

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher outlines the rationale for the study and gives the aims and objectives of the study. As a teacher himself, the researcher has observed that although the policy states clearly that there should be Representative Councils of Learners (RCL's) in schools offering Grade 8 and higher, in some schools that is not the case. Other schools involve learners only in the maintenance of discipline. Is that the purpose of the policy? What did the policy makers really intend with this policy? This study will help find the answer to these questions. But firstly, the background to this research must be discussed, to be followed by the rationale for the study. The statement of the research problem and the aims and objectives of the study will then be listed in order to structure the study from the beginning.

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1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

The researcher, who is a teacher in a "black" farm school, has gained the interest in this investigation after having been elected as a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) for four years. This was during the times when the TLO training and empowerment was not attended to yet by the Department of Education (DoE). The researcher had to rely on his own experience of the Students Representative Council (SRC) from the college of which he was not a member.

The researcher had to guide the learners during the RCL elections and facilitate them up to when the RCL had to perform their duties. There was no book to read to empower himself. It was equally difficult for the learners to participate actively, especially in the School Governing Body (SGB) meetings because that was a new concept to them. From that time on the researcher has been following the developments and improvements in RCL empowerment and related issues. The empowered TLOs brought little change to the fore.

That could be an indication that in some schools the RCL was functioning very well, whilst in others it existed only in name; in most of the others it was still non-existent. Each educational Region or District sets the timeframe for the annual election of the SGBs, but this is not the case when it comes to the elections of the RCL's. The question can be asked whether this indicate that the issue of the RCL's in schools is treated very casually and in a laissez-faire manner, or that it is of less importance to the DoE itself.

Some schools have a tradition of a Students Representative Council (SRC). Such students' organizations played an important role in the birth of the new South Africa. They then had to be transformed to be more democratic for the democratic country. For this reason South African School's Act (RSA, SASA, Act no 84 of 1996) stipulated that RCL's be established. The aim for SASA (1996) to take a modern approach in school governance is to change the way the schools are run and to encourage schools to take responsibility for their own matters. We need an education system which is based on the principles and values of the new constitution (KZN DEC, 1996). Of course some traits of the SRCs had to be carried forward to the RCL.

History tells us that in most of the schools where the SRCs were an active representation of learners, learners had an understanding of the liberation struggle of a black person. Do we still need such a background? Boycotts and mass actions were then common in the townships. Nowadays we communicate our dissatisfaction around the table in a real democratic fashion.

After about two decades, the RCL came into being. It is only reasonable for anyone who was around during the SRC times to wonder if the same will not happen when learners are given a say in the governance of the school. Why live in fear? Why not get adequate information on the exact roles learners have to play? The main focus will be whether there is a need at all for learners to form part of the governance structures, considering certain factors like whether all schools do indeed have RCL's as the policy stipulates.

Good public school governance requires a flourishing partnership based on mutual respect and mutual confidence among the constituencies which make up and support the school. The appropriate balance of constituency, rights and interests in composition and operations of school governing bodies is therefore a matter of great importance (RSA, SASA, 1996).

Some of the fears we have had, such as whether it would be appropriate for learner and teacher representatives to participate in discussions concerning the contracts on currently employed staff, had already been taken care of in the SASA (RSA, 1996). These representatives can however, be encouraged to participate in discussions on policy matters affecting the teaching staff and learners respectively, and the relationship between staff and the body of learners.

The DoE has so far left the guidance of the RCL to the discretion of the TLO. Of course it is expected and inevitable that the department's role will always be restricted to legal accountability which will also vary from school to school; that being determined by the capacity and the experience the SMT and the SGB have in governance matters.

Against this background it seems that the time has come to – once and for all – get the whole issue of RCL's thoroughly researched. This fact has motivated the researcher to attempt this topic of the role of learners in school governance, with specific reference to farm schools. It is the conviction of the researcher that once the matter of learner representation has been documented and well structured, the existence and functioning of such bodies will improve substantially. This study therefore, intends to assess the role of RCL and identify the areas for development and improvement.

In a research study of this kind the researcher must firstly establish if all the stakeholders in a school have a full understanding of what learners' involvement in school governance entails. Secondly, he must also establish if the learners are used effectively and with understanding to the benefit of the school. Lastly, in schools where the RCL's are not functional or non-existent, the authorities must

come to the assistance of the school to try and make RCL's more effective and useful.

There is a bit of confusion as to who should be an electoral officer during the election of the RCL. According to the notice (Government Gazette, No 5202, 1997), the principal or an educator or educators delegated by him/her, shall oversee the election of RCL members. According to Manganyi (1997: 30), the TLO or any other person appointed by the District Director shall be the election officer for the RCL elections.

It is evident from the two statements above that the principal and TLO should conduct the RCL elections.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This inquiry is basically about **determining whether learners can contribute positively in the governance of the school as members of the RCL.**

The following questions will be asked to lead the investigation:

- How is the RCL formulated?
- Are learners capacitated enough to be able to carry out their duties?
- Which areas need improvement and how can they be improved?

In this investigation one needs to identify if all the stakeholders in a school are aware of the existence of the RCL and the presence of learners in the SGB. It would be a good thing if the school managers can be clearly in connection with the functioning of the RCL. In order to be able to do that, the researcher will have to conduct interviews to find out how the different schools view the role of learners in school governance. This process will be facilitated by asking certain questions that would help in gathering the necessary information to complete this inquiry. The fact that the different schools apply the policy on RCL's in different ways, shows that development still needs to be done.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The ultimate aim of this study is to assess whether the RCL members are competent and ready to carry out their duties. To achieve this aim, the following objectives will be pursued by the researcher:

- To investigate if the farm schools in the sample as selected have established their RCL's as stipulated by the education policy;
- To establish whether and how the RCL's are actually contributing to the effective governance of the schools; and
- To unpack some of the functions of the RCL and point out those areas that need further development, if there are any.

The RCL is a recognized learners' organization and furthermore, it is represented in SGB. Therefore, it should not remain inactive, nor should it exist under a cloud of doubt. Once the abovementioned objectives have been achieved, learners would no longer doubt their contribution in school governance.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research strategy will be used in this project as a method for data collection. A survey design will be used to measure the sample and results in this research.

The target population is a farm school in the Bhokuzulu Circuit in Vryheid, KwaZulu Natal, which offer Grade 8 or higher classes. Because of so little variety in this Circuit, the preferred method of sampling is stratified sampling. The researcher would have loved to visit two "white" schools that produce good results, and another two that do not manage to deliver good results in Grade 12, to conduct interviews, but due to the fact that there are only two "white" high schools in this Circuit, and both of them produce good Grade 12 results, this wish could not be accomplished. On the other hand, it might not be easy to access any information regarding the governance of a high school that did not produce good Grade 12 results the previous year, due to low confidence that results from poor performance.

The data collection method of the interview will enable the researcher to make generalizations of the findings from the sample of respondents. The information obtained during data collection will then be reduced, condensed and grouped into meaningful units. The information collected with the use of a tape recorder will be listened to holistically to identify main themes. Multiple meanings will be looked at carefully.

1.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Although the sample of study chosen is not very representative, the findings could still be generalized in similar circumstances. The researcher will conduct interviews with the participants in a place where they (participants) feel most comfortable. The researcher will conduct the interviews whilst recording the proceedings by means of an audio tape. The respondents will be given all the information as to what type of questions will be asked and what kind of information they will be expected to provide.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every participant in this study will be told exactly what the investigation is all about and what will be expected from him/her during the interview. This will be done to ensure that the respondents do not hide important information or that the Hawthorne effect does not come into play. All participants will be told about their freedom to withdraw from the study at any given moment when they feel unhappy or unsure.

The majority of the participants will be learners who might still be minors; therefore, their parents and their principals will be requested to sign a consent form before an interview is held. The names of the respondents will not be used in the findings; they will be identified by means of simple codes.

The researcher will seek approval from the District Head, Circuit Managers, Ward Managers and the principals to visit the selected schools. Once the research is

completed and the report is written, anonymity will be maintained in order to cause no concern to anyone of the participants.

1.8 CONCLUSION OF THIS CHAPTER

According to policy (SASA, Act no 84 of 1996:11(1)), a RCL at a school must be established at every public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade or higher. The functions of the RCL are stated by law (RSA, Act No 3 of 1996: section 72 (1) (d)). **This research undertakes to assess the feasibility of these functions for the learners aged between 13 and 18 years.**

The election of the RCL members is conducted by either the principal himself/herself or any person delegated by the principal, which includes the TLO. These elections are preceded by the election campaign which is also conducted by the principal or any other person delegated by the principal. It is advisable that this campaign be conducted differently in the different classes. Even the different sections of the same grade have to be handled separately. It is important to emphasize that the person conducting these campaigns, must not influence the learners with his/her own perceptions or feelings of the elections, but make learners aware of their rights; and teach them the correct voting procedures.

The time of election is not specified in the policy; it is just stated that the elections should be conducted during the first term of the year. This allows for the Grade 8's to settle in into the high school and get to know one another.

The TLO is the teacher who is elected by other teachers or the learners to guide the RCL in performing their duties. He/she is elected on the basis of the relationship he/she has with the learners; a professional relationship, parent-child relationship. He/she nevertheless, still has to undergo some training to enable him/her to work with these learners, especially as they now pass through the adolescent stage. There will always be questions as to whether there is enough time to train these teachers, considering their workload in their schools and classrooms.

