

This idea is captured in literature. For example, Buchanan and Huczynski (1997) indicate that management relates to structures and processes within an organisation. Similarly, Gous (2006) in Hashikutuva (2011) highlights that planning, organising, controlling and monitoring are often associated with management, hence it is worth saying, as the data reported that some participants (L1, L19, T2, T3) not only viewed learner leaders as leaders, but also as managers of others. Other participants also viewed learner leadership as being part of the LRC structure which is discussed next.

4.3.4 Learner leadership seen as part of the LRC structure

Most respondents viewed learner leadership as a function of the Learner Representative Council (LRC), associating it with the idea of traditional leadership, where leadership is centred on a hierarchy where individuals are bound to adhere strictly to the set rules and roles (L1, L8, L14, L17, L19, L20). Interestingly, the Grade 9 learners did not see themselves as leaders because they were not participating in the LRC. Another learner (L4) added that the "*LRC make decisions for us and we follow them*". Even more, another respondent (L7) stressed that *"if the school wanted us to lead, they could have included us in the LRC campaign"* (LQ). Also,

another respondent proclaimed that *"we are just Grade 9s, who follow what we are told to do since we are the youngest in school"* (LQ). In a similar manner, another respondent (L10) viewed learner leadership as "*LRC members, because they are the only ones that participate in leadership*" (LQ).

The view of learner leadership that emerged here seems outdated and traditional. For example, respondents associated leadership with those in formal positions. The above views are associated with traditional views of leadership that are based on the model of leader to follower hierarchy and are entirely dependent on what leaders in formal positions do. This is an authoritarian leadership style that allows a leader to impose expectations and define outcomes. This type of leadership is opposed by distributed leadership that advocates that leadership be dispersed among both formal and informal positions. Some authors suggest that anyone could become a leader (House & Aditya, 1997; Helland & Winston, 2005).

Having presented the different views on the notion of learner leadership, I now move on to the second research question, on the involvement of Grade 9 learners in leadership at the school.

4.4 Grade 9s involvement in leadership at this school

Data across all sets showed that Grade 9 learners were only marginally involved in leadership development activities in the school. There were only six learners who participated in school activities such as the school choir, sports club and cultural performance group. Further to these, some felt that performing during school events such as Independence Day and African Child Day was one way of participating using leadership skills because they prepare themselves without the help of the teachers (L3, L10, L11, L16). Some also said that it "*feels good*" when the crowd shouted that they performed a nice drama (L18, L20) and that they "*feel good and important*" (L10, L13). A learner (L1) stated that she was the class captain and was "*leading my class although other learners around the school do not take us seriously because we are just small kids*" (LQ). Another learner (L7) added that "*we are conducting morning assembly at least once a term*" (LQ). They also participate in voting for the LRC although they "*are not allowed to campaign because they are young*" (L8, LQ).

The above views illustrate what is regarded as part of the national school culture in Namibia. School culture means people in an organisation have adopted ways in which they do things and

made it a habit until it becomes the culture of their organisation. Macneil, Prater and Busch (2009) contend that "a school culture refers to things such as climate, or ethos, the deeper patterns of values, beliefs and traditions that have been performed over the course of school history" (p. 74). Similarly, Donnell and Boyle (2008) add that "culture is something that gives an organisation a sense of identity and determines the organisation's legends, rituals, beliefs, meanings, values, norms and language, the way in which things are done around here" (p. 4). However, in this case the culture portrayed is not unique to this school. This is what happens at all schools in Namibia.

Moreover, during the interview with the principal, she emphasised that learners were accorded opportunities to participate in different clubs at the school. This was negated by a learner (L3) who confessed that "*Even if we are interested to participate in clubs at school, they never chose us when club members are performing or making decisions*" (L3, LQ). I observed this during a parents' meeting where only members of the cultural performance club from senior grades participated in welcoming the parents (O, 08/07/17). Another respondent said, "*we know nothing since we are young*" (L17) while another one added that "*there is no point joining the clubs because no one will notice your presence, the fact that you are a Grade 9 learner*" (L5). Most of the class felt that they were not participating in leadership because at most of the activities happening at the school, decisions were either made in staff rooms or by the LRC. They felt that "*no consultation is being done"* regarding the affairs of the school (L1, L2, L5). Added to this is another learner (L12) who said, "*they do not tell us what they are discussing"* (LQ). Also, another learner said, *"they do things on their own, but they expect us to do well in school work"* (L15). Sometimes they feel like they are "*not part of the school"* (L10). It is *"bad to be the youngest at the school"* another learner emphasised (LQ). These learners' views are in agreement with that of Smyth (2006) who argues that when learners feel that their contributions towards the school are unnoticed, they tend to develop negative feelings towards schooling and lose interest in school activities.

These views were shared by everyone I interviewed. Teachers, Heads of Departments, the principal and the School Board member acknowledged that there was no a single activity at the school that had been initiated or led by the Grade 9 learners. This was the case because as they were the youngest at the school, there were no platforms for them to participate in leadership. Additionally, the notion of learner leadership was not understood by most teachers and learners.

In summary, the participation of learners in leadership at the case study school was a concern because the community where the school is located believes that to have children making decisions is offensive. Culturally, learners are not mature enough to make decisions (HoD1, HoD2, T2, T3). This is supported by early researchers of education who saw very little need for student participation in school governance or affairs. The belief was that "children were immature and incompetent and needed to be under the jurisdiction of their parents until they were ready to shift to adulthood" (Locke, as cited in Chinsamy, 1995, p. 10). Chinsamy (1995) further argues that "children can cast off their dependency when they become adults and rational enough to understand the principles by which they are governed" (p. 11).

Not only parents that are concerned with learners' participation but also school authorities have shown little faith in learners regarding the sharing of power with the learners. According to Buckley as cited in Chinsamy (1995, p. 11) school authorities "cannot face the change in their traditional position". Moreover, they based their arguments on the fact that issues discussed at school are intellectually rooted thus it would be pointless and time wasting to have learners in decision making structures" *(ibid).* According to Sithole, quoted in Shekupakela- Nelulu (2008) on cultural grounds elders do not discuss important issues in the presence of children. To do so now would "tarnish the respect which children must accord their elders and bring about decay and morass in the traditional value system" (p. 14). I come back to this important argument in Section 4.6.1

The above situation aroused my interest in probing the third research question, of what should be done to enhance the Grade 9 leadership at the case study school, which is discussed next.

4.5 Enhancement of Grade 9 learners' participation in leadership

Due to Grade 9s minimal leadership involvement at the school, I enquired what should be done to enhance the participation of Grade 9 learners because by encouraging leadership, learners develop leadership skills and learn to become citizens prepared to engage enthusiastically, not only at school, but also in their communities, as well as participate in democracy (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Below are the findings.

4.5.1 Creating awareness and motivational talks

The findings suggested that awareness needs to be created for the learners to participate in leadership at the school. School Board members and teachers including the Heads of Departments and the principal need to talk openly with learners about leadership roles. Learners need to be motivated, educated and be encouraged on the importance of leadership at the school. The School Board member interviewed pointed out that "*if learners take part in leadership at a young age, they will indeed become great leaders of the society*" (I). He further added that it was in ancient times that learners were regarded as kids and were unable to make decisions. However, this is the 21st century "*where learners know what matters to them*". They need "*to speak out and be heard*", only then the situation at schools in terms of academics and discipline will improve. The Head of Department (HoD1) suggested that "*we need to call in influential people from the community to talk with them and motivate them about leadership issues*" (I). These ideas correlate well with that of Archard (2013), who emphasises that "leadership should be practised through the influence of others and through the notion of servant leadership, ultimately resulting in a positive outcome for all involved" (p. 347).

When asked who should be responsible for the education and motivation of Grade 9 learners, some participants believed that it was the responsibility of every teacher at the school. Specifically, the member of the School Board explained that "*it is the responsibility of every teacher because they are aware of learner leadership unlike parents, they must promote it*". He further clarified that "*it is their sole responsibility to create awareness and educate learners on matters that concern them such as learner leadership*" (I). He further added that "*our responsibility as School Board members is to find out if teachers are encouraging learner leadership at the school*". Adding to the SBM's views was the two Heads of Departments and the principal who believed that "*all of them at the school have the responsibility of creating awareness*" (I). Others opposed the idea as they felt that it was the responsibility of the class teacher and those in management positions, including the Life Skills teacher, to develop Grade 9 leadership (T1, T2,) while another teacher (L3), had a different view that "*it is the responsibility of the register class teacher and all other teachers teaching Grade 9s*" (I).

The above views indicated that although the members of the management team that were interviewed believed that it was everyone's responsibility to enhance the Grade 9s leadership,

teachers felt that it was not their responsibility but that of people in managerial positions. This means teachers viewed leadership as manifested in fixed formal positions.

Apart from creating awareness and motivational talks, they also suggested that becoming LRC members and being accorded opportunities to participate in different clubs, as other ways of enhancing leadership of Grade 9s and these are discussed respectively hereunder.

4.5.2 Participation in the LRC

Some teachers felt that Grade 9 learners should be given opportunities to participate in the LRC. A teacher suggested that "*they should be given portfolios to be served strictly by Grade 9 learners within the structure of the LRC"* (T1). Also, another teacher added that, "*it is only fair since they are young and dominated by the senior learners"* (T2). This point is the same as that of some learners who requested that "*they should be added in the structure of the LRC"* (L14, L19, L21). Equally important, another learner (L22) indicated that "*we need to be treated fairly and equally regardless of our age or grade, when it comes to leadership"* (LQ). Added to this is a learner (L8) that proposed to "*be given the rights to participate in leadership like any other learners*" while another learner (L1) emphasised that, *"I want to be on the LRC because of my academics, since I was the overall best performer last year"* (LQ). In line with the above views, the Head of Department (HoD1) suggested that "*now that we are talking about learner leaders, from the next election, we need to have a portfolio within the LRC structure strictly for someone from Grade 9"* (I).

The above are good suggestions because Grade 9s are interested in participating in leadership. When asked if they think they have the right to participate in decision-making at the school, most of the Grade 9s strongly agreed. They thought that this opportunity would not only give them opportunities to engage with the rest of the school but also "*prove to other learners that they have great ideas and they can take responsibility fully just like them"* (L10, L14, L16). Added to this was another puzzled learner (L18) who queried: *"why are we not participating in the LRC if we are all learners at the school"* (LQ).

The principal assured me that as of next year, Grade 9s would be involved in taking part in LRCs "*uncontested*" (I). She further explained that since the voice of the LRC was being heard at the school, it was only fair to the Grade 9 learners to join the structure, for their voice also needed to be heard (I). Through my observations, the stakeholders at this school had only just

realised the importance of enhancing leadership capabilities, influenced by the first stage of Mitra and Gross' pyramid discussed in the literature review chapter. The above views echo with Flutter (2006) who advocates for inclusivity of people at grassroots, paving the way towards a leadership model that is increasingly student-led (p. 184).