Like it is done with the SGB members, learners need to be trained to do their work; and to do that we need time. All successful schools would rather want to spend every minute of their time doing academic work in the class.

The RCL must meet at least once a term (RSA, Act No 3 of 1996: 23). The question can be asked: Is this enough time for the TLO and his team to contribute positively in school governance? It has to be borne in mind that during this time the RCL members must be taught about the protocol of the school, how to behave in a formal meeting and how to handle their classmates and other schoolmates.

1.9 EXPOSITION OF THE STUDY

In this research project the following will be contained in the chapters:

In Chapter 1 the background was given and the rationale which focused on the reason(s) for conducting this study, followed. A review of literature was done to find out just what other authors say about the establishment of the RCL, their status and functioning. The problem statement was briefly made, followed by the aims and objectives of the study. The methodology of this inquiry was discussed and this was followed by the ethical considerations the researcher needs to observe during this study.

In Chapter 2 a thorough literature review will be done to describe the origins of the relevant governance structures under scrutiny in this study, as well as the support the RCL may give to the SMT and the SGB in respect to the performance of their duties. Only South African literature will be reviewed.

Chapter 3 will reveal the data collection techniques which the researcher will use to find out what the perceptions of the respondents (principals) are, what the TLOs and the RCL members say themselves about the roles the learners are to play in the day-to-day running of the school to ensure effectiveness and success.

The findings will be **analyzed** and discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5, the last chapter of this study, will reveal the final research findings and conclusions will be drawn. The researcher will then formulate the recommendations on the basis of the findings.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African Schools Act (RSA, SASA, Act No 84 of 1996) clearly distinguishes between the governance and professional management of a public school (RSA, 1996b: Section 16 (1) and (2)). In this chapter of the research it will be revealed that the governance of a public school has shifted from the principal to the governing body of a school. In Chapter 1 the focus of the investigation has been introduced, that is the governance of/by learners in a public school. Chapter 2 will now focus on what is affirmed by the legislation and literature by other authors concerning the governance of learners.

The literature study is done to elucidate the governance of learners in public schools in South Africa. According to Mouton (1996:119) the literature review serves as a “map” or “maps” of the terrain. In order to demarcate the terrain a number of management theories will now be discussed to place the whole research endeavour within the context of management and governance

2.2 THEORIES OF MANAGEMENT

According to the National Department of Education (DoE, 2000: 31), the following are the benefits of management and leadership relationships which allow all stakeholders to participate:

- People discover common needs and purpose. They see a connection between their own needs and the school’s needs.
- People feel that they are doing something that matters to them personally and to the larger world.
- People welcome problems which are challenging and through which they will grow and learn.

- Teams of people have greater resources because each person brings something different to the team, but they all contribute to achieving the common goal.
- Working in this way brings out creativity in individuals and in teams.
- The school can recognise and see all the knowledge of its staff, learners and other stakeholder groups;
- A vision of where the school should be going come from all levels. The responsibility of the leaders is to manage the process so that new visions become shared visions.

There are many theories of management, but the researcher will only discuss those that are relevant to this study. The following theories of management will be highlighted:

- Participatory Management
- The Collegial Model of Leadership
- Management by Wandering About (MBWA)
- The Bureaucratic Model of Leadership
- A Democratic Model of Leadership

2.2.1 Participatory Management

Participatory management calls for collaboration and this collaboration involves total sharing of responsibilities, which includes the right to succeed and to fail and, unless responsibility and power are shared amongst the members, the organisation will lack creativity. Participatory management does not mean that everyone decides everything. Decisions are left to relevant people. The ultimate goal of participatory, site-based management is to improve schools in order to improve learner performance.

Van der Westhuizen (1991: 155) concurs that conflict is reduced through participatory decision-making, instead of decisions being made in a typically bureaucratic/

authoritarian manner. Participatory management may be useful in the school environment.

Participation, according to Armstrong (1991: 601), provides employees with the opportunity to contribute to the success of the organisation by involving them in decision-making and means of joint consultation, productivity committees, suggestion schemes and the latest development, a quality circle.

2.2.2 The Collegial Model of Leadership

Collegiality in organisations can not be overlooked. Collegial models of leadership assume that organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of leading to consensus. Power is shared among some or all members of the organisation who are thought to have mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution, for instance a school.

2.2.3 Management by Wandering About (MBWA)

Although not too relevant for this research, the MBWA theory is a good example of being the catalyst that brings educators, aides, parents and administrators together in pursuit of excellent schools. MBWA is an active person-to-person process that relies on deeds, involvement and participation to create better schools.

Fraser and Hetzel (in Nkoe, 2000: 24) argue that the MBWA leaders possess honest awareness of the self and how they affect others; they create and clarify new visions; they encourage and empower others to join in the quest to capture visions and transform them into reality; and they are aware of power and value of people.

2.2.4 The Bureaucratic Model of Leadership

The bureaucratic model of leadership can not be overlooked because bureaucracy implies that any goal-oriented organisation comprising thousands of individuals

would require taking heed carefully of its activities and it is imperative to note that bureaucracy is based on legal authority.

Van der Westhuizen (in Nkoe, 2000: 21-23) states that the school as a bureaucratic organisation is characterised by the following mechanisms affecting the activities of educators:

- A hierarchical structure of authority and strict supervision of employees;
- sufficient vertical communication;
- clear written rules and procedures to set standards and direct activities;
- clear plans and schedules for educators;
- the inclusion of supervisory and administrative positions in the hierarchy to allow changes.

Bureaucracy enables an organisation such as a school to attain the highest degree of efficiency and it is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. The assumption is that the RCL as an organisation will apply this theory to its functioning in order to raise their degree of efficiency.

2.2.5 A Democratic Model of Leadership

According to Van der Westhuizen (in Nkoe, 2000: 24) democratic leadership involves the members by means of mutual consultation in decision-making, thus creating positive interpersonal relationships. This theory also yields many facets that a school can learn from when training its RCL members to function effectively in their duties to govern their fellow learners.

In the following paragraph a short historical background of the development of the learner governing systems as they have functioned in the past will be discussed in order to enlighten the reader to understand how the current SGBs and RCL's came into being.

2.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.3.1 Introduction

The National Minister of Education stated in the education policy after 1994 and in January 1996 that every school shall elect a School Governing Body (SGB) which will assist in the running of the school on day-to-day basis. “The governance of the public schools now requires the active participation of parents, educators, learners, workers and other members of the school community” (National Department of Education, 1997).

The South African Government laid down the following terms for school governance:

- Placing the schools in the hands of the school community;
- understanding that decisions on school matters should be made by those who best understand the needs of learners and the local community.

These terms give some measure of control to both learners and parents for their own education and that of their children. It may not slip our minds as adults that learners are still children under our guidance on their way to adulthood. They may not be given more responsibilities than they can handle. “The powers of the RCL are determined by the SGB in consultation with the RCL and in conjunction with relevant policies such as SASA; hence, for instance, no organization may commence or continue its activities on the premises of a school or a hostel before approval of its constitution by the governing body of the school concerned” (KZN DEC, Vryheid Region, 2000: 21).

According to SASA (RSA, 1996), the inclusion of learners in SGB and the partnership between the government and the SGBs would bring to light the following:

- To ensure that both national coherence and the promotion of a sense of a national common purpose in the public school system is sustained, while retaining flexibility and protecting diversity;
- to enable a disciplined and purposeful school environment to be established, dedicated to a visible and measurable improvement in the quality of the learning and outcomes throughout the system;
- to enable the representatives of the main stakeholders of the school to take responsibility for the school governance within the framework of regulation and support by education authorities;
- to ensure that the involvement of the government authorities in school governance is at the minimum required for legal accountability and is based on participative management;
- to enable SGBs to determine the mission and character or ethos of their schools within the framework of constitutional provisions affecting schools and provincial school law;
- to ensure that the decision-making authority assigned to the SGB is occupied with allocation of an equitable share of public (budgetary) resources and the right to raise additional resources for them to manage and recognize that a governing body's right of decision-making is not linked to the ability of its community to raise resources;
- to ensure both equity and redress in funding from (budgetary) resources in order to achieve a fair distribution of public funds and the elimination of backlogs by past unequal treatment; and
- to improve efficiency in school education through the optimum use of public financial (budgetary) allocation and publicly funded staff resources.

2.3.2 The purpose of the School Governing Body (SGB)

The researcher will now discuss the purpose of having SGB in public schools. According to Potgieter (1997: 23) the general purpose of a governing body is that of performing efficiently and skilfully its functions in terms of the SASA on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the school community. It is for this reason that the governing body is placed in a position of trust towards a school (RSA, 1996b:

Section 16(2). According to Squelch (in Lemmer, 2000: 138) to be in a position of trust, means that the governing body must:

- act in good faith;
- carry out its duties and functions in the best interest of the school; and
- not engage in any unlawful conduct;
- not disclose confidential information that might harm the school;
- not compete with the school's interests and activities.

South Africa now has a new system of education. It emphasises equal access and improving the quality of education. Managers and leaders will in future be judged on the quality of education their schools deliver. To successfully put into practise the new education policy, management in educational institutions must change. An appropriate management system for education has to be built from the ground up, so that teachers and learners shape it according to their needs.

The new policy framework is based on the belief that our schools, and therefore, our country, can only prosper if they are guided by new forms of governance which emphasises the interrelatedness of different stakeholders in the education process. Governance in education is concerned with the relationships between people: individuals, interest groups, different stakeholders and institutions and structures in the education system

Leaders and managers can promote new forms of relationships by:

- establishing the necessary structures - leaders and managers must set up structures where they can meet with stakeholders, regularly;
- sharing relevant information - they may have to educate people to understand the information. Sharing information and exploring what that information means for the school is a powerful way of building stakeholder commitment;
- allowing for participation and involvement - they must make it a principle of their own leading and managing that, wherever possible, they consult with all the relevant stakeholders before decision-making processes begin (National Department of Education, 2000: 30).

According to Nkoe (2000: 13) the problem is whether the various governing bodies' interests can be united just by a consideration of their various rights, duties and powers on which the authority to govern education must rest? To answer this question, the researcher will firstly discuss the election of the RCL, its duties and functions, and thereafter some relevant theories of management and legislation.

2.3.3 The Student Representative Council (SRC) and the prefect system

Buchell (1995: 111) differentiates between the class prefects and the school prefects. The role of the class prefect is relatively the same as that of the school prefect except that their duties are limited to the classroom. Both the class prefects and the school prefects were nominated by the teachers. Other learners at school had no say on who would be the prefects in their school.

The prefect is a pupil with strong leadership qualities, who is worthy of the respect and trust shown in him/her by both the teachers and fellow pupils. As prefects, they have a position of authority, in a group/school which demands responsibility and accountability of the actions of others. The prefect must be carefully chosen, since a wrong choice may undermine, rather than uphold, discipline" (Buchell, 1995: 111). The following are the duties of the class prefects:

- They are the link between the class teacher and pupils in the classroom.
- They assist with the orderly management of the class in accordance with the rules of the school.
- They maintain both good discipline and good spirit in the classroom.
- They give messages to the class.
- They organise pupils to decorate the classroom.
- They maintain discipline in the class when it is necessary for the teacher to be absent from the class.
- They shall report all forms of misconduct to educators who in turn will take relevant steps to rectify such misconduct.
- They shall supervise timetable and ensure that they are kept to the letter.
- They shall keep records of absenteeism and late-coming for submission to the class teacher on a daily basis.

The duties of the class prefect may be extended as the class group progresses to higher standards.

2.3.4 The Representative Council of Learners (RCL)

The South African Schools Act (SASA, Act No 84 of 1996) further decrees that the RCL is now the only recognized representative body at a school. RCL's are viewed as an integral part of an effective school governance system designed to encourage greater learner involvement. Opening up dialogue with them, consulting them and considering their views in a meaningful way, is an important way to help learners to become confident, capable and autonomous citizens. Current school management research reveals that RCL's provide a coherent strategy to promote leadership and democratic values among learners (South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), 2004: Part four). The purpose with the introduction of RCL's was to make the schools self-reliant institutions within a democratic community. The governance of schools is therefore, supposed to be a shared responsibility and co-operation between the SMT (SMT), the SGB and other members of the school community. "This move to set up RCL's is about placing schools as centers of change, as well as laying the foundation for a democratic South Africa" (Gauteng Department of Education, 1998: 2).

The policy states that in KZN DEC (Act No 3 of 1996: 21), there shall be a RCL established at each public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade and higher. The RCL is formed by class representatives who are democratically elected from each of the classes mentioned above. Together all class representatives form the RCL. The RCL in turn elects two learners from among themselves, who would form part of the SGB, representing all learners on the SGB. The learners, who represent all other learners at school in the SGB, are actually elected by other members of the RCL. This was a call made by a former National Minister of Education, Professor SME Bhengu. Almost all the schools responded to this call. The National Minister of Education, who succeeded him, also adopted that policy and maintained the status quo.

The big question under investigation in this research is whether anyone in the school situation knows what the role of each group of people in the SGB is. To prevent any uncertainty the DoE introduced annual SGB empowerment workshops; however, these workshops were meant to be for the information of parent members of the SGB only. This could have been because of the reasons like:

- learners are supposed to be in classes, learning on every school day; thus, ensuring that the culture of teaching and learning is not interrupted;
- the RCL is entirely entrusted to one knowledgeable educator, the TLO.

Learners who serve on the SGB have to be elected every year, but it still has to be researched whether their actual role in the SGB can be fulfilled within the specified term of office they are given. The role of the RCL in day-to-day running of the school also has to be questioned as to whether all the school have an understanding thereof.

The policy stipulates that every class shall elect at least one representative, but if the class consists of both boys and girls, one male and one female learner shall be elected. Candidates may be nominated verbally or in writing, by class members. According to the act (KZN DEC, 1997), the electoral officer and his/her assistant must conduct an information/education campaign to enlighten each class on their democratic rights in terms of SASA and the supporting regulations. For the sake of effective communication, it is recommended that each grade (group) be dealt with separately during these campaigns.

2.3.5 Training of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL)

Due to time constraints, the election campaign is carried out only once a year. During the election campaign, learners are made aware of the need to elect the person that will address their needs; this means they have to vote for somebody who will serve them without getting tired, with integrity and enthusiasm and not somebody who is just a friend. The representatives thus elected will be accepted by the class; therefore, will enjoy full co-operation of the entire class.

A Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) may by notice in the Provincial Gazette set out how an RCL is to be established, how members are to be elected and what functions the RCL has to perform (National Department of Education, 1997: 9). This policy further provides for learners to be represented in the governing bodies of their schools. It is compulsory for all learners in every school that provides education for learners in the eighth grade or higher, to have representation in the governing body. The participation in the SGB will provide learners with a legitimate role to play in school governance and management. It is important to note that learners, who are elected to the SGB, need not be members of the RCL. By this SASA provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of the schools. This also underlies the fundamental constitutional principle of co-operative governance and participative management.

The National Department of Education (1997; 11), have found that learners quickly realized the significance of their role in a RCL once they understand the connection between the struggle for democracy in the past and the present need to consolidate and broaden democracy as we strive to build our nation. It is therefore, important to look at what the roles and responsibilities of the RCL and the SGB are.

The following are the duties and functions of the RCL:

- To promote the culture of learning in their schools;
- to support the principal, teachers and the non-teaching staff in the performance of their duties;
- to assist with the development of the code of conduct of learners;
- it is the link between the learners and the school and the school management and the governing body;
- to build unity among learners ;
- to keep learners informed about the events in the school and in the community; and
- to encourage good relationships between learners, educators and non-educators (RSA, Act No 3 of 1996: Section 72(1) (d)).

Once learners adhere to these duties they will understand that learners are not allowed to interfere in the professional duties of an educator. They may only submit their recommendations to the SMT before the duty load is drawn and during the course of the year, as long as they do not interrupt the functioning of the school. In well governed schools, the RCL is a channel of communication between learners and other stakeholders. They are also a forum for airing their grievances which could range from minor complaints about homework to more serious matters such as the violation of their rights. The RCL co-operates with the school management by assuming control over learner affairs and by establishing an ethos of order and harmony among their peers. RCL's can also co-ordinate projects that involve the learners at the school such as heritage days, organizing parents' evenings, organizing prize-giving ceremonies and fun days. In SGB meetings, RCL members contribute to decisions about forthcoming school events and discussions about current issues like school fees increase (The Teacher, 2004: Part four).

The governance of the school is vested in its SGB. Learners are part of the school and therefore, it is the responsibility of the SGB to govern learners effectively (RSA, 1996b: Section 16 (1)).

2.3.6 The functioning of the Representative Council of Learners

The RCL is the body that represents learners on matters in the school concerning them. It is the link between the learners of the school and the school management and the governing body. The RCL is required to build unity among learners, and keep the learners informed about events in the school and in the community. The RCL is also tasked with the responsibility of encouraging good relationships between learners, educators and non-educators.

The governing body consults the RCL when a code of conduct is compiled for all learners at the school. The RCL is required to support this code of conduct, which sets out to establish discipline in the school and create an environment that is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning

process (Department of Education and Culture: Understanding School Governance: Manual 2: 43).

The school may be seen as the practice field for a child's later life. The school should make provision for preparing pupils as fully as possible by exposing them to as many aspects of life as possible during their school career. The ideal would be that the pupils' participation in planned activities should afford them the opportunity of being actively involved in and exposed to situations that would equip them with the expertise, knowledge and skills that they would be expected to evince as worthy adults (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 348).

2.3.6.1 Selection of pupil leaders

It should be made clear that the identification of pupil leaders is a task for the entire corps of teachers at a school. The educational managers however, have the task of managing this process.

Hendrikz (1983: 73) quoting Maree in Van der Westhuizen (1991: 360) mentions the following qualities which were found during an investigation in which the school principals were asked what personality traits they looked for in pupil leaders:

- Personal neatness and neatness of work;
- friendliness towards teachers and fellow pupils;
- humility without passivity;
- reliability;
- trustworthiness at all times (integrity);
- strong personality to take the lead if required;
- should be a good follower;
- should be able to distinguish between right and wrong i.e. should have a sense of responsibility;
- should be loyal;
- should be helpful;
- should be obedient;
- should be purposeful;

- should be sympathetic;
- should have depth and be thoughtful;
- should be humble;
- should be hardworking;
- should be persevering;
- should be aware of evil deeds and be able to report them;
- should be active in all school activities without being arrogant (should be able to deal with rewards);
- should have the ability to put across a point;
- should have self discipline; and
- should have a sense of humour.