4.5.3 Be accorded leadership opportunities

A learner (L12) felt that "*we should be consulted when decisions are made at the school*" (LQ), on whatever is happening at the school, so that they too could voice their concerns (L2, L5, L11). A learner (L13) added that "*we must be involved in decision-making because we are also smart to decide good things*" (LQ). Also, another learner (L14) said, "*we need freedom to participate in school activities"* (LQ). In addition, being encouraged to participate in different activities was one of the suggestions brought up by most teachers. They should be "*given opportunities to serve in such clubs' portfolios to feel that they are part of the rest of the school'* (HoD2, T3, SBM). Learners themselves felt that they should establish clubs where they elected people from their class to serve in the club's portfolio. This would be a great platform, as "*teachers will start listening to what we say or what we want, not like now that they only listen to the LRC"* (L7, LQ). This idea overlaps with Fullan's (1982) question, of what would happen if educational stakeholders treated the learner as someone whose voice mattered in the affairs of the school and generated another question of, how are we going to make sure learners' voice are being heard.

These views coincided with Spillane (2006) who emphasises that "it is not only about a collective interaction among leaders, followers and their situation but also about leadership practice" (p. 4). Confirming this is Mitra and Gross' (2009) pyramid of student voice that illustrates that the learner voice is further enhanced through collaboration with adults and results in learners' capacity for leadership being built.

As the above discussions showed, the participation of Grade 9 learners in leadership is very limited and enhancing it is a matter of urgency. Following next is my fourth research question, regarding the constraining factors inhibiting the Grade 9s participation in leadership. Since I used CHAT as an analytical tool to surface them, the constraining factors are presented in terms of CHAT. They are in fact contradictions between or among the various elements of the CHAT activity system. As indicated in Chapter Two, Engeström, (2001) explains that "contradictions

are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovate attempts to change the activity" (p. 137).

Moreover, the second generation of CHAT helped me to surface the contradictions and tensions within and between elements of the activity system where leadership was being investigated. The second generation of CHAT further allowed me to present those tensions to participants during the Change Laboratory workshops.

4.6 Factors inhibiting Grade 9s leadership participation

It appeared from the data that there were several challenges that hampered the successful practice of leadership practices for Grade 9 learners at the case study school. In terms of the analytical framework I used (CHAT), these challenges were contradictions, that is, points of tension between two or more of the elements in the framework.

As discussed in the last section of the literature review chapter, contradictions in activity systems are described by Engeström (2001) as imbalances caused by deviations from standard scripts and are regarded as the motive for force of change and development within and between activity systems (p. 137). There are two of four levels of contradictions in a single activity system as discussed in the literature review chapter. Thus, the next section discusses primary and secondary contradictions that were identified within the Grade 9 learner leadership activity system. Below is the second generation CHAT activity system that was used to analyse the contradictions discussed next.

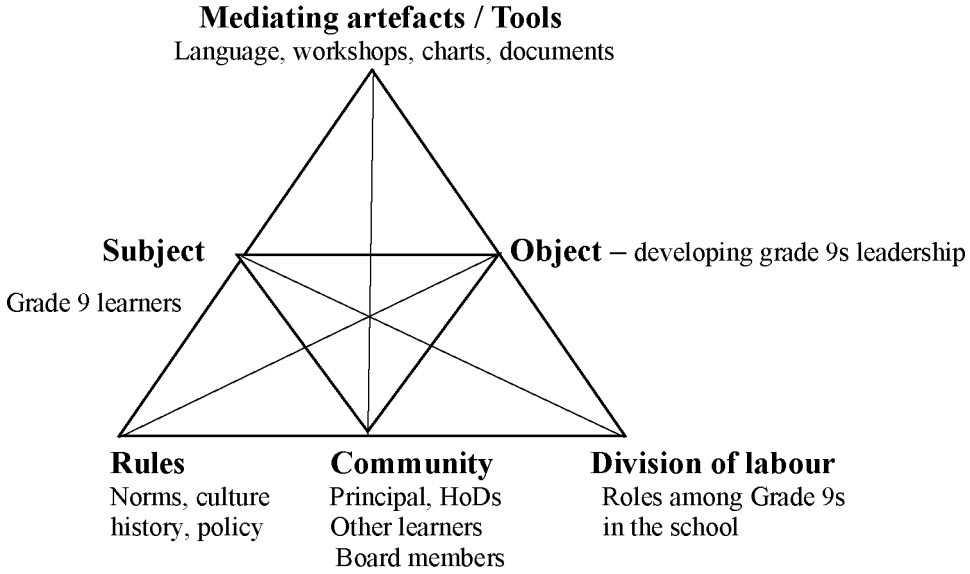


Figure 4.1: Grade 9 leadership activity system

To remind the reader, primary contradictions occur within an element of an activity system while secondary contradictions occur between more than one element of an activity system. These contradictions informed me of how, what and why Grade 9 leadership was happening at the research school the way it was. Since my study aimed to bring about change, I then presented these contradictions during the Change Laboratory workshops conducted with my research participants. The essence of the Change Laboratory was to work collaboratively with members of the activity system, to build and develop new practices, tools and models (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

4.6.1 Lack of opportunity to develop learner voice

One of the contradictions which surfaced from the data was the lack of opportunities to develop learner voice. This contradiction occurred between the *subject* and *the school culture* as well as *the school norms*. This tension emerged due to the misunderstanding of the concept learner leadership among different stakeholders and resulted in hampering the effectiveness of Grade 9 learners to participate in leadership, as there were no platforms for learner leadership activities. Historically, there were no opportunities for learners to lead and this is still the case as learner leadership as a concept needs to be explored. This prevented some teachers, Heads of Departments and learners, from understanding the importance of learners' participation in leadership. The Head of Department (HoD2) viewed learner leadership as the structure of the LRC; hence, she did not see the need for Grade 9s to participate in leadership (I). A teacher (T3) believed that *"Grade 9 learners are young and not capable of leading"* (I). Thus, it becomes difficult to accord the learners opportunities to air their views and exercise their democratic rights through leadership. The principal remarked that a lack of understanding amongst teachers on the importance of learner voice in school governance, made it hard for Grade 9 learners at this school to lead effectively. She further clarified that, *"I hardly see teachers giving responsibilities to learners because teachers could have assigned learners during their absence to take over their classes"* (I). Instead, they are leaving this responsibility to the principal and HoDs. She insinuated that some teachers had never taken leadership roles during their schooling time, thus they did not understand the importance of learner leadership.

The findings further revealed that learners felt that they were not recognised and in most cases, they are *"not consulted"* when it comes to decision-making or on what matters to them (L1, L5, L9, L15). Most of the Grade 9 learners indicated via the questionnaire, that their views were not taken seriously and never implemented. Even parents regarded them as too young to

lead (L3, L6, L10, L19). They said that some of the teachers were even "*mocking*" them when they voiced their concerns and this embarrassed them (L18, L23, L24). They apparently lost confidence in most teachers because whatever they say to them, the teachers respond by saying "*it is nonsense in their ears*" (L17). Due to this negativity, learners felt they were not recognised as part and parcel of the school. These views are in line with Angus (2006, p. 370) who indicates that "it is precisely these marginalised learners who school leaders need to reach out, engage with and learn to understand and accommodate in schools".

Indeed, learner voice needs to be developed because it is about true democracy within institutions (Shuttle, 2007) and it is "a potential catalyst for student agency" (Grant, 2015, p. 95). As Mitra and Gross (2009) contend, learner voice initiatives "can broaden the scope of who has a voice in schools and can even lead to student participation in developing school reform efforts" (p. 538).

Consequently, the Grade 9s suggested to the school governing body and the school management team that they accord them platforms such as a learner leadership club at the school. They requested that workshops for awareness regarding learner leadership be conducted for both teachers and parents. The participants confidently said that the notes handed out on learner leadership and the experience they gained during the Change Laboratory would help them change things around the school. Their workshop objective was that each class identify what mattered to them most and establish the clubs based on what they viewed as important. The above suggestions echoes Grant (2015), who highlights that learner leadership clubs "offered a space of leadership from which learners could speak back concerning what they consider important about their learning" (p. 96).

4.6.2 Traditional norms regarding learners

This was really a significant tension, as Grade 9s themselves were not too sure to whom they should turn to for support regarding leadership practices. There was thus a secondary contradiction which occurred between the *object, culture* and *community*. Across all data sets, data revealed that the way parents and teachers perceived learners, resulted in a lack of support for learner leadership. As I showed in Section 4.6.1, the research site as a social institution is located within a community that strongly believes in traditional culture with respect of adults, parents and elderly leaders, as one of its cultural strengths – hence the ignorance and non-support from both parents and teachers. Although a certain teacher (T1) believed that "*all*

learners are capable of leading" (I), when asked the question: "*do all learners lead?"*, the findings from both the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that learners should not lead due to their immaturity (P, HoD2, T2, T3, L7, L11, L19).

The fact that learners are regarded as kids who should always listen to elders, is in line with Rudduck and Flutter (2000) who state that "there is a legacy of public perceptions of childhood that has made it difficult until recently, for people to take seriously the idea of encouraging young people to contribute to debates about things that affect them, both in and out of school" (p. 80). Data showed that culturally, it was believed that learners should not take part in leadership roles and decision-making because they are "*unable to take fully responsibility"* of their decisions regarding issues affecting them (HoD1, T3). These views above are like that of Uushona (2012), who points out that generally, children are portrayed as lacking moral standards, being out of control and lacking experience on which to draw for effective participation.

This tension (cultural norms and traditions of the Oshiwambo) did not only cause teachers and parents to not trust learners with leadership roles, but also most Grade 9 learners too felt they were too young to lead the senior learners. We "*cannot stand in front of senior learners and be expect to tell them what to do"* (L15, L19). Another learner (L11) said that "*who would listen to small kids like us, that is the joke of the century"* (LQ). Teachers felt that if leadership roles were to be entrusted to young learners, there would be no order at the school any longer. As Moose (2012) puts it: "Trust is likened to energy, it creates the conditions and mobilises people to action" (p. 29). I can argue that without trust in the learners by the teachers and principal, the distribution of leadership let alone of power and authority, will be inhibited. Moreover, Harris (2010) makes the point that "a successful distribution of leadership depends upon the firm establishment of mutual trust" (p. 552). This means that a leader should trust the other leaders, such as a principal or a teacher needing to trust a learner to lead, for learner leadership to progress.