They however, warn against making too many demands upon a non-adult pupil-leader. With regard to the situation in which the pupil leaders find themselves (an educational situation), it should be borne in mind that the pupil is not yet an adult but is in the process of becoming one. This requires that the following aspects should be taken into account:

- The child's level of becoming: Leadership tasks which are carried over a short period and with a limited function and clearly defined and limited decision-making framework would be prescribed for every young pupil leader.
- The extent to which a pupil leader has already established certainty with regard to his outlook on life- and his world-view.
- The extent to which a pupil leader has already comprehended and accepted the value system within which the school functions.
- The reaction of the pupil leader when he/she is made a leader, i.e. how he/she deals with the authority which is linked to his/her leadership position. It should be noted at this point that the most general reaction on the part of adults is to see if the child has perhaps "become too big for his/her boots". One should also take note of whether the tension caused by greater responsibility can be handled by the child.

Bearing the above in mind, an educational leader may then move on to implementing a programme in which teachers can identify potential leaders throughout the year and throughout the school career of the pupils.

In each school organisation there are various occasions and places at which pupils will have the opportunity to take the lead. The identification of these leadership opportunities should take place before the various leaders are appointed. Then only should the right person be selected from potential leaders who have been identified, to carry out the specific leadership task in a particular situation. It must be taken into account that the followers or the potential followers should, in accordance with their level of becoming, also have an increasing say in choosing pupil leaders.

In the specific education situation at a school in which pupils find themselves, teachers should ensure that a few pupils are not overloaded with all the leadership posts at a school. A healthy distribution makes the workload more bearable for pupils and also provides them with more opportunities to practise leadership.

2.3.6.2 Training of pupil leaders

It should be recognised that a pupil leader does not have an easy task. He is placed between the adults on one hand and his friends on the other. The pupil leader has to move between two extremes; the adults in his life and his peers. Teachers should realise that the pupil leader may experience divided loyalties and the necessary support to handle the appointment should be provided for the selected leader (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 363).

It is apparent that the training of pupil leaders at school cannot be separated from their identification. When the training of pupils in leading positions is being discussed, it should be stressed that this refers to training in management skills, since the leader has to act in the capacity in which he/she was appointed, that of being the pupil manager of his fellow pupils. Even if a pupil has already occupied a leading position during a previous year or period, the appointment to a new leadership position with new followers and in a new situation, once more requires

further continuous training. The training of pupil leaders is not a once-off task. The training programme for pupil leaders should be monitored periodically by the management of the school (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 365-367).

2.3.6.3 Functions of the RCL (EXCO)

- **Leadership roles**

When learners are elected into RCL, they are given leadership roles and they have been invested with necessary authority and decision-making capabilities. Gorton (in Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 358), defines authority as the right granted to a manager to make decisions, within limitations, to assign duties to subordinates and to require subordinates' conformance to expected behaviour. According to this definition, authority implies that a pupil leader may:

- make decisions;
- give instructions and; and
- expect a certain reaction.



In all instances a person is given just as much authority as is necessary to carry out his/her responsibilities. At its first meeting, convened by the TLO, within seven days after the election of the RCL, the RCL shall elect an executive committee. The executive committee shall be elected from amongst the members. The election shall be by secret ballot.

- **The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee shall comprise at least the following:

- A president,
- deputy president,
- treasurer,
- secretary, and
- three additional members.

No member of the RCL may hold more than one office. The principal shall inform the District Office in writing of the names and addresses of the learners elected as office-bearers.

- **The President**

The president shall:

- chair all meetings where he/she is present;
- conduct all correspondence and activities of the RCL;
- enforce the constitution;
- sign minutes;
- represent an RCL at official functions; and
- perform all duties associated with the office.

- **The Treasurer**

The treasurer shall:

- keep a record of all monies received and used;
- submit regular reports on the financial position of the RCL; and
- prepare an annual financial statement.

- **The Secretary**

The secretary shall:

- keep minutes and record all decisions taken by the members;
- prepare the agenda for each meeting; and
- keep a file of all correspondence received and sent out (Department of Education: Guide for Representative Council of Learners).

2.3.7 The Code of Conduct of learners

The Code of Conduct is a set of moral principles accepted by a group of people. Through the Code of Conduct, the governing body expresses what the school should achieve while the educators decide how to achieve it (Gann, 1998:48).

In the following paragraph the researcher discusses the legal basis for the development of the Code of Conduct in South Africa (RSA, 1996b: Section 8).

- Subject to any applicable provincial law, a Governing Body of a public school must adopt a Code of Conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school.
- A Code of Conduct, referred to in subsection (1), must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.
- The minister may, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, determine guidelines for the consideration of Governing Bodies in adopting a Code of Conduct for learners.
- Nothing contained in this act exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the Code of Conduct of the school attended by such learner.
- A Code of Conduct must contain provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings.

The task of developing a Code of Conduct is also listed in Section 20 (1) (d) of the Schools Act as one of the compulsory functions of the governing body (RSA, 1996b, Section 20 (1) (d)).

It is important to view the manner in which, the governing body should develop this Code of Conduct for the learners.

2.3.8 The purpose of the Code of Conduct

Effective learning and teaching take place in a controlled, orderly, safe and conducive environment. Rose (1997: 59) has the following list as purpose of a Code of Conduct:

- Create a well-organised and good school so that effective learning and teaching can take place;
- promote self-discipline;
- encourage good behaviour; and
- regulate conduct.

Rose (1997: 10) encourages all schools to have a Code of Conduct for learners because the school may be asked to prove in a court of law how their learners were informed of the consequences of misbehaviour.

Learners must be consulted during the establishment of the Code of Conduct for learners which is established for them (RSA, 1996b: Section 8 (1) of the SASA). It is important to have inputs from learners' during this process as some authors mentioned that if learners are not allowed to make decisions on their governance, learners become passive and lethargic and they are likely to revolt against the people, places, policies, programs and processes that deny them the opportunity to participate in decisions that influence their lives (Purkey & Strahan, 1986: 13). Rifkin (2001: 11) supports the participation of people in decision making by saying all people have both the right and duty to be involved in decisions about activities that affect their lives because such involvement provides a basis for increasing self-confidence and self-reliance. The diversity in learners' culture, race, ethnicity, family structure and economic base makes it all more necessary to learner in determining the needs and participation in decision making.

2.4 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNER READINESS FOR GOVERNANCE

In order to set the table for the training, improvement and development of learners to be ready to take up leadership in learner governance structures it is necessary to give an overview of the characteristics of the developmental phase of

adolescence, because that is the phase in which the secondary school learners will be (from 13-18) when they have to take up these roles.

2.4.1 Adolescence

Adolescence is the stage between childhood and adulthood. The term “adolescence” is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means “to grow up” or to grow to “adulthood”. Because of individual and cultural differences, the age at which adolescence begins, varies from 11 to 13 and the age at which it ends varies from 17 to 21. Since the age boundaries of adolescence are variable, it is better to demarcate the various developmental stages of adolescence on the basis of specific developmental characteristics rather than on age.

The end of adolescence however, is not indicated by clear characteristics as is the beginning. From a social point of view adolescence ends when the individual begins to fulfil adult roles - the individual has thus become independent and self-provident. From a legal point of view, adolescence ends when an individual becomes eligible to vote (age 18), or when he can be held liable for contractual obligations (age 21). From a psychological point of view, adolescence end when the individual is reasonably certain of his/her identity, is emotionally independent of his/her parents, has developed his own value system and is capable of establishing love relationships and adult friendships.

In modern Western societies the end of adolescence is not as clearly marked. Even the behavioural guidelines for adolescence are vague and uncertain. Furthermore, the period of adolescence is longer in Western societies than in more tradition-based societies, because Westerns mature physically much earlier. Their society is a very complex one, they remain financially dependent on their parents much longer and their education and training periods in preparation for a career are much longer. Western psychologists therefore divide adolescence in to two stages: early adolescence (age 10 to 15) and late adolescence (age 16 to 22).

In modern Western societies there are also divergent descriptions of the adolescent. Some of these descriptions are very negative and others very positive, as the following divergent opinions indicate:

- The negative view of the adolescent states that in comparison with the adult he/she is more of a rolling stone, emotionally disturbed, sexually promiscuous, less idealistic and critical of moral values. He/she is therefore, “disengaged” from the adult generation.
- On the other hand the positive view of the adolescent sees him/her as better informed and cleverer than previous generations. He/she is also more idealistic, honest, tolerant, loving and sentimental and promiscuous than today’s adults were in their youth. Today’s adolescents thus, have little to learn from their parents and are seen as the generation that can “save” the world (Louw, 1991: 377-378).

2.4.2 Social development

Mwamwenda (1989: 45) mentions the following points about the social development of the adolescents:

- Some see adolescence as such an attractive stage that they have no desire to enter adulthood and take on the responsibilities that go on with it. Often they want to have the best of both worlds.
- Adolescents tend to be so eager to please others and to be popular that some develop popularity neurosis.
- As adolescents search for their identity, the peer group provides some clarification on some aspects, although it is not entirely the answer, since most of the group are experiencing similar problems. The search for one’s identity becomes a pre-occupation. The adolescent wants to know who he is, what he is capable of achieving and what he wants to do in life.

- Adolescents tend to change their personality in the sense that from time to time they assume different roles to keep up with times or to test which one is most suitable.
- Some adolescents are idle and see no purpose in life.
- Adolescents tend to be idealistic and look for perfection in themselves, society and its institutions and others, including their parents and older folk. This idealistic perspective is usually destroyed by disillusionment sooner or later.
- Adolescents tend to be theatrical and melodramatic about emotional matters, irrespective of how trivial they may seem.
- Adolescents tend to regard the pursuit of pleasure as one of the main objectives in life. Some conclude that drugs are the solution, others sex, or the combination of the two. Some focus on the nobler objectives such as education, dedicated to service to mankind, etc.
- The adolescent's assertion of his independence may cause conflict between himself and his parents who wish to control him as they always have done. At this stage the adolescent is inclined to establish stronger friendship links with his peers, who exercise substantial influence over him. To gain approval and acceptance he complies with their expectations. On the other hand, a large number of adolescents subscribe to conventionalism, which means that they accept and see meaning and purpose in established norms, values and goals, processes and institutions. Long before coming into contact with the peers, adolescents fall under the influence of their parents. Consequently, they may choose to adhere to their parents' values and standards or conform to the expectations of their peers. Both parents and peers influence the behaviour of adolescents. Parents have a long influence on long-term matters such as values, moral development, occupational choices and political thinking, while peers have strong influence on behaviour relating to immediate status and in areas such as dress, hairstyle interests and social relations (Mwamwenda, 1989: 45-48).

2.4.3 Moral development

There are more prescribed values and rules for behaviour in traditional societies than in modern societies which leave the individual free to base his behaviour on the values he chooses. The responsibility imposed on the individual in modern society to determine his own values may cause problems for the adolescent, since he is confronted with a wide variety of values and only vague guidelines to indicate which values to accept and which to reject. Thus, one of the most important tasks the adolescent has to perform is to develop a personal value system. The adolescent has to question certain values and accept others in order to build up his own value system. The adolescent's cognitive ability to formulate hypotheses, to investigate them and to make deductions from them, as well as his capacity for abstract thinking, enables him to consider alternative values and assess them rationally. In some cases the adolescent may still be morally immature. This is caused by the following cognitive limitations:

- Egocentrism;
- the confusion of subjective and objective experiences;
- heteronomous respect for adults (the feeling of inferiority, dependency,
- affection, admiration and fear that the adolescent has for adults cause him
- to believe that he should accept the values and commands of adults unconditionally).

According to Kohlberg (in Louw, 1991: 409-411), the development of moral judgement takes place on three levels, namely the pre-conventional level, the conventional level and the post-conventional level

2.4.4 Cognitive development

Adolescence is often seen as the "time of the dreamer" and the time which theories are constructed a stage which the adolescent thinks about reality and

abstract things and at which a world of possibilities opens before him. He thus reaches, according to Piaget's theory, the level of formal operations.

Piaget distinguishes the following characteristics of formal operational thinking:

- Abstract thought: Formal operations are characterised particularly by the ability to think in abstract terms or, in other words, to think about things that are not concretely present.
- The actual versus the possible: During middle-childhood the individual thinks primarily about what actually exists, but during adolescence he thinks about possibilities.
- Propositional thought: The adolescent can reason on the basis of propositions without taking reality into account.
- Scientific thought: The adolescent also develops the ability to consider all the possible solutions to a problem.

The ability of adolescents to theorise and to examine values, norms, beliefs, roles, social and political systems and various possibilities, permits them to construct ideal families, societies, ideologies, beliefs or solutions. Because they are aware of alternatives, they devise ideal ways for ending deprivation, poverty, social problems and false beliefs. However, they often lose sight of reality and suggest utopian solutions to the world's problems. Because the adolescent is able to distinguish between the actual and the possible, he becomes aware of the way things are and what they could have been (Louw, 1991: 401-402; 405-406).

2.5 EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

According to McWhirter (1998: 28), researchers have identified several elements common to effective schools. Quoting from several authors like Good and Brophy, he states that these can be classified into the general categories of leadership behaviours, academic emphasis, teacher and staff factors, student involvement, community support and social capital. The question can thus be asked:

2.5.1 What makes a school effective?

The answer given is that schools deemed effective tend to have autonomous management at the school site. That is, the school staff is able to make many decisions about programs and programme implementation without the need to seek the school board's approval.

2.5.1.1 Leadership behaviours

Effective schools place an emphasis on strong instructional leadership.

2.5.1.2 Teacher and staff factors

Effective schools are characterised by collegial relationships among the staff, encouragement of collaborative planning, and low turnover among the faculty.

2.5.1.3 Student involvement

Students at effective schools tend to have a sense of community, a feeling of belonging. They also are likely to have clear goals. Student discipline at effective schools is fair, clear and consistent and is not oppressive or punitive (McWhirter, 1998: 64).

The culture of a school can be divided into two distinct portions; student climate and teacher/staff climate. Students who succeed in school have both high expectations of themselves and a strong, positive sense of belonging to the school community.

Some schools have reported a marked reduction in disruptive behaviours after students have been taught to mediate disputes on their own way. Also, students who are given leadership opportunities exercise decision-making skills and learn the importance of self-control. The ability of students to solve their own problems and peacefully settle their disputes directly and positively affects student climate (McWhirter, 1998: 65; 69).

According to Nkosi (2000: 27), schools become effective if principals are not only managers but also leaders. The leader's primary task is to create a conducive environment in which educators and learners will be motivated to achieve set objectives. Schools are effective when theory and practise is from a whole school improvement perspective. Principals, educators and learners of effective schools subscribe to certain values. They should be committed and dedicated. Effective schools should have corporate values, such as managing, self-image, parent involvement in school activities and have well communicated methods and procedures. Effective schools in the Mpumalanga Province are those with less learner absenteeism.

2.5.2 Teamwork

Effective schools have colleagues that function as a team. It is from these teams where principals will see individuals worthy of recognition. The team makes effective decisions, generate ideas and provides emotional support.

2.5.3 School leadership

School effectiveness reflects the nature of leadership at that particular school. In effective schools learning takes place without disruption. These schools are characterised by a safe and orderly school environment. These schools have a positive school discipline policy in which rules are meaningful, clear and applied consistently so that effective learning, teaching and service takes place (Nkosi, 2000: 19-21).

2.6 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

From the discussion above, it is evident that learners should be part of the running of the school. This can easily happen when they are involved in day-to-day decision-making. Because of that fact, learners should be represented in the school governance structures. Involving learners in decision making helps reduce conflict within the school.

Learner representatives in school governance have to be accepted by all learners at school. This demands that they should be elected, not nominated, by learners themselves. The prefects and monitors' role was mainly focused on discipline whereas the democratically elected learner representatives do more than that. Among other things, they are involved in drawing up the Code of Conduct of learners; they are allowed to initiate certain activities such as fund-raising at their school. With this kind of cooperative governance, learners are given a chance to practice for later life as leaders or as followers where they will have to choose their leaders and then respect them.

Principals and or TLOs may wish for certain learners with certain personality traits to be chosen as leaders, but they may not influence the elections. The preferred personality and traits may not be imposed upon leaders as protocol. This may prove to be stressful on leaders since they are not yet adults.

Leaders among learners should be identified over a year and then be trained. Louw (1991: 430-431) states that at the age of 12-13 years, Grade 8 learners are not ready for more leadership roles since they are not yet emotionally independent. According to Mwamwenda (1989: 43-44), the majority of learners in their adolescence are still seeking for their identity, therefore, they are easily confused, want to please their peers more than observing norms and values. There are a few though who would still be able to make the right decisions.

According to McWhirter (1998: 64), student involvement is one of the important factors in making schools effective. He states that when learners are involved in planning and decision-making, the school experiences less incidents of disruptive behaviour, and the teachers can easily concentrate on instructional programmes. He states that learners can also be allowed to sort out certain disputes among themselves, calmly.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will state clearly the methodology of how he will go about gathering information from the sample population described below. The kind of research will be a qualitative one. According to Leedy (2001: 147), the term qualitative research encompasses several approaches to research that are in some respect different from one another yet all qualitative approaches have two things in common. Firstly, they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings - things that are in their natural world. Secondly, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. Qualitative researchers rarely try to simplify what they observe. Instead they recognize that the issue they are studying has many dimensions and layers, so they try to portray the issue in its multi-faceted form.

From the five qualitative research designs mentioned by Leedy, the researcher will only focus on two of them, i.e. ethnographic design and phenomenological design.

3.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC DESIGN

In ethnographic research the researcher studies the group in its natural setting for a lengthy period of time, often several months or several years. The focus of the study is on everyday behaviour of the people in the group with the intent to identify cultural norms, beliefs, social structures and other cultural patterns. In some ethnographic studies, the researcher engages in participant observation, becoming immersed in the daily life of the people.

3.3 PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In its broadest sense, the term phenomenology refers to a person's perception of the meaning of an event as opposed to the event as it exists outside the person. It is a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation. Phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews (perhaps 1 to 2 hours long) with a carefully selected sample of participants. A typical sample size is between 5 and 25 individuals, all of whom have had a direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated.

The actual implementation of a phenomenological study is as much in the hands of participant as is in the hands of the researcher. The phenomenological interview is often an unstructured one in which the researcher and the participants work together to "arrive at the heart of the matter." The researcher listens closely as the participants describe their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon and must be alert for subtle yet meaningful cues in participants' expressions, questions and occasional side tracks. A typical interview looks more like an informal conversation with the participant doing most of the talking and the researcher is doing most of the listening (Leedy, 2001: 151-153).