Since teachers do not view learners as part of society and culture, learners do not receive support by teachers and community at large for their effectiveness in leadership participation. Hence, they are not seen as social actors and or agree that "pupil participation and perspectives may be more acceptable than it has been in the past" (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 80). This is really a significant tension as Grade 9s are not encouraged, as most learners indicated that "*they*

do not get support from teachers" (L7, L11, L13). On the same note, teachers felt that it was the responsibility of those in managing posts to offer support to learners. Their primary roles were to "*ensure effectiveness of teaching and learning"* (T1, T2, T3). The above views indicated that the issue of cultural norms played a role and resulted in a lack of support for learner participation in leadership. Both parents and teachers believed that children would gain power if they were to participate in leadership and to illustrate this, when I was introduced at the school and expressed that I was exploring learner leadership, one teacher thought I wanted learners to take over the leadership in the school (O, 07/05/2017). She asked me the following question: "*Are you sure that there will be no chaos and anarchy if learners are to lead the school?"* as she did not want their school's name to be tarnished. I assured her that it was aimed at building leadership capabilities in learners, as well as observing how leadership can be developed by means of an intervention. In my own personal observations, I observed that a lack of awareness about learner leadership caused the uncertainties among educational stakeholders. This is since the phenomenon of learner leadership is under-researched in Namibia. Accordingly, after the intervention, some teachers expressed the fear that members of the Leaner Leadership Club would change the rules and norms of the school (O, 07/08/2017).

On the other hand, different stakeholders could not reach consensus as to who had the responsibility to enhance the Grade 9s leadership practices. Most teachers felt that it was the responsibility of the school management team and the principal to offer support to develop the leadership of learners, which means they viewed learner leadership as a hierarchy system. Other teachers revealed that they did not want to be blamed by parents if learners started misbehaving and got out of hand. A teacher (T3) emphasised that "*the moment learners become leaders they would start dictating to their parents and it is us teachers who will be blamed by their parents*" (I). This was revealed in an interview question which asked – who do you think has the responsibility to develop Grade 9 leadership at this school? He pointed out that "*I am here to teach not to do those things*" (T3). The community as one element of CHAT theory clashed with the functioning of Grade 9 leadership since they could not fully support the ideas of a learner leader.

During the Change Laboratory workshops, participants suggested the matter should be taken to the office of the principal, for her to let the teachers and parents know about their grievances. In fact, it is not easy to change cultural norms and beliefs of people, thus this type of

contradiction is an example of conflict that may take the form of resistance, disagreement, argument and criticism, as Engeström and Sannino (2011) explain.

4.6.3 English language as barriers

This is a secondary contradiction because it occurred between the *subject* and the *tools* of the activity system. Indeed, language is an artefact in the activity system. As defined previously in the literature chapter, in an activity system, artefacts or tools refer to both psychological and physical tools that enable or limit the intervention of an activity system and these tools are employed by the subject to act on an object (Engeström, 1999). The issue of the English language as a barrier is not only a concern at the research site, but a national concern especially in the far north regions of Namibia. I argue that this is caused by the language of teaching and learning – a non-native language being the medium of instruction as per the Namibian school curriculum. Since the English language is not a native language to both learners and teachers, the teaching and learning is sometimes conducted in vernacular languages (code switching) for the learners to understand the subjects' content. As a result, schools consistently perform below expectation, with English failure rates accelerating each year (National Directorate Examination Assessment report, 2015).

Consequently, Grade 9 learners felt that since they were not able to speak English well, they did not see the point of participating in different clubs around the school. In fact, one cannot perform a certain task without tools, hence these participants were unable to develop leadership skills without proper communication. One of the learners pointed out that "*other learners will laugh at us since we can't speak proper English*" (L6, LQ). Another one (L12) said, "*how can we join different clubs if we cannot express ourselves in English"* (LQ). Teachers too discovered that learners "*cannot express themselves*" well in English and as a result they were not taking part in clubs (T2, T3, HoD1). These constrained the Grade 9s from leading effectively because a lack of proper communication was a tension for the Grade 9s in participating in different clubs.

Since contradictions in the second generation can be sources of change and development, the English language as a barrier, was broken down through establishing the English Club. This was the start of a solution to this problem, as participants could practice different language skills such as speaking, listening, writing and reading, aimed at improving their day to day

communication. The establishment of an English Debating Club revealed opportunities for constructing innovations for new ways of structuring and enacting the activity (Foot, 2001).

Through my experience as a teacher, I have learned that these challenges originate from lack of leadership practices in our education sector. This is supported by John Maxwell (1993), who states that "everything rises and falls on leadership" (p. viii). Likewise, there is an African proverb that states 'an army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by a sheep'. This is evident in the many challenges facing our schools and institutions of higher learning. For example, there is a lack of communication between curriculum developers and curriculum implementers, thus resulting in teachers not understanding the curriculum they teach as well as the many relevant documents. To address this concern, our leaders governing our education sector need to engage their followers on the ground, especially teachers and learners.

4.6.4 Limitation of existing policy

According to Engeström (1987 as cited in Strydom, 2017), policy refers to national and provincial policy and curricula as well as local/classroom/teacher policies that regulate teaching and learning. There was a tension between the *tools* and the *object* that limited the Grade 9s from becoming learner leaders. The only policy on learner leadership are the Regulations made under the Education Act *(Act 16 of 2001).* Since most of the teachers at the case study school viewed learner leadership as the LRC structure, this policy limited the participation of Grade 9s in leading, as it only afforded opportunities to learners from senior grades to become members of the Learner Representative Council (LRC). Clause 29 (c) of the policy stipulates that "only a learner who will be in one of the two highest grades at the school in the following year may be nominated". This means the Grade 9s cannot participate in the LRC until they are in Grade 11. There is no other policy about leaner leadership clubs at schools, thus learner leadership was not practiced at school. I maintain that the limitation of this policy may be caused by the fact that learner leadership is not fully developed or the fact that learner leadership is confused with formal leadership positions amongst learners.

In the same fashion, the Department of National Education (1997) as cited in Naicker (2000) suggests that for the Outcome Based Education (OBE) in South Africa to materialise there had to be "a move from one paradigm to another, from one way of looking at something to a new way. A move to a new mind set, a new attitude, a new way of thinking" (p. 5). In the same way, the above quote could apply to learner leadership in Namibia and it remains imperative for

school management to unpack the implications of the previous systems, to make changes in leadership thinking and practice (Uushona, 2012, p. 190).

On the issue of policy limitations, the participants recommended that an internal school policy be formulated that would allow all learners at the school to participate in at least one of the learner leadership clubs of their choice. This recommendation was forwarded to the chairperson of the school governing body to present to both parents and teachers for endorsement. There is no doubt that the endorsement will be made because the principal promised to influence all parties involved, as she was very happy with the positive results this study brought forth at the school (I). The principal further confessed that this study had made them aware, especially the teachers, of what learner leadership was and its benefit towards the welfare of the school (I).

4.6.5 Limited understanding on the significance of learner leadership practices

It is not only learners that do not realise the importance of leadership development, teachers and parents too refer to the learner leadership practices as a waste of time. This is a primary contradiction as it occurred *within the subject* and at the same time a secondary contradiction as it occurred between the *community* and *the object*; hence, leadership development does not occur if the participants do not recognise the value of it.

A teacher (T3) said, as Grade 9s are the youngest at the school, they do not "*know time on task tactics*". She claimed that *"they would end up neglecting their school work if they are to participate in leadership activities"*. She further added that "*they cannot manage the pressure of being a leader and at the same time a learner"* (I). In addition, this was also the view of the Head of Department who answered that *"I do not want to be blamed if Grade 9 learners failed"* because "*they wasted time on leadership"*. She further supported her claim by saying that "*some parents come to school requesting their children do not participate in different clubs because they do not want their kids to fail"* (HoD2).

Another question in the questionnaire was: *Do you wish to participate in leadership activities?* To this, a learner (L4) said, "*my parents said I should not participate in different clubs because it is a waste of time and I need to study"* (LQ). Also, another learner (L7) pointed out "*that we have a lot of subjects to study, I really will not have time to be in leadership*" (LQ).

In this activity system, there was a need for awareness to help the community to develop the object and share different roles (division of labour) among all learners at the school, to participate in extra-mural activities. When all the members of the community are aware about the significance of learner leadership, there will be no option for learners not to participate in other school activities.

As contradictions arise, they expose opportunities for change and action (Foot, 2001). The Grade 9s wrote a letter to the principal requesting permission to conduct a one-day workshop for the entire school about learner leadership. The workshop planned to be conducted early September 2017. The participants went to the extent of formulating the programme and allocating roles amongst themselves. For example, the club's president would facilitate the talk on the benefits of learner leadership, the vice-president would talk about how learners could establish the learner leadership clubs.

4.6.6 Bullying

Finally, another contradiction that emerged was bullying. Some learners indicated that there were learners from their class, senior learners and teachers that bullied them. These caused "*us to feel insecure and stop attending extra-mural activities*" (L11). This tension occurred between the *object* and the *community* also within the *subject* of the activity system. Bullying refers to the unwanted, aggressive behaviour amongst school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power inequality. The fact that they withdrew from school activities and started isolating themselves, prevented them from participating in leadership activities. This is undoubtedly a critical situation, as it does not only rob them of opportunities to participate in leadership, but it also affects their psychological and emotional well-being. I argue that the issue of power relations plays a role here, as those suffering from bullying are the youngest ones. A certain learner (L24) said that "*I stopped participating in the cultural performance group because of bullying*" (LQ). She further explained that "*every time I want to practice the cultural performance, senior learners always make fun of me and it is always us (the young ones) who have to clean the venue or are being blamed if something goes wrong*" (LQ). Most of the bullies were in Grade 11 and 12 and *"we do not even report them because we know nothing will happen to them"* (L6, LQ). Teachers hardly take them seriously, another learner emphasised (L4). The senior learners "*don't want to associate with us*" because "*we are small kids"* and this makes us "*feel lonely and unhappy"* **(L11, L13).** Teachers were also bullying

them, as some participants said that "*some teachers are calling us names, teasing and gossiping about us'* (L16, L18, L19).

Learners from Grade 9 that were bullying others, apologised to their victims and stopped it immediately during the Change Laboratory workshops. As for the senior bullies, recommendations were made through the principal's office, for awareness creation through educating others. This was done during the morning devotion, when the club secretary highlighted the disadvantages of bullying and the negative consequences towards the perpetrators (O, 24/07/2017).

Having discussed the above surfaced contradictions from the Grade 9s leadership activity system, I next reflect on the Change Laboratory workshops and the potential contribution of these workshops to the participants.

4.7 Phase 2 aim: To intervene and bring about change: Reflection on the CL workshops

To embrace an intervention in my study was appropriate and fit the purpose of this study as it sought to bring learner voice into the world of research, to increase social justice and human rights that are advocated for and by this study (Mertens, p. 3). Further to this, formative research focuses on the tensions that arise when unequal power relationships surround the investigation of what seems to be intransigent social problems.

4.7.1 Change Laboratory explored

Since the findings revealed that the Grade 9s involvement in leadership was marginal, I then decided to intervene with the purpose of developing Grade 9s leadership opportunities using the Change Laboratory intervention.

To remind the reader, I wish to start with a definition of what a Change Laboratory is. Change Laboratory is a method for developing work practices by the practitioners (participants) and is based on the notion of re-mediation and dual stimulation derived from CHAT (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). The Change Laboratory (CL) intervention was applicable in my study because it gave participants the potential to use mediating artefacts to bring about change that my study was advocating for. In addition, CL was used with second generation CHAT theory to see how reality was shaped and viewed with regards to learner leadership development at

the research site. Since knowledge is constructed in a context of power and privilege (Mertens, 2009, p. 48), knowledge is socially and historically constructed within a complex cultural context. The intervention allowed me as a researcher to create an interactive connection between myself and the participants in the study.

I will now reflect on the Change Laboratory (CL) workshops conducted during the data generating process, before moving on to the fifth research question that emerged from the CL workshops, highlighting the potential contribution of CL workshops to the participants.

Since CHAT enabled me to identify points of tension within the activity system, solving and overcoming these contradictions had the potential to promote learning and growth. I used the second generation activity theory that helped me identify, understand and analyse the central activity which was the case study unit. CHAT provided the tools to understand the relationships between elements of the activity system.

I employed three Change Laboratory (CL) workshops discussed below to analyse the data with research participants, where I presented the findings as mirror data to surface contradictions and tensions in the activity system and prepared the mirror data for representation during the CL workshops. The essence of CL workshops is to work collaboratively with members of the activity system, to build and develop new practices, tools and models (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

All the Change Laboratory workshops were conducted in the Grade 9 classroom after the afternoon study session from 14h30. These workshops were filmed, and photos were taken by participants on rotation. There was also a secretary and a time-keeper. I was an observer and interventionist during these workshops, writing notes in my observation schedule.

4.7.1.1 The first Change Laboratory workshop

The **first** Change Laboratory workshop was conducted on Wednesday, 12th July 2017. I introduced the theory that framed my study in terms of an activity system and discussed the concept 'distributed leadership' where learner leadership can be imagined. During this workshop, I highlighted that I used CHAT to analyse the data and that contradictions that emerged would be presented to them the next day to find solutions.

Figure 4.2: Participants during the first CL workshop listening and engaging with the researcher as the study is introduced

4.7.1.2 The second Change Laboratory workshop

The **second** workshop was conducted on Thursday, 13th July 2017 and this was for mirroring the data and providing opportunities for participants to discuss and resolve the contradictions. The participants resolved contradictions in four different groups of six members each. All four groups addressed all the contradictions that emerged.

Apart from the contradictions discussed earlier, other challenges emerged during the CL discussions. For example: learners who laugh at other learner's mistakes, no cooperation within their groups and shyness to participate. By the end of the session, those who usually laugh at others' mistakes apologised and promised to stop doing it; those who were not collaborating started doing so; and those who were lacking confidence were encouraged to present their group discussion to the class.

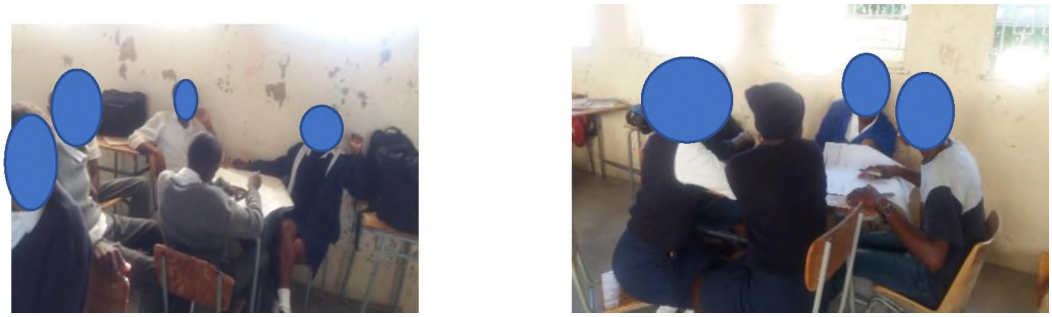


Figure 4.3: Some of the participants during the second CL workshop busy resolving contradictions in their respective groups

During their group discussions, I observed that learners started to participate actively in their groups and most of them used the vernacular language during group discussions.

I further observed that as discussions went further, practitioners became more confident as they supported each other and began to share their views and opinions openly. These opportunities helped them make great contributions without fear. I was impressed with the way the discussions were carried out in their respective groups (O, 13/06/17). The Change Laboratory workshops were learning opportunities because they contributed both to the accumulation of participant's scientific knowledge and to the progress of new ideas and solutions for meeting these challenges. Furthermore, solving contradictions and tensions that arise during the mediation provides the opportunity for learning, what Engeström (1999) calls 'expansive learning' which I discuss in the next section. This is in line with Edwards (2005) who says, when contradictions are resolved, learning happens, and a more advanced activity system emerges. As a result, participants developed their understanding of the focus of the study (learner leadership development). The activities sought to address new emerging problems that created a new understanding of the research focus (Daniels, 2005).

On the other hand, the unresolvable contradictions that emerged during this session were presented to the office of the principal for further investigation. These included bullying from both teachers and other learners, lack of support and motivation from teachers, and lack of opportunities available for leadership.

4.7.1.3 The third Change Laboratory workshop

The **third** workshop was conducted on Monday, 17th July 2017 where practitioners presented their solutions to the challenges discussed and paved the way forward. Each group had a volunteer presenter to present in front of the class to the rest of the participants. On the contradiction of '*language barriers'* every group suggested the establishment of an English Club. On the contradiction of '*misconception of the concept learner leadership'* each group suggested training by the researcher. Additionally, all the groups suggested that these two contradictions' resolutions should be implemented.

On Wednesday, 19th July 2017, I conducted training on the concept learner leadership as suggested by the learners. The topics of discussion included the following: definition of the concept learner leadership, ways of becoming learner leaders, benefits of learner leaders and qualities of learner leaders. I prepared the handouts (see appendix 11) on the said topics and the training was done using the Learner Centered Approach (LCA) where participants actively participated. On Friday, 21st July 2017 I evaluated the possible effects the workshops and the training had on the participants to answer my fourth research question "*What positive contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops have on the participants"*, by distributing a reflection form (see appendix 3) to each participant. I present their responses below.

4.8 Potential contribution of the Change Laboratory workshops

Following the Change Laboratory workshops, transformative opportunities were established through the process of expansive learning. Expansive learning processes enabled me as a researcher to intervene in a way that gave the participants opportunities to address and settle some tension that was surfaced within and between the elements of the activity system. The participants agreed to come together to construct and implement new and doable changes in practice to improve the collective system (as cited in Engeström, 2007). Due to the scope of this study, the engagement was only made up to stage 6 of the expansive learning cycle as illustrated below.

Stage 1: Questioning of current working model and disturbances – The participants were encouraged to interrogate, disapprove, or reject some aspects of their understanding on the notion of learner leadership practices at the school. They questioned the existing standard

practices of learner leadership at the school that resulted in the next stage of analysing the situation at the school.

Stage 2: Analysis of history and current state – the participants were fully involved here both mentally and practically trying to find out the underlying factors of why things are the way they are. This was divided into two further stages following next.

Historical analysis**:** The activity "future search activity" (Weisbord, 2012) was used as a lens to trace the past. The activity revealed that nothing much had happened in terms of leadership between the past and present, as a result, the participants shaped the future.
Current analysis: The resolving of contradictions happened during this stage.

Stage 3: Trying to find new solutions – During this stage, the participants were planning to create a new model. They strategised to compile the rules and the regulations of the club, prepared an official opening and the calendar of activities.

Stage 4: Formation of a new solution - In expansive learning, there is a "collective creative activity" that emerges when participants engage during the workshop discussions (Engeström, as cited in Yamazumi, 2009, p. 21). In this case, the establishment of an English Debating Club was created. The participants also voted for the executive structure of the established learner leadership club.

Stage 5: Implementation of the new solution – Both my observations and the attendance register revealed that the participants had been attending the English Debating sessions, practicing speaking the language within the vicinity of the school and following the roster time-table.

Stage 6: Evaluation of the new model – The reflection on the established learner leadership club (English Debating Club) was done after two weeks of implementation. The reflection of this intervention is presented in detail in the next section (see Section 4.9).

Next, are the responses and observations made through the engagement of participants during the workshops. These included: planning, collaboration, commitment, leading by example, self-confidence and initiative and are presented below.

4.8.1 Planning

The learner leaders caught me by surprise the day I went to evaluate the effectiveness of the Change Laboratory workshops. I found them gathered together in our usual venue discussing the way forward. I found the list of all events planned for them to establish their English Debating Club written on the chalkboard. Moreover, they had planned that the first thing they had to do was to elect members to serve on the executive structure of the club. They further planned to set up rules and regulations of the club and a roster of their meetings (when to meet and what activity to be carried out). I observed that the election of the club's president, vice-president, secretary, vice-secretary, deputy secretary, treasurer, vice-treasurer and the time-keeper was done democratically, fairly and transparently (O, 21/07/2017). In each portfolio, they nominated four candidates, two females and two males. Each participant could vote twice in each portfolio and the two candidates with the most votes occupied the seats.

According to the participants' reflections (CLR, 21/07/2017), a participant (L5) stated that "*we drafted a roster of our meetings, we planned how we are going to start with our English Debating Club and we compiled our club's rules and regulations"* (CLR). Another participant (L10) said, "*We planned that our President and Secretary present our plan of action to the principal on Monday. I am so happy to be part of English Debating Club"* (CLR). Harris and Lambert (2013) state that "the ability to organise and plan are critical skills for leadership capacity and play an important part in the leadership process". Moreover, Harris (2013) emphasises that "to sustain improvement, there has to be a means of implementing planning" (p. 19).

4.8.2 Collaboration

Collaboration was observed starting from when participants were engaged in group discussions to the voting process (O, 21/07/17). Throughout their planning activities, they were indeed working as a team. This was evident in the words of a participant (L12) who indicated that "*it was interesting when our group tried to suggest solutions to the challenges presented in a cooperative way*" (CLR). Also, another participant stated, "*our group members were listening to each other and giving chances to talk one at a time without interfering with others*" (L14) Added to this, is another participant that confessed that "*we never worked together like this, we learnt to work as a team in the workshops*" (L19, CLR). In my personal observation, I noted that most of the learners were willing to help each other in carrying out all the activities (O,

21/07/2017). My observation agreed with one of the participants who mentioned that *"when we are working together it makes us good leaders because good leaders are those who help others*" (L3, CLR). In support of these premises, Whitehead (2009) asserts that bringing people together and developing others is one of the most important values that an authentic leader can have. The fact is that good leaders are those interested in helping others and creative a conducive environment *(ibid.)*. Teamwork as it was observed, created a happy and interactive environment which promoted effective decision-making during the carrying out of the English Debating Club activities (O, 22/07/17).

4.8.3 Commitment

Whitehead (2009) indicates that leadership "is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (p. 847). I observed that commitment was one of the values of leadership confirmed when learners ensured that their calendar of activities was taken seriously. I observed them being punctual and hard working in realisation of their club's vision (O, 26/07/17). In a CL reflection, one learner leader expressed that "*if we are not committed to our rules and regulations of our club, we will not achieve our vision* (L19). Further to that, another participant said, "*I will be a good leader who is committed to her work and be good with people*". She further said that *"I will study very hard because we will be working in groups helping each other and leaders cannot fail"* (L13). To add to that, another participant admitted that "*I was not doing my corrections for my difficulty activities but from now on I will start doing it and get serious with my education"* (L14). The above views showed that participants developed a sense of commitment towards their activities.