The study the researcher intends to undertake for this investigation is the qualitative one because the researcher will interview subjects in their natural setting, the school. The researcher will employ an unstructured form of an interview. During an interview, the researcher will be alert to perceptions, expressions and feelings of the participants.

3.4 THE INTERVIEW AS METHOD

The interview is a direct method of obtaining information from a face-to-face situation. The interview is used in research, personnel selection, vocational guidance, counseling, medical and psychiatric diagnosis, etc. Here we are concerned only with the research interview.

3.4.1 The purpose of the interview

The research interview, though time consuming, as a rule expensive, and often difficult to arrange, is sometimes preferred to the written questionnaire, particularly where complex topics are involved, or where the investigation concerns matters of a personal nature.

- The interviewer has the opportunity of giving a full and detailed explanation of the purpose of the study to the respondent, and to ensure that the latter fully understands what is required of him/her.
- If the respondent misunderstands a question, the interviewer can add a clarifying remark.
- If the interviewee appears to show lack of interest or becomes detached, the interviewer can stimulate and encourage him.
- The flexibility of approach which is inherent in the interview technique is particularly valuable when information is sought from children or from illiterates (Behr, 1973: 67).

Other advantages of the interview, according to Mminele (1995: 38-40) are:

- If the interviewer can succeed in gaining the necessary rapport with his or her interviewee, certain types of confidential information may be obtained that the person concerned may be reluctant to put in writing;
- the interviewer can explain more clearly the purpose of the investigation and just what information he/she wants;
- the interviewer is able to evaluate the sincerity and insight of the interviewee;
- it makes it possible for the same information to be sought in several ways at various stages of the interview, thus checking the reliability and truthfulness of the response;
- the researcher is able to stimulate the interviewee into his or her own experiences. In this way, significant areas not anticipated in the original plan of investigation can be explored;

- by using open-ended questions, where the interviewer is encouraged to expatiate at some length, provision is made for the greater depth of response.

The main demerits of this device are:

- It is not easy for a novice researcher to establish the required rapport between himself or herself and the subject (interviewee);
- issues of race and gender may affect an interview adversely;
- the device is one of the most difficult to use successfully;

Points which the researcher should keep in mind when using this device are the following:

- The interviewer should know exactly what type of information he or she needs;
- the questions should follow a logical sequence and they should be written down;
- the interviewer should be cautious with the people he or she interviews;
- the interviewer should avoid leading questions which unconsciously imply a specific answer;
- the interviewer should be able to assure the interviewee that his or her responses will be held in strict confidence;
- as far as possible, the interviewer should be carefully trained in areas such as developing rapport, asking probing questions, preparing for the interview (Mminele, 1995: 39-40);
- the participant must do 90% of the talking;
- ask clear and brief questions;
- ask one question at a time;
- avoid sensitive questions;
- ask experience (behaviour) questions before asking opinion (feelings) questions;
- don't worry if your questions are not as beautifully phrased as you would like them to be for posterity;
- ask questions when you do not understand;

- repeat key questions throughout the interview;
- allow for pause in the conversation. Do not let periods of silence fluster you;
- return to incomplete questions. Often the participant does not provide full information (Strydom, 1998: 293).

The three models for interviews are: the unstructured interview; the semi-structured interview and the structured interview (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003: 44).

Strydom (quoting Collins, 1998:1) states that qualitative studies typically employ unstructured or semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews are also known as in-depth interviews because as the interview progresses an internal dynamic develops and a story line emerge that becomes increasingly complex. Quoting May (in Morse, 1991: 189), he further states that semi-structured interviews are defined as those organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth.

Behr (1973: 68) describes the structured interviews as standardized, the ones in which the procedure to be followed is determined in advance of the interview. He further states that the structured interview minimizes to a degree errors due to differences in technique of different interviewers. According to him the unstructured interview is the one in which a series of questions to be asked are also prepared beforehand, but the interviewer is permitted to use his discretion and to depart from the set questions as well as their order of presentation as the situation demands.

The key question that the researcher will be asking the subjects is:

- Tell me about the role of the RCL in your school.
- How is the RCL implemented in your school?
- How do you capacitate the whole school so that they know why they are voting and who they are voting for?

3.4.2 The sample

The researcher will gather information from four schools in the Bhekuzulu circuit. Two of these schools will be Black schools whilst the other two will be White schools. All these schools will be those that have RCL's, i.e. the high schools.

3.4.3 The importance of draft questions

The interview development process begins by broadly indicating the questions which you'd like to ask. The number, type and format of your questions will be informed by the level of structure to be imposed on the interviewer.

3.5 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

3.5.1 Conducting an interview

The first task of the interviewer is to establish rapport with the interviewee. This is done *inter alia* by making the latter feel at ease through gaining his confidence, and conveying to him the impression that he is in possession of information or knowledge which is needed for the research and which no one else can give.

The interviewer must be pleasant and restrained in his manner; he must be a good listener, and avoid making interjections except if essential to clarify a point. Furthermore, he must not be distracted by irrelevancies, and he must avoid giving any hints by his facial expressions, tone of voice or use of implied questions which suggests the answer he would prefer to be given. The interviewer, while being permissive, must nevertheless control the situation so as to ensure that the interview does not wander away from the main topic (Behr, 1973: 68-69).

The following are some of the guideline for conducting the qualitative interview given by Leedy, (2001: 159-160):

3.5.2 Guidelines for success

Find a suitable location: In theory one can conduct an interview anywhere that people are willing to talk to you. The interview would be more successful if you find a quiet place where you and your interviewee are unlikely to be distracted or interrupted.

Record responses verbatim: The interviewer should capture everything the interviewee says.

Keep your reactions to yourself: Although you won't necessarily want to maintain a continual "poker face," you are most likely to get accurate information if you don't show surprise or disapproval of what someone tells you.

Remember that you are not necessarily getting the facts: As confident and convincing as some of your participants may be, you should always treat their responses as perceptions rather than as facts.

3.6 ANALYSING DATA

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 479-480), data analysis is an ongoing cyclical process integrated into all phases of qualitative research. It is primarily an inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories.

According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003: 63), the final stage of the interview begins by drawing together the data collected and structuring them in such a way as to make ready for analysis. In small-scale work, this would typically involve grouping the responses to each question from all interviewees to make comparison between respondents easy. Using this approach allows themes, issues and concerns to be easily identified and quantified (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003: 63).

Creswell (as quoted by Strydom, 1998: 142-165), believes that the process of data analysis and interpretation can best be represented in a spiral image - a data analysis spiral. This is supported by Leedy (2001: 160-161), when he states the researcher begins with a large body of information and must, through inductive reasoning, sort and categorize it and gradually boil it down to a small set of abstract, underlying themes. Strydom presents this analytical spiral in a linear form. The steps are as follows:

- Collecting and recording data
- Managing data
- Reading and memorizing
- Describing, classifying, interpreting
- Representing, visualizing

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 480-481) put these steps as follows:

- Continuous discovery, especially in the field but also throughout the entire study, so as to identify tentative patterns;
- categorizing and ordering of data, typically after data collection;
- qualitatively assessing the trustworthiness of the data, so as to refine one's understanding of the patterns;
- writing an abstract synthesis of the themes and/or concepts.

Data analysis in a qualitative inquiry involves a twofold approach. The first aspect involves data analysis at the research site during data collection. The second aspect involves data analysis away from the site following a period of data collection. Data analysis frequently necessitates revisions in data collection procedures and strategies. These revisions yield new data that are then subjected to new analysis.

Classifying data means taking the text apart and looking for categories, themes or dimensions of information. It also involves identifying general themes.

Interpreting involves making sense of the data. As a researcher, I will need to search for other, plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them (Strydom, 1998: 340-344).

According to Mouton, analysis involves “breaking up” the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. The aim of analysis is to understand the various constructive elements of one’s data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in data.

Interpretation involves the synthesis of one’s data into larger coherent wholes. Interpretation means relating one’s results and findings to existing theoretical frameworks or models, and showing whether these are supported or falsified by the new interpretation. Interpretation also means taking into account rival explanations or interpretations of one’s data and showing what levels of support the data provide for the preferred interpretation. Some of the more common errors associated with poor analysis and interpretation are summarized in the table below:

TABLE 3.1: ERRORS IN ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING DATA

Sources of error	Elaboration
Using inappropriate statistical techniques in qualitative analysis	The appropriate use of statistical procedures is tied to assumptions about levels of measurement, normal distributions, the amount of variation in the data and sample size.
Drawing inferences from data that are not supported by the data.	Conclusions that one may draw on the basis any data set need to have sufficient and relevant inductive support before they are accepted.
Biased interpretation of the data through selectivity	Scholars very often attempt to “prove” their pet hypotheses without proper consideration of rival hypotheses and alternative explanations.

(Mouton, 2001: 108-109)

The best method of data analysis for this study will be content analysis because as Henning, puts it: "Content analysis is the preferred choice for novice researchers, because it is easy to get a handle on it and it works on one level of meaning - namely the content of the data.

3.7 VALIDITY

Strategies that increase internal validity are briefly defined below:

- *Lengthy data collection period.* The lengthy data collection period provides opportunities for continual data analysis, comparison, and corroboration to refine ideas and to ensure the match between research-based categories and participant below.
- *Field research.* Participant observation and in-depth interviews are conducted in natural settings that reflect reality of life experience more accurately than do contrived or laboratory settings.