4.8.4 Leading by example

As Whitehead (2009) states: "Authentic leaders expand the horizons of others; they are concerned with developing followers in ways allowing followers to achieve their own leadership goal" (p. 852) This concurs with the view of a participant (L16) who confessed that "*I was selfish not to help those struggling with their school work, but I realised leaders should lead by example*" (CLR, 21/07/17). Another participant (L23) said, "*I used to come late but now that I am the president of the club, I have to lead by example"* (CLR, 21/07/17). Also, another participant (L7) stated that "*I learnt to respect others to give a good example and influence others to do the same*" (CLR, 21/07/17). In support of these views, is Harris and

Lambert (2003) who assert that leaders should "look at the influence of a shared endeavor to enhance the skills of the individual" (p. 432), while Whitehead (2009) confirms that authentic leaders are "self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others" (p. 850).

4.8.5 Self-confidence

I could not believe my ears when the club president with confidence announced at the morning devotion their intention of establishing an English Club and invited interested learners to join if they were ready to adhere to the rules and regulations of the club. The club secretary read aloud the said rules while the vice-president introduced the club members on the structure (O, 24/07/17).

Soon after the morning devotion I interviewed the club secretary, the president and the vice-president. The club secretary (L1) stated that "*I used to be shy just to stand in front of others and say something because I know other learners could make fun of me and laugh and now that I am in this LLC I feel confident and I will not be shy anymore, because I understand that a leader is someone who is not shy of anything"* (I). Also, the club president (L23) indicated that *"since I became a member of the LLC I developed confidence so that I do not fear standing in front of a crowd of people as I was before"* (I). Added to this is the club vice-secretary who confessed (L9) that "*in most cases I would be shy to stand in front of the crowd but I gained courage through the workshops you conducted"* (I). The above views evidently showed that the learner leaders indeed gained confidence, as Bush (2007) and Coleman (2005) emphasise that confidence building is a driving factor for improvement of educational leadership and management in school institutions.

4.8.6 Initiative

Initiative is another skill that emerged from the data collected. From my personal observation (O, 24/07/17) and the learners' observation (O, 21/07/2017), it was clear that learners were innovative in suggesting that they should establish the English Debating Club. Further to this is the suggestion that they wanted their club officiated by the Senior Education Officer (SEO) for English, to offer them training on how to go about constructive debate to make their club a success. They drafted a letter inviting the SEO and she responded positively the same day she received the letter. Further to this, they suggested that their English teacher, class register teacher and the principal should attend the official opening of their club. Furthermore, they

created a vision and a mission for their club and they also requested that I design nametags for each club member. To me this was one element that showed initiative. Literature emphasises the importance of initiative in leadership, as decision-making often requires new ideas to be formulated and an imaginative outlook promoting change, as opposed to simply achieving the status quo (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris, 2006).

The data above indicated the skills and values demonstrated by participants during and after the Change Laboratory workshops, that helped them to successfully establish their English Debating Club. During the intervention, my observation was guided by Mitra and Gross' (2009) pyramid of student voice. Next, I present the findings for my last research question: *"How did the learner leadership club bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders?"* In this section, participants will be called learner leaders. Apart from my observations, I also conducted a focus group interview with learner leaders, to share their experience of becoming leaders.

4.9 Leadership growth brought by leadership club amongst learner leaders

Below are data drawn from my observations and the focus group interview I conducted with the principal and learner leaders two weeks after the learner leadership club (English Debating Club) was established. Formative intervention focuses on culturally appropriate strategies to facilitate understanding that creates a sustainable social change and understands the dynamics of power and privilege and how they can be challenged in the status quo (Mertens, 2009, p. 10). As a researcher, I was engaged in the process of emancipation and collaboration, ultimately attempting to understand and change social reality (Lather, 1992, p. 87).

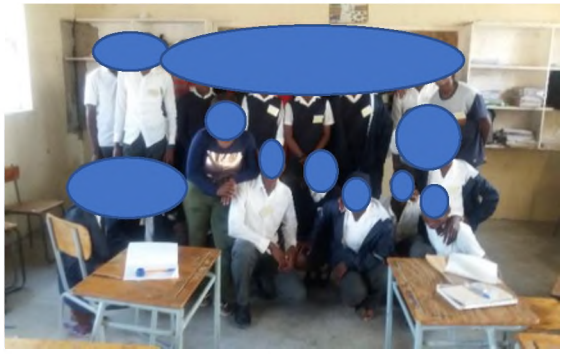
4.9.1 Learner voice enhanced

Data shows that the participation of learner leaders in the intervention brought about good communicative skills and learners could talk in front of others which means they were raising their voices. I observed that the three levels in the pyramid of student voice (Mitra & Gross, 2009) were reached. To start with, their voices were heard when the principal gave them the go-ahead to establish their English Debating Club. Further to that, all invited guests were present at the official opening of the club. They collaborated well not only with the principal, but with officials from the Department of Professional Development who officially opened the club. As a result, their leadership capacity was built and they successfully established their

English Debating Club, where many learners from senior grades joined, including the LRC's head girl. They showed their readiness to work in partnership with the adults in the school to bring about change. Mitra and Gross (2009) state that increasing students' voice yields positive results in the school. The collaboration began with the school principal when she motivated the club members to carry on with their English Debating Club intervention, saying, *"It is a good idea because at the end of the day the English performances will improve"* (P). It was indeed an exciting moment for Grade 9s. Most of them confessed that it was the first time they had been taken seriously, not only by the principal, but also by the educational stakeholders from the Continuing Professional Development Department (LL4, LL6, LL10, LL18, LL20, LL22, LL24). This coincides with Mitra and Gross (2009) who further goes on to say that having student voice in schools and sharing in decision-making will shape their lives and the lives of others.

Officials on the opening day of the English club

Officials with the debaters for the day



Some of the group photos for the club members from Grade 9 that were present

Figure 4.4: Official opening of the learner leadership club

4.9.2 Self-confidence Improved

During the focus group interview, a learner leader (LL5) indicated that *"my confidence has improved since I can now stand up in public, something I did not do in the past"* (FGI, 07/08/17). According to Bush (2007), leadership is needed in schools to transform learners into

becoming self-driven individuals with a high self-esteem. This was also supported by another learner leader (LL24) who further expressed that confidence helps us to become *"critical thinkers able to solve problems in our school as well as in our community"* (FGI, 07/ 08/17). Bush (2007) acknowledges that confidence building is a driving factor for the improvement of educational leadership and management in school institutions. Indeed, I observed that they had gained confidence and were spearheading the club with self-confidence.

4.9.3 Authentic leadership skills developed

Learner leaders through the focus group interview showed that they gained good leadership skills and that the intervention developed them towards becoming authentic leaders. Whitehead (2009) states that "authentic leaders always seek improvement and are aware of those being led and look out for the welfare of others". A certain learner leader **(LL10)** during the focus group interview mentioned that "*I talk to other learners in a polite way and I am considerate about individual differences*" (FGI). In support of the above is Whitehead (2009), who indicates that good leaders produce outcomes which are healthy for society and have good listening skills. Additionally, I observed that the learner leadership club had changed not only the Grade 9s who initiated it, but also the other learners that joined from other grades (O, 07/08/17). This was confirmed by a learner leader from a senior grade who stated that, "*I stopped bullying others from the day I joined the English Debating club and started respecting different views".*

4.9.4 Improved behaviour and interpersonal relationships

Data indicated that the learner leaders' leadership skills had made them more sensitive to others and their attitudes had improved from being shy and unruly learners both in the school and the community **(**FGI, 07/ 08 /17). A learner leader (LL6) said "*I changed my behavior because I used to laugh at others when they made mistakes, but I learnt that it is wrong to do so*" (FGI, 07/08/17). Another learner leader (LL19) said, "*I stopped bullying others and I also stopped my other friends from bullying because it is a bad thing*" (FGI, 07/08/17). The above views resonated with my observation that they had developed unity and treated each other with respect (O, 07/08/17). I further observed that the way they interrelated with others had changed because they showed good interactive bonds which included treating people equally (O, 07/ 08/17). In the focus group interview, one learner leader stated, "*there are times when I was selfish, and I did not want to work with others but since I joined this intervention I developed unity*" (FGI, 07/08/17). I observed the LLC members welcoming others as they were coming

to the English Debating sessions (O, 07/08/17). I further observed that they also motivated others not to surrender in carrying out their interventions, something that proves essential to becoming an authentic leader.

4.11 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter were generated through an administered questionnaire, observation, focus group interview with learner leaders and face-to-face interviews with teachers, Heads of Departments, the principal and a member of the School Board. I further discussed themes which emerged from data including participants' unique experiences on both Change Laboratory workshops and intervention.

In summary, the Change Laboratory workshops were very successful. While Grade 9 learners did not hold formal leadership positions in the school at the time of the research study, they showed interest in becoming learner leaders. They worked hard to implement the knowledge they gained during the Change Laboratory workshops, hence the establishment of the learner leadership club (English Debating Club). They worked hard to ensure senior learners, including LRC members joined the club. Furthermore, the philosophy of Grant (2015), that leadership is not limited to formal authority and can be exercised by anyone within the school, encouraged them to become an "agent of change" at the school *(ibid.)*. Another motivating factor is the training I had with them that inspired them to become responsible, accountable and to lead by example.

Indeed, transformation had occurred and the Grade 9s were empowered and became influential leaders. Such a leadership method is vital "to review existing school practices and promote a just, inclusive and meaningful learning environment for all learners" (Grant, 2015. p. 109). She further added that "the schooling experience needs to leave learners feeling empowered and enriched rather than disillusioned and denigrated" *(ibid.)*. For Angus, the starting point is likely to be when "the school, its teachers and leaders reach out to such children, move to meet them rather than expecting them to adjust to the entrenched school and teacher paradigms, and attempt to engage them in relevant and interesting school experiences in which they can recognise themselves, their parents, and their neighbours" (2006, p. 370).

In the next chapter, I conclude the thesis by emphasising the main features of my findings and critically assessing my work. I also highlight some of the limitations encountered during the research process and make some recommendations for further research in the same field of interest.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

"I try to shake lose my mind so something fresh can fall out"

(Goldberg, as cited by Badenhorst, 2008, p. 206)

5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore learner leadership development in an urban secondary school in Omusati region, in the northern part of Namibia. I presented and analysed the raw data generated from different sources in Chapter Four of this thesis. In this chapter, I present the summary of the research findings. The chapter then presents the recommendations for good learner leadership practices and the recommendations for further research on the concept of learner leadership. The chapter also highlights the limitations and analytical framework which characterised this study. It further presents the reflection of the journey for this thesis and ends with a conclusion. This is a case study, which employed a qualitative method approach in answering the following six research questions.

Phase 1 aim: To understand the involvement of Grade 9s in leadership at the school:

1. What is the understanding of the Grade 9 learners and teachers of the concept learner leadership at the school?
2. How are the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school?
3. How can Grade 9 leadership be enhanced at the school?
4. What are the potential mechanisms / underlying causes that promote or inhibit Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?

Phase 2 aim: To intervene and bring about change:

5. What potential contribution did the Change Laboratory workshops make to the development of the participants?
6. How did the learner leadership club bring about leadership growth among the learner leaders (participants)?

5.2 Summary of key findings

In response to ***research question one***, the findings revealed that the notion of learner leadership was understood differently by different participants. Most of the participants' views associated learner leadership with traditional views of leadership, where leadership can be viewed in formal positions e.g. structure of Learner Representative Council (LRCs). These views imply that learner leaders need to possess certain qualities, capacities and skills to lead. Thus, learner leadership was understood in terms of outdated, traditional leadership views. The fact that learner leadership was viewed as a hierarchical system, meant that Grade 9 learners were not accorded opportunities to participate in leadership at the school. They were not allowed to use their voice as leaders, because the policy did not allow them to become part of the LRC. As a result, the school did not seem to inspire and embrace shared leadership. Consequently, leadership did not seem to exist amongst the learners at the school, and was fixed in the structure of the LRC. The above views show that the mindset and attitudes of people about learner leadership, was still focused on the Apartheid era, where leadership was linked to authority.

On the other hand, the notion of leadership as collective, where all people in the school including learners can act as leaders, also emerged. However, the findings did not reveal the practice of leadership being distributed amongst Grade 9s at the school.

In response to ***research question two***, the findings revealed that there was limited involvement of Grade 9 learners at the school, due to the notion of them being the youngest at the school. The minimal involvement of Grade 9s in leadership was caused by the cultural belief that learners are immature, incompetent and need to be under the jurisdiction of their parents until they become adults. The community where the research site was situated believed strongly in the traditional culture that learners cannot lead. Hence, community members believed that learners were not mature enough to know the strategy of time on task. It was not only the parents that were concerned with learners' participation in leadership, but also school authorities who showed little faith in learners regarding the sharing of power. Moreover, the school authority based their arguments on the fact that issues discussed at school are intellectually rooted, thus it would be pointless and time wasting to have learners on decision-making structures.

The findings for ***research question three*** revealed that for Grade 9s leadership to be enhanced, the following needed to be considered: awareness and motivational talks needed to be created. Learners should be given the opportunity not only to participate in the structure of the LRC but to be accorded leadership opportunities by providing platforms for learner leadership clubs at the school. The findings did not reveal if the enhancement of Grade 9s leadership would be realistic, considering the fact that the community's culture believes that learners are kids who are not mature enough to make responsible decisions. However, the teachers, principal and heads of departments showed a willingness to improve the situation at the school.

The findings for ***research question four*** revealed that there were numerous factors that hindered the participation of Grade 9 learners in leadership. In fact, these constraining factors were indeed contradictions in the Grade 9s leadership activity system. The findings showed that lack of opportunities to develop learner voice was one of the contradictions emerging for Grade 9s to participate in leadership. The misconception of the concept learner leadership, caused lack of platforms for leadership development. Consequently, the Grade 9s suggested to the school governing body and the school management team to accord them platforms for learner leadership clubs at the school. They requested that a workshop, discussing awareness regarding learner leadership, be conducted for both teachers and parents. The participants confidently said that the handouts on learner leadership and the experiences they gained during the Change Laboratory workshops, helped them change things around the school. Their workshop objective was that each class should identify what mattered to them and establish the clubs based on what they viewed as important.

In addition, another contradiction that emerged was the traditional norms regarding learner leadership at the school. As stated earlier, culturally, learners are not allowed to lead as they are regarded as too immature to make sound decisions. This is indeed a tension caused by the fact that the research site as a social institution is located within a community that strongly believes in traditional culture with includes respect for adults, parents and elderly leaders as one of its cultural strengths; hence, the ignorance and non-support from both parents and teachers.

Furthermore, English language as a barrier was one of the contradictions identified, in the sense that they could not join the extra-mural activities as they were afraid to be laughed at as they could not express themselves well in English. The participants established the English Debating

Club as a tool for improving their daily communication skills. Limitations on existing policy was another contradiction hindering the Grade 9s participation in leadership. Since this was beyond the power of the participants, they suggested that the school creates an internal policy that will accord platforms for learner leadership opportunities.

Moreover, the limited understanding on the significance of learner leadership was also one of the contradictions that emerged. The fact that participants did not understand the good practice of leadership, meant that they regarded the participation in leadership as a waste of time, especially as it would conflict with the academic purpose of the school. Participants requested that I offer them a one-day training on the topic of learner leadership. Finally, another contradiction that emerged was bullying. The fact that they withdrew from school activities and started isolating themselves, prevented them from participating in leadership activities. This is undoubtedly a critical situation as it does not only rob them of opportunities to participate in leadership, but it also affects their psychological and emotional well-being. I argue that the issue of power relations played a role here, as those suffering from bullying were the youngest ones at the school.

I argue that the above contradictions that hindered the Grade 9s leadership participation was caused by the traditional norms amongst the stakeholders that see the learners as children who have no moral standards and therefore cannot lead. In addition, there was a misconception of the concept learner leadership, as some perceived it as power sharing and this could also be another reason for these contradictions. I emphasise that awareness regarding learner leadership is crucial for all educational stakeholders, including parents, for learner leadership to be practiced at schools effectively.

The findings for ***research question five*** indicated that participants worked collaboratively to build and develop new practices and models. Findings further revealed that transformative opportunities were established through the process of expansive learning (as presented in Chapter Four, Section 4.8). During these interactions, participants showed leadership skills such as planning, teamwork, commitment, leading by example, self-confidence and initiative. I maintain that all learners can lead if they are given opportunities to practice their leadership skills. During the Change Laboratory workshops, participants tended to understand the phenomenon under study and that resulted in them intervening to bring about change.

Moreover, learner leaders managed to turn their understanding and practice of leadership upside down. I believed that there was always going to be a multifaceted interaction between the learner leaders in this research group. This is because they come from such varied personal, social and economic situations – meaning they would have different responses to similar circumstances. In this research study, I have argued that leadership occurs through the application of influence which requires mutual interdependence of the learner leaders, which is underpinned by their culture and histories, the very conditions that they have grown up in.

As for the ***sixth research question***, the establishment of the English Debating Club improved their communication skills and improved their self-esteem during the process. Further to this, participants developed authentic leadership skills as they improved their behaviour and interpersonal relationships. Their voices were heard, and they collaborated well, not only with the principal and other senior learners, but also with officials from the department of continuous professional development. The findings further indicated that using the transformative approach, enabled the participants to bring their own history into account around the issue under study. Using this type of method encouraged the recognition of areas in which there was a need for a change in working practices, such as learner leadership, and then suggest possibilities for change through reconceptualising.

5.3 Significance of my study

Since studies regarding learner leadership in the Namibian context are limited, this study hopes to fill the gap in literature and contribute to the body of knowledge. This case study aimed to provide a better understanding of how learners, teachers, Heads of Departments, a School Board member and the principal perceive the practices of learner leadership in their school. Moreover, this study aimed to develop leadership opportunities amongst the Grade 9 learners at an urban secondary school in Namibia. The study also hoped to give a voice to the learners themselves. The findings of this study will help colleagues and policymakers in education better understand the significant role of learner leadership involvement in schools, especially curriculum designers in identifying professional needs and developing relevant training programmes about learner leadership in school curriculums.

In addition, this study advocates distribution of leadership amongst all educational stakeholders in schools. As a result, the study may be used as a reference point to help teachers enhance the

practices of learner leadership to improve the teaching and learning process in schools. As a teacher, the study improved my own perceptions regarding learners as leaders.

The inclusion of learner leadership practices as extra-mural activities in schools, was very important for this study. This was because it revealed what mattered most to learners and proved that learners could lead. The study further recognises the significant role of leadership practices and its contribution to learners' knowledge.

5.4 Recommendations for good learner leadership practice

The following recommendations need to be considered to ensure that the practice of learner leadership is understood and encapsulated into the mindset of all educational stakeholders including parents.

As Nelson Mandela said, 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world', and educational stakeholders need to be trained and educated about learner leadership. This means higher education institutions should train teachers on leadership skills and more specifically on learner leadership. Both principals and HoDs need be trained on aspects related to leadership. The scope for learner leadership should be extended to adult education programmes such as literacy programmes. Also, community members should be encouraged and invited to come to schools to attend workshops related to learner leadership.

Moreover, the government of the republic of Namibia should offer scholarships to encourage principals, heads of departments and teachers to pursue their studies in the field of educational leadership and management, at least up to Master's level.

It is recommended that curriculum developers need to consult with learners when selecting topics to be taught. Thus, a need to integrate learners' views into the school curriculum guidelines regarding learner leadership, is essential so that their voice can be heard as they know what matters to them.

Equally important, educators need to be convinced that learner leadership is effective and will benefit them in their delivery of their lessons. I therefore recommend that the establishment of leadership clubs as described in this study, should be emphasised to the wider fraternity of

educators. Finally, learners should not be left out of education with regards to leadership, as they make up the majority of the educational stakeholders.

5.5 Recommendations for further research in learner leadership

Based on the findings of this study, the following future research possibilities arose. It will be good to explore parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the practice of learner leadership in schools. Secondly, teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the involvement of learners in leadership needs to be investigated. Thirdly, this study did not look in-depth at issues of gender roles and perspectives regarding learner leadership. For this reason, I urge future studies to place their focus on this area of study.

The research site principal found my research approach very different from that of any other previous scholar, because the research intervened and brought some changes at the school. As a result, she would not hesitate to welcome other researchers at her school. Thus, I recommend other researchers go beyond interpretive method of research. Future research in the field of educational leadership and management should use the transformative method that has the principle of double stimulation. Through this process, the participants transform a situation which is meaningless for them, into one that has a clear meaning (Engeström, 1987, p. 356).

This case study was conducted in an urban secondary school. Although it has yielded intriguing findings, it would be interesting to extend any future studies to incorporate more rural schools where cultural beliefs about learners as leaders is stronger.

This study employed second generation of CHAT and as a result, issues arose from the community members which could not be dealt with. Thus, I recommend future research to use third generation of CHAT that will enable the diversity of stakeholders in different activity systems. Third generation CHAT looks at more than one activity system and how they interact with each other. For example, using third generation in this study may have taken the form of looking at three activity systems - learners, teachers and parents - and how they interact (or fail to interact). The concept of boundary crossing (interactions between activity systems) gains significance in the third generation.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The study is limited to an urban secondary school in Omusati region of Namibia. This does not mean that the sample's choice was an oversight as my intention was to explore in-depth leadership opportunities for Grade 9 learners existing at the research site. Being a case study, the findings may not be generalisable and cannot be replicated to other contexts, as this was not the purpose of the study.