3.8 RELIABILITY



Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participant meanings from the data. Ethnographers enhance reliability in their design by making six explicit aspects:

- *Researcher role.* The preferred research role is that of a person who is unknown at the site or to the participant.
- *Data collection strategies.* Using the study for future research is impossible without precise description of data collection techniques: the varieties of observational and interviewing methods and how data were recorded and under what circumstance.
- *Data analysis strategies.* The researcher must provide retrospective accounts of how data were synthesized and identify the general strategies of data analysis and interpretation (McMillan, JH & Schumacher, S. 1993: 387-388).

3.9 LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

Ethical guidelines include, but are not limited to; informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, harm to subjects, and privacy and others. As a researcher, I will have to obtain permission from the ward managers and from the school principals to enter the schools and interview the subjects that I have chosen. I will assure the principals, ward managers and my interviewees that the information which I will gather, shall only be used for study purposes and that their names or the names of their institutions shall not be revealed, but I shall refer to the institutions as BHS 1 and 2 for the Black high schools, and WHS 1 and 2 for the White high schools. I shall explain to them the purpose of enquiry (interview) and make them aware that should they feel uncomfortable at any stage during the interview, they are allowed to withdraw.

3.10 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the researcher described the type of study and the research design that he will be conducting. The process of the interview was detailed as well as how the data which will be collected by means of interviews, will be analysed. It was explained how the researcher will ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Some legal and ethical aspects which the researcher will take into consideration were also laid down.

In Chapter 4 the data will be analyzed and the findings be discussed and interpreted in order to be able to come to some conclusions in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher wants to find out from the data that was gathered what the views of the headmasters, TLOs and RCL members are about. In an analysis of the data he will focus on the following information:

- Whether the RCL members are elected in accordance with the requirements as prescribed by SASA (South African Schools Act);
- Whether the RCL members are being empowered in one way or the other;
- Whether the RCL members perform to their expectations or not;
- How they think the functioning of the RCL can be improved.

4.2 A DISCUSSION OF THE SUMMARISED INTERVIEWS

4.2.1 Interviews with the principals

4.2.1.1 Black High School (BHS 1)

The first school that will be described is the Black High School of which the participants were interviewed. It is situated within the rural area. It is a beautiful school with three-story buildings. The enrolment is estimated around 850 learners with 23 teachers, SMT members included. Most of the learners, $\pm 70\%$ come to school by “bakkies” and about $\pm 5\%$ walk for about 3 to 4 km to school. The remaining 25% stays around the school.

On the third day of December 2004 at 09h20, I interviewed the principal of this school. He said that the RCL in his school does its work because it keeps all the learners informed. Even though they have started the year badly because of certain circumstances, they called them (all learners) together and talked to them.

Everything has now been normalized. What follows here is a verbatim copy of what he said:

“You see now, if a child talks about something un-acceptable to any teacher, he/she would be referred to the RCL. This RCL thing does work; it’s only that our learners are not like the township kids. They are still afraid, thus never do anything bad. When learners sometimes need something urgent, they send the RCL members to tell Mr. Zulu, the TLO. The long and short of it, it is better having them. It is just that it is not common yet to argue a point with the learner in a meeting. They are still afraid to talk straight”.

“I don’t think they prepare well for the meetings. We do give them invitation letters like everyone else, but in a meeting they would just sit and be quiet. Never has a learner opposed anything in a meeting. It boils down to saying they are still not used to it. The environment in which we grow up has that influence that you don’t look an adult in the eye, nor do you oppose them even when you feel that you do not agree with him/her; you just keep quiet. They still have that”.

“Yes, it would perhaps be better if their term of office was longer because this year you work with one child who is perhaps an introvert because of his/her fear for the adults. Next year, when he is starting to get used to working with the adults, like we’ve been working with them, their term of office is over and then the other person is elected. It would perhaps be better if the department said that if the learner is still at school, say perhaps he/she was first elected doing Grade 11, no new person should be elected if the child is still willing to continue, you see. I think that would be better and the child would get used to the task because even the adults who are new in the governing council, are just like children. They simply keep quiet, not to mention the women; they really keep quiet, yes.”

4.2.1.2 Interpretation

Once the researcher started interpreting the above mentioned data, the following results came forward:

- Elections - The principal did not seem to have a clue as to how the elections of the RCL members have to be run. He has left everything to the TLO.
- Functioning of the RCL - The principal feels that the presence of the RCL makes his work as the school manager easy, because he does not have to deal with learners directly, but through the TLO and the RCL. He also feels that they are not doing well in formal meetings, but this does not surprise him; he feels that they need some time to adjust into this task.
- Recommendations for improvement - He therefore, recommends that the term of office of the RCL members, especially those learners not in Grade 12, should be made longer. It seems like there was an incident at his school where the RCL members had to come to the rescue of the principal to assist him in restoring order.

4.2.1.3 White High School (WHS 1)

On the 30th of November 2004, I visited the first of the White High Schools in Vryheid, which for the purpose of this study will be referred to as the “White High School 1” (WHS 1). I found out that the senior certificate scripts marking sessions were already underway.

The principal, as the centre manager was willing to meet me, but did not have enough time to talk to me. He gave me the constitution of the RCL for his school and answered a few questions to add or clarify a few things. Remembering that there are only two high schools for Whites in Vryheid, I accepted what he offered me. The constitution is written in Afrikaans. Soon after getting out of his office, I recorded what we had talked about.

I summarized the constitution and his responses as follows:

- All learners are given nomination forms and advised how to fill them in by the TLO. If the number of nominees is more than needed, elections by secret ballot would be carried out. The boys would vote for a boy and the

girls would vote for a girl. Every learner has one vote. That would mean that each class would ultimately elect two learners into the RCL.

- During elections, the official (teacher) conducting the elections, who is usually the TLO, would count the votes. The voting papers would be kept for three months after the elections.
- Although it is written in the constitution of the RCL that committees are formed within the RCL, the principal clearly mentioned that they are not involved in any sport in any way more than being players. He also stated that they are not allowed to interfere as far as teaching and learning is concerned.
- As far as the discipline in the school is concerned, they still have prefects, who are the senior students at school. He stressed that the RCL should not be involved more than conveying the requests and suggestions of the learners to the principal and staff.
- The duties of the TLOs are: to advise learners about elections; to organize the elections; to train the RCL members, which he said that the TLO does during the “activity period?” This is the period during which learners go to sports, choir and other to do computer. Asked what he felt the role of the department should be, the principal said that it should only train the SGB and the TLO and nothing more.

4.2.1.4 Interpretation

- Elections - The TLO announces the dates for the election of the RCL during the morning assembly at the beginning of the year. On the day of the elections learners are given nomination forms and the TLO advises them how they should be filled in. If the number of the nominees exceeds the expected number of the representatives of the class, voting by secret ballot is then conducted.

- Functioning of the RCL - The role of the RCL members is restricted only to conveying requests to the principal and staff. They are not allowed to interfere with teaching and learning. The school has prefects to deal with learner discipline.

4.2.1.5 White High School (WHS 2)

On the same date, the 30th of November; I interviewed the principal of the second White High School (WHS 2) in Vryheid. The school has enrolled black and white learners. This is what the principal had to say:

“The election of the president is through an open selection, anyone can be elected. Up to now it was always a Grade 12 learner. We don’t prescribe to them. I personally don’t have too much of a problem with that. The only problem we have is the last part of the year because then they start writing the exams. We do our selection in the beginning of the year because that is when the Grade 8’s start coming in.”

“In the last term there is not much that is happening in the school because there is only one governing body meeting, so that we are not worrying about all sorts of policies and changes and things.”

“What I also do is whenever there is any change to take place in a school, say in two years we’ve got to change our code of conduct, I would first have a meeting with RCL where the proposed code of conduct will be discussed, the whole code of conduct. I would ask them: Are you happy with this and this? When they say yes, then I can go to the whole school and tell them we’ve discussed this and this with the RCL and they accepted.”

“About 80% of the RCL are strong learners, but you’ve got those few weak ones. And now they must go stand in front of the class and make certain suggestions, and it’s a joke, but fortunately it’s only very, very few times that that happens. That is the weakness that I have seen in this whole thing here.”

If teachers select these learners, and then they do not really represent the class. The classes need to select them. So that is what I say is the biggest problem. Fortunately, it's only a few and they are overruled by the strong ones in a group, so to say."

"The Grade 8 and the Grade 9 are still immature and it is difficult to use them for discipline. I mean they can discipline their own class groups, but the Grade 8's can't discipline the 10, 11 and 12. I mean you can't expect them, so we don't use them for discipline at all."

"We've got the prefect system which we appoint from Grade 12. They look after the discipline in the school, but the RCL, they are there for policy making and making sure about adherence to the code of conduct. They are my ears and my eyes and things on the playground. They pick up certain things and they can send it through via the representatives on the SGB and so it comes to me. The system is good, but the Grade 8's and 9's, I think it is their very early growing age but they can influence their peer group. We are lucky that the SGB members are very strong members so their influence can go through the whole RCL."

4.2.1.6 Interpretation

- Elections - All learners are informed by means of announcements and notices about the election dates of the RCL members. The principal is not involved in the process of election; this is carried out by the TLO. For as long as they have had the RCL, the president thereof is a Grade 12 learner. Elections are conducted at the beginning of the academic year, when the Grade 8's start coming in.
- Functioning of the RCL - The RCL members are an instrument through which the principal reaches the learner constituency whenever there is a change that is to occur at school. The RCL members liaise between the learners and the school management and governance structures. On

the other hand there are prefects in this school which are responsible for learner discipline.