Maxwell (1992) refers to generalisability as "the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or settings than those directly studied" (p. 293). As indicated earlier, the study was limited to 24 learners, the principal, two HODs, three teachers and a member of the school governing body at the research site in the Omusati region. Although generalising findings for this study is impossible because a sample population cannot represent all similar situations, there is another aspect that can improve the quality of my study, such as transferability. Findings of a case study are transferable "in that the researcher presents the results as directions and questions" (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 32). Transferability "invites readers of research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience" (Cziko, 1992, p. 10). As a researcher, I made sure I provided rich data and plausible findings through creating an account of methods and data which can "stand independently so that another trained researcher could analyse the same data in the same way and come to essentially the same conclusions; and to produce a plausible and coherent explanation of the phenomenon under scrutiny" (Mays, 1995, p. 109). The more successful I am the more transferable the study becomes.

Another limitation in my study was the scope of this study, as it was limited to one activity system (second generation of CHAT). Many of the problems regarding the development of Grade 9s leadership, lie outside the group of learners, such as in the community of teachers and parents.

Besides these limitations, this study offered insights on how the school context shaped the leadership skills of the Grade 9 learners at the research site. It is believed that the lessons learnt from the case study school might be seen in other similar schools.

5.7 The relevance of CHAT to my study

As indicated earlier in this study, CHAT was used as an analytical tool for this study. Therefore, this section explains the significant value CHAT brought to this study. Since CHAT is oriented to understand the context, culture and history of specific practices such as learner leadership, I used this lens to analyse and understand the activity system of Grade 9s leadership practices. The second generation of CHAT was an analytical tool for this study that helped me to consider the learners' experiences, background and culture when making decisions.

Since my study is a formative research, CHAT broke the boundaries between concrete and abstract, observation and intervention, qualitative and quantitative, which are not easy to come by in many analytical frameworks (Sannino, 2011). In this study this means that participants thought and learnt from the mirrored data and made meaning to attain "rich reconceptualisation of the object of the activity" (Sannino, Engeström, & Lemos, 2016, p. 605). Participants engaged in interpreting and understanding the presented contradictions and tried to find new solutions. As a result, expansive learning occurred during the Change Laboratory workshops.

The CHAT methodology provided the opportunity for expansive learning during the Change Laboratory workshops. Expansive learning allowed learners to collaboratively discuss challenges and contradictions hindering their leadership practice. Learners were enabled to develop new knowledge to solve the problems. This type of method does not only allow both the researcher and the participants to understand the phenomenon under study, but also allows the participants to intervene to bring about the change; for example, learners established an English Debating Club as a tool to improve their daily communication skills. In the process, learning occurred as participants developed leadership skills such as planning, teamwork, collaboration, initiative, leading by example and commitment. Learners also developed self-confidence that enabled them not only to influence other learners to participate in leadership, but also to educate senior learners regarding leadership clubs.

Additionally, CHAT is an adaptable, open-ended framework that can be worked with in diverse contexts and yet be relevant and productive (Agbedahin, 2012, p. 42). In this study, CHAT's second generation provided analytical tools and a lens that helped me to surface the contradictions and tensions within and between elements of the activity system. CHAT further allowed me to present those tensions to participants during the Change Laboratory workshops.

Finally, CHAT is oriented to understand the context and history of specific practices, their objects, tools and social institutions. This provided a powerful socio-cultural and social-historical lens (Daniels, 2004) through which I could analyse the activity system of Grade 9s leadership practices, so as to understand them. Smyth (2006) discovered the need for a drastically diversity of culture and educational leadership in schools which promote reliable forms of learner voice. This shows that schools need to include the experiences, backgrounds and cultures of all its learners when making decisions. Thus, I explored the cultural and historical background of learner leaders in the school, using CHAT as the analytical framework for this study.

5.8 Personal reflection

My research journey was very informative and intellectually exciting. Since the commencement of this study, I learnt various approaches to conducting a research study. Being a full-time student allowed me to have adequate time to read different literature related to my study. I also had opportunities to attend classes, research design weeks, pre-doc weeks and one on one sessions with my supervisor. These helped me to improve my academic literacy, for instance writing intellectually and logically. As a result, I got an opportunity to present my research findings at the 5th South African Educational Research Association (SAERA) conference held in Port Elizabeth. Also, I was one of the few students accepted to attend a journal writing retreat at Assegai Trails. The retreat helped me to draft my first article to be submitted earlier next year (2018). Additionally, I am provisionally accepted for a PhD course next year, pending this MEd result.

Furthermore, I learnt that conducting a research study requires hard work, discipline, patience and most importantly sacrifice to successfully accomplish the objectives and goals of the study. I remember leaving my critically ill mother in a hospital bed to conduct the second Change Laboratory workshop at the research site. Furthermore, I learnt to be ethical with everything that involved analysing and gathering data. I also learnt that each research study that one undertakes, should relate to previous research in the same field to grow the field. This adds to the validity and legitimacy of this study. Finally, the experience of networking with colleagues and participants was educative and enriching.

5.9 Conclusion

As indicated in Chapter One, this study explored learner leadership development opportunities focusing on the Grade 9 learners in Ngola Secondary School in the Omusati region of Namibia. It further identified factors hindering learner leadership and sought to develop agency in learners through Change Laboratory interventions to bring about changes. These goals and objectives were successfully accomplished as explained hereunder.

The concept learner leadership was explored, and the findings revealed that there was a misconception on the notion, as most participants defined it as management. Consequently, I, the researcher, conducted a one-day workshop with the Grade 9 learners. Topics covered were: the definition and the benefits of learner leadership, leadership qualities of learner leaders and the development of learner leadership in the school. Secondly, factors hindering the development of learner leadership at Ngola Secondary School amongst the Grade 9 learners were also investigated. The constraining factors and contradictions were presented to the Grade 9s and solutions were recommended during the Change Laboratory workshops.

All Grade 9 learners proved to be leaders during the intervention. On a positive note, the study created leadership opportunities through the establishment of a learner leadership club at the research site. The established club recruited a total of 35 members from Grade 10-12 including the head girl of the LRC. This showed that during this study, leadership was distributed amongst learners at the research site, as Grant (2008) defines distributed leadership as "a group of activities where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where leadership is fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon" (p. 87). Indeed, Grade 9s dispersed and influenced leadership among other learners at the school. At least it was a start, and with a changed mindset and appropriate strategies it would be possible to build on this basis and develop learner leadership to its full capacity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Grade 9 learners administered questionnaires

Exploring Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities

Instructions for Questionnaires

1. Use a **Black** or BLUE ink pen. Please do not use a pencil
2. In the interests of confidentiality, you are not required to supply your name on the Questionnaire
3. Please respond to each of the following items by placing a **CROSS** that correctly reflects your opinion and experiences on the role of learner leadership in your school.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (Cross **(X)** all that applicable)

1. **Gender: Male** ☐ **Female** ☐
2. **Your current age:** <15 ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ >18 ☐
3. **Number of years at this school:** 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 or more ☐

For section A and B, answer the following closed questions/statements by indicating a **YES or No** in the space provided.

SECTION A: Grade 9 learners' participation in the leadership at the school

1. Are you given opportunities to participate in the decision-making at the school?

   .....
2. Do the LRC members volunteer or instructed to orientate Grade 9 learners?

   .....
3. Do Grade 9 learners undertake leadership roles without being delegated by the teachers or principal?

   .....
4. Are there activities initiated by the Grade 9 learners at the school?

.....

SECTION B: Based on the assumption of how the principal encourages Grade 9 learners' leadership.

1. You feel confident when asked by the principal to perform a certain task outside the classroom.

.....

2. Principal and School Management Team trust your class/grade to organise and carry out school activities.

.....

3. The principal gives administrative support to Grade 9 learners at large.

.....

4. You are openly communicating with the principal regarding issues concerning you.

.....

5. All Grade 9 learners are always prepared to volunteer towards extra-mural activities without the interference of the principal.

.....

6. Principal always respond positively to learners' projects and support them throughout.

.....

SECTION C: Please answer these questions in detail and as honestly as you can.

1. How do you understand the term "learner leadership"?

   .....

   .....

2. Do you think you have the right to participate in decision-making at the school? Explain where might this decision-making happen and who would be involved?

   .....

   .....

3. Is there any opportunity available for you to participate in leadership? Explain.

   .....

   .....

4. Do you think teachers and the principal know what is most important to you? Why do you say so?

   .....

   .....

5. How are you, the Grade 9 learners involved in leadership at the school? Give examples.

   .....

   .....

6. What do you think should be done to encourage your participation in leadership?

   .....

   .....

7. What are the factors you consider are discouraging you to lead in this school?

   .....

   .....

8. Are your ideas and complaints taken seriously by the School Management Team? Why do you say so?

   .....

   .....

9. If you are given the opportunity to change anything about this school, what would you change and why?

   .....

   .....

10. Could you describe for me the relationship between teachers, principals and your class in sharing responsibilities at this school?

.....

Thank you so much for your time and efforts in answering this questionnaire.

BEST WISHES FOR YOUR STUDIES!

APPENDIX B: Face-to-face structured interview for teachers, HoDs, principal, SBM

Exploring Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities

This interview consists of two parts**: Personal information and Research questions**. You are requested to answer all the questions to the best of your ability as honestly as possible. The duration for this interview session is less than 60 minutes. Be reminded that this session will be recorded, and transcriptions will be shared with you.

Part 1: Personal information for participants' description

1. May I please know how old are you and for how long you have been teaching?
2. What is your highest qualification?
3. What inspired you to become a teacher?
4. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Part 2: Research questions open-ended questions

1. Define for me the concept 'leadership'.
2. What is your understanding on the concept learner leadership?
3. Do you think learners are capable of leading? Elaborate
4. What are the opportunities provided to develop Grade 9 learners' leadership at this school?
5. In your opinion, what should be done to enhance Grade 9 learners' participation in leadership in the school?
6. What do you consider as factors that can hinder Grade 9 learners' leadership in the school?
7. What recommendations do you have for addressing the challenges that you mentioned for Grade 9 learners' leadership practice?
8. In your personal capacity, what can you do to encourage Grade 9 learners' participation in leadership in the school?
9. In your view, who has the responsibility to develop Grade 9 learners' leadership in this school?
10. What are the contributions of learner leadership towards the school welfare?
11. Is there any project or activity initiated by Grade 9 learners at this school?

12. Any additions, suggestions or questions you have in regard with Grade 9 learners' leadership development at this school?

Your time and effort are highly appreciated. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX C: Change Laboratory workshops reflection/evaluation form

Exploring Grade 9s learners' leadership opportunities

1. What did you learn in these workshops?

   .....

   .....

2. What was interesting about the workshops?

   .....

   .....

3. If you are invited to attend similar workshops in future, will you attend or not? Why?

   .....

   .....

4. What did you like or dislike about your group discussion?

   .....

   .....

5. Is there something you want to change about yourself after attending these workshops? What is it and why? If not, explain

   .....

   .....

6. What is it that you never did that you would want to do at this school after attending these workshops?

   .....

   .....

7. Any comment you wish to share with me regarding these sessions or my study?

   .....

   .....

It was a great experience learning from you. I am forever grateful. Thank you a million.

APPENDIX D: Structured observation schedule: Exploring Grade 9 learners' leadership opportunities

Observation schedule directed by Mitra and Gross (2009) Pyramid of Learner voice

Meetings to be attended	**Learner's voice being heard** *Comments*	**Collaboration with teachers** *Comments*	**Capacity building for leadership** *comments*
School board	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……
School Management	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……
LRC/ Class monitors	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……
Mass meetings	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……
Others (to be specified)	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……	…… …… …… …… ……

DATE: ..... Week no: .....

Overall comments:

.....

APPENDIX E: Letter from supervisor

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

03 May 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that **Ms Loide Vaino (student number 17V4920)** is a registered Master's student at Rhodes University, currently pursuing research in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Education, Educational Leadership and Management*. Ms Vaino 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 Vaino'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 consider 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

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

APPENDIX F: Requesting permission from Director

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

26 May 2017

Enq: **L.M. Vaino**
Cell: **+264812132199/ 27610430837**
Email: mloidev@gmail.com

To: The Director of Education, Arts and Culture: Omusati region
Cc: Inspector of Education: Outapi Circuit
Principal, [redacted] SSS

Subject: Request to grant permission to conduct a research in a selected school in Outapi circuit.

I, Loide Mwasheka Vaino, a full time Master student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, hereby requesting your esteemed office to grant me permission to conduct a research proj[redacted]**a SSS.** The data generating process is expected to start **from 05th June 2017 until 28th July 2017 (approximately 8 consecutive weeks)**.

The researcher will conduct interviews with Principal, HODs and teachers and distribute questionnaires to selected 20 learners. **The research objective is to explore leaner leadership opportunities exist in Namibian educational institutions.** The study is part of fulfilling requirement for a Master degree program in Educational Leadership and Management at Rhodes University, SA. This study is of great significance as it is likely to contribute to the development in the field of educational leadership and offer important information to Principals and Inspectors of Education in charge of schools as well as the Ministry of Education in Namibia. I promise to adhere to the ethical requirements as expected of a research study as required by the university.

Thanking you in eagerness that this humble request will receive your highest attention and

respond favourably in writing soonest.
Yours Sincerely

Loide M. Vaino (Ms)
Master Student, Rhodes University

APPENDIX G: Consent letter for the parents / guardians

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

01 June 2017

Enq: **L.M. Vaino**
Cell: **+264812132199/ 27610430837**
Email: mloidev@gmail.com

Dear parents / Guardians

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

I, Loide Mwasheka Vaino, a full time Master student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, hereby requesting you to grant me permission for……to participate in a research study through answering a questionnaire after classes which will be conducted at your child's school. The data generating process is expected to start **from 05th June 2017 until 28th July 2017 (approximately 8 consecutive weeks)**.

I promise anonymity of your child throughout this study and your child will be free to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences for him/her. Pictures will be taken during Change Laboratory Workshops, but no identity will be revealed. It is against this

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

Regards

Loide Vaino (researcher)

Declaration

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

…… ……

Signature: Parent/Guardian **Date**

APPENDIX H: Director's letter for permission granted

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Team Work and Dedication for Quality Education

Tel: +264 65 251700
Fax: +264 65 251722

Private Bag 529
OUTAPI

Enq: [redacted]

30 May 2017

Loide M. Vaino
Rhodes University
P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown

Subject: Permission to conduct research in selected school in Outapi circuit

This letter serves to notify you (Ms. Loide M. Vaino) that permission has been granted to conduct a research to "explore learner leadership opportunities exist in Namibian educational ins[redacted]ondary School Outapi Circuit.

Please be informed that the research to be conducted at school should by no means whatsoever disrupt teaching and learning.

We hope and trust this exercise will enhance quality education in the Region.

ıithfully

30/05/2017

Mr. La ɔan Shapange
Director of Education Arts and Culture

OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION
OF THE DIRECTOR
PRIVATE BAG 529, OUTAPI
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Teamwork and dedication
quality education

cc: The Principal. [redacted]S
Inspector of Education for Outapi circzlit

APPENDIX I: Consent letter for the teachers/HoD/principal/SBM

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383
Fax: +27 (0) 46 622 8028
P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140

07 June 2017

Enq: L.M. Vaino
Cell: +264812132199/ 27610430837
Email: mloidev@gmail.com

Dear participants

I, Loide Mwasheka Vaino, a full time Master student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, hereby requesting your permission to participate in this research project at **your school.** The data generating process is expected to start **from 05th June 2017 until 28th July 2017 (approximately 8 consecutive weeks)**. You will be expected to participate through face-to-face structured interview of not more than an hour in relation with learner leadership.

I am currently conducting the study on the distribution of learners' leadership. In this regard, I have chosen your school because I believe that your school will provide valuable data in expanding the boundaries of my knowledge and skills in this practice. Please note that this is

not an assessment of your performance. The identities of all participants will be protected in accordance with Rhodes University's ethics protocol.

I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all participants and you will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences. You will be required to declare on this form if you wish to participate in this study. In the interest of the participants, a copy of the completed dissertation will be made available to members of the staff. My supervisor is Prof. Hennie Van der Mescht who can be contacted on +27834457833 at the Faculty of Education, Room 32, Rhodes University campus, Grahamstown.

Regards:

Loide Vaino, Researcher **DATE: .....**

Declaration

I,.....

.... (Full names of participant) hereby declare that I understand the content of this document and nature of the study. I fully agree to take part in this research project. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

..... **.....**

Signature: SBM / Principal / HoDs / Teachers **Date**

APPENDIX J: Member checking declaration form

DECLARATION

I …… (full name of the interviewee) hereby declare that I read through the transcriptions and I am satisfied with the notes written. I could make changes where I see necessary.

…….. ……..

Participant's Signature **Date**

APPENDIX K: Workshop handouts

Monday, 17 JULY 2017

CONTRADICTION: MISCONCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT LEARNER LEADERSHIP
SOLUTION: WORKSHOP ON THE CONCEPT LEARNER LEADERSHIP

1. **What is learner leadership?**

- ✓ An interaction and building relationships with other learners, peer leaders and other members of the school with the purpose of developing leadership skills (Mordaunt as cited in Uushona, 2012, p.22).

- ✓ As providing the opportunities to learners at various levels within schools to lead either formal or informal with respect to the day to day schools' activities.

- ✓ Seeks learners' participation in schools whereby all learners have rights and encouraging ethical behaviour and personal responsibility towards school affairs.

- ✓ Giving learners a voice to provide opportunities to work with adults to make changes in schools such as collecting information on school problems and implement solutions (Mitra & Gross, 2007, p. 542).

2. **What are the benefits or advantages of learner leadership?**

- ✓ Invoking (raising) learner voice and develop leadership skills (Grant, 2015).

- ✓ Involving learners in leadership, "highlights ways in which young people can learn democratic principles y sharing their opinions and working together to improve school conditions for themselves and others" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522).

- ✓ Provides interactions that focusing towards learners and their own voice in decision-making (Flutter, 2006).

- ✓ Provides opportunities for learner voice to be heard.

- ✓ Provide spaces of leadership from which learners can "speak back" regarding what they consider to be important and valuable about their learning (Flutter, 2006, p. 282).

3. **What are the good qualities of a learner leader?**
    - Punctuality
    - Commitment
    - Leading by example
    - Planning
    - Initiative
    - Self- confidence
    - Teamwork
4. **Ways in which learner participation in leadership can be developed?**

- ✓ Enhance learner voice

- ✓ Become a member school clubs voluntarily

- ✓ Establish learner leadership clubs voluntarily

ISSUES EMERGED FROM THE DATA COLLECTED REGARDING LEARNER LEADERSHIP AND THEIR SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

CONSTRAINING FACTORS	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
1. Language barrier	We should start up an English Club.
2. Misconception of the concept learner leadership	You should offer workshops to us about learner leadership.
3. Lack of support, training and motivation	Support, training and motivation should be offered to us regularly by teachers.
4. Lack of consultations	Teachers should start consulting us whenever they are making decisions.
5. Lack of confidence	We should start to participate in

	different clubs at school.
6. Bullying	Bullies should be reported and Punished. We should be educated About consequences of bullying.
7. Gossiping and jealousy	Learners should be educated about Negative effects of gossip and Jealousy.
8. Shyness	We should be allowed to participate in Different clubs at school.
9. Power relation	Equality- learners must be treated Equally across the grades.
10. No Learner Leadership Club (LLC)	We should establish learner leadership club
11. Lack of policy / guidelines	Come up with a guideline
12. Grade 9s are young	Be treated fairly like any other learners
13. Distrust/mistrust/ No trust	They should start trusting us and stop calling us young ones.
14. Lack of opportunities available	Opportunities should be provided to us to participate in leadership e.g. we should be allowed to participate in LRCs and other school activities.

WHAT MATTERS TO THEM (GRADE 9 LEARNERS)

- School uniform – boys trouser to change colour to navy blue
- Extra classes to be offered for learners with learning difficult.
- Extending Saturday morning study time- instead of 9-10 to start from 9:00-12:00
- Absenteeism of teachers to lessons

- Formulation of English club
- Bus fees – stop paying bus fees termly
- Cleaning campaign
- Buying of classes curtains
- Cleaning of the library
- Dilapidated buildings need renovation
- Our school building needs to be painted
- Lack of interrelationship between subjects (learners) and community (teachers)

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

.....

.....

.....

.....

"be the change you want see"

APPENDIX L: Invitation letter to officiate the English debating

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

[redacted]SECONDARY SCHOOL
[redacted]CIRCUIT
OMUSATI EDUCATION REGION

TEL: [redacted] PRIVATE BAG 5[redacted] FAX: 065-2[redacted] OUTAPI

24 July 2017

[redacted](English Senior Education Officer, Grades 8-10)
Department of Professional Development
Omusati Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture
Outapi

RE: Invitation to officially opening our English Debating Club

There is a student from Rhodes University doing her research on "Exploring grade 9 learners' leadership at our school". During the process of her research, we have identified English language barrier as one of the factors hindering learner's leadership at our school. We then decided to establish an English Debating Club with an aim to improve our English Communication Skills.

Therefore, we are hereby inviting you to visit our English Debating Club on Wednesday, 26 July at 14:30 to open our Club officially and offer us training on how to conduct a constructive debate to keep our club moving forward.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated and kindly respond through the principal's office on or before Monday, 24 July 2017.

Thanking you in anticipation.
Yours in education

.....
[redacted]
(Club Secretary)

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
[redacted]
OUTAPI CIRCUIT
2017 -07- 20
OUTAPI
TEL: 065-251004

.....
[redacted]
(Club president)