4.2.2 Interviews with the TLO's

4.2.2.1 Interview with TLO of BHS 1

I then talked to the TLO of the Black High School (BHS 1) on 29 November 2004. The interview was held in the Deputy Principal's quiet office.

"In a way each class elects two people. We have 16 classes so that means 32 learners form the RCL. They were told that a class representative does not automatically qualify to be an SGB member. If a class feels that they need to elect another learner to represent them in SGB, they could."

"Two people per class mean one boy one girl; but there are some classes that elect two girls if they don't see any boy capable enough and there are some classes that elect two boys if they don't see any girl capable enough to represent them. Actually fourteen classes should have participated in elections because we have two Grade 12 classes and four of the RCL members come from Grade 12. Out of which, what made me to oppose this RCL formation more was that the president of the RCL was from Grade 12 and that can not happen. I did not want to embarrass them. I then said they should be additional members, but would not vote, they can only raise concerns but they will not be actively involved, because they would be embarrassed if I simply said they must go out of the RCL."

"As per meeting we had in Maritzburg, Grade 12 learners do not form part of the RCL members because the RCL does not deal with matters of the current year, but the following year when they (Grade 12) will have left. So obviously, matriculants do not qualify to be in the RCL executive; that is what we were taught."

"Now at the stage when I came on as a TLO, the RCL had to forward the mission statement of this school to the learners because you'll note that children normally

want to exercise what they call their rights at the expense of parents' rights and teachers' rights. So this mission statement contains the school policy and procedures which were accepted by the RCL of that time, teachers of that time and parents of that time. So we started by revisiting the mission statement, forwarded it to teachers and parents. The parents accepted it; then we forwarded it back to learners so that they would know what their responsibilities are. Unfortunately the mission statement that was presented to the parents was written in English and the parents said that it sounds funny; the mission statement presented to them was written in English, whereas we knew very well that they are Zulu speaking. To them it would not be fair that we wrote the mission statement and interpreted it for them, because we could only say what felt good to us and what we liked and what supports us. So they wanted it translated into IsiZulu, so that they could take it home and read. Then they could talk about what they read for themselves."

"Up to this far the RCL is not very much involved with the teaching and learning processes because even those who represent learners in the governing council, they simply sit there and keep quiet till the end of the meeting. They do not actively participate. I only had one case when one learner came to ask me why doesn't the RCL, after our meetings come to give all learners feedback. For instance, the meeting in question is the one in which the chairperson of the governing council was elected for the term 2004-2005. That only involved the governing council and there only the executive members, so that when the whole the SGB is called, the new SGB would be introduced. There is no need to go back and call the student body meeting to tell them just that. I said to the RCL president: "Is there anything else you want to tell learners?" He said no, and then I said there is no need to call the student body meeting just for that. To me it was not important or valuable enough to call the whole student body meeting and eventually when the need arise to call them into a meeting; they will not come because they know that sometimes you call them for petty issues."

They are also involved in extra-curricular activities. Usually the main sporting code here at school is soccer; so the boys would see to it that the soccer kit is all right; washed, collected, even the whistles and the balls must be there. Because I

said to them there is an education committee which would specialize in this field, who would look after A, B, C, and D. There should also be an entertainment committee within the governing council which would look after this and that. There should be a sports committee which would look after A, B, C, and D. They said how about SCM? I said that I include that under entertainment. Because we are running away from church because we know that it is not the place for play. The entertainment committee shall include religious activities. I could not have the SCM committee because there might be members in RCL who are not religious; in other words that is why it is included in the entertainment committee. In other words, the entertainment committee shall have more members than the sports committee and the education committee. So the sports committee has been active in soccer. In entertainment we did not organize any special function or whatever, but the chairperson of the entertainment committee eventually is what they use to call a born again Christian. So he has developed a group which renders musical items during assembly.”

What happened in the election is there are three streams here at school: pure science with Physics, Mathematics, Biology and Geography. The second stream only differs from the first in that they take Agricultural Science in stead of Physical Science. The third stream is the Humanities and there is a Commercial stream too. To address your question directly: Each class in these four streams elects two learners to represent them in the RCL.”

“We feel that the RCL should have funds allocated to it; at least 10 cents from the fees paid by each learner at school. The RCL must have its own finance committee. All these functions that we organize should be funded from this coffer. Of course, money will be kept by the school; it can not be kept by learners. We would be teaching self-sufficiency. It is now difficult and they are afraid to come and tell us that they want to stage a concert if they don't know what their responsibilities are. Obviously, even I call governing council meetings they fail to raise their concerns because there are only elders in there. I happen to sit in the governing council meetings representing teachers. I meet them there. Even if I tell them that, no, you should raise your concerns, more especially when student affairs are being discussed you've got the right to be wrong and to be right.”

“I invite them to the meetings by giving them letters of invitation and we discuss a few things before the meeting; but in the meeting they still have that fear that they cannot speak in front of the principal or the honorable member of the society. They still need to be empowered to overcome that fear. I don’t know how because their term of office is only a year. If at least it was allowed for the president to hold office for three years, he would perhaps develop gradually as a member and become aware of what is expected of him/her. With such a short term of office, by the time when they start to develop confidence, they must go.”

“I did not have time to develop them this year but I projected that for next year, because then I will have the time. I only became the TLO late in this year, and there is not much activity in the third and fourth quarters. We concentrate more on the exams.”

“Because most learners travel by bakkies to and from school and I can not meet them on Saturday mornings. I can not meet them after school hours, they will miss their transport. So this creates a problem for me. When I have to meet them I have to ask the SMT to shorten the teaching/learning periods which is also not good for me because as an MTLO (Master Teacher-liaison Officer), I had to go out many times training other TLOs and when I come back I must use extra time if I want to finish off the Grade 11 and 12 syllabi before the trial examination in September. At the end of the day, I don’t have enough time. I only squeeze in during break times to have meetings with the RCL. I do not want to lie and say I had time to meet the RCL because I didn’t.”

4.2.2.2 Interpretation

- Elections - The TLO was elected in the middle of the year, during May. When he took the position, the RCL had already been formed. He feels it was not properly elected because according to him the Grade 12 learners should not have been included the RCL.
- Functioning of the RCL - Because it was towards the end of the second term, he (the TLO) was left with only a month, so he could not get far with

the RCL. During the third term all teachers need to focus their energy into finishing off the syllabus. They only managed to draw up the mission statement. The RCL in this school is involved in sports wherein they have to ensure that the balls and the attire are kept in good condition, always.

His observation of the RCL is that they do not actively participate in meetings, especially at the governing body level.

- RCL empowerment - The TLO could not carry out his duty of empowering the RCL because of the following reasons: He was elected into the position only late in the year. He is a Grade 11 and 12 subject teacher which forces him to spend all the time he has at his disposal finishing the syllabus and preparing the learners finely for the trial and final examinations. Some of the members of the RCL stay far away from the school; so they are not available after hours.
- Recommendations for improvement - He recommends that the president should hold office for three consecutive years. This would help him/her to learn more about his/her responsibilities and overcome fear. He recommends that the school should budget for the RCL activities, the funds of which would be kept by the school. The RCL treasurer would give the report on the expenditure thereof.

4.2.2.3 Interview with TLO of BHS 2

On the 6th of December 2004, I interviewed the TLO of the school described below, BHS 2. This is a combined school. All learners in this school stay far from school, with the exception of only a handful. About 85% of the learners walk a distance of not less than 5 km to school everyday. Most of them have to cross wide rivers which are very dangerous after heavy rains.

I had given him leading questions. He prepared and recorded all his responses by himself. I had to listen to the responses and go back to him, if I had follow up questions and time allowed him.

Preparing learners for elections – “It is my duty to prepare learners as classes and constituency for the RCL elections. When I prepare learners both as RCL nominees and constituencies, I highlight the following factors which include inter alia: Two class leaders of different sex, namely a lady and a lad shall be nominated and shall automatically become RCL members.

- *Constituency and nominees are given two days to identify the potential leaders and to manifest either orally or in writing for the said class positions.*
- *The constituency vote for the class leaders in secret ballot.*
- *The class leaders automatically become eligible to contest as office bearers for the portfolios namely: President, vice-president, secretary general and treasurer.*
- *All the elected class leaders are work shopped by the TLO to campaign for the said portfolios. Their campaign is allowed for five workdays and should strictly end on 31 January of each academic year.*
- *On the first academic day of February, the entire student body which comprises Grades 8 to 12 vote for nominees into aforesaid positions.”*

“It is the hectic job for the TLO to prepare learners since most of them are not versed with the election procedures. It seems that it is much easier for those in urban areas to prepare since some learners have some knowledge with regard to provincial and national elections. It is quite problematic in rural areas since some learners are also scared to express themselves orally and most of them are not used to public speakers.”

“As a TLO I’m responsible for RCL empowerment and it is also my duty to empower RCL, which implies that I need to enlighten them with regard to their rights, particularly those that contribute positively towards their well-being; hence I quote some sections, subsections, paragraphs and sub-paragraphs from a supreme law of RSA, namely the constitution. When I empower them, I highlight that it is the duty of the State of the government to provide education for its citizens. I also tell them that as RCL members they are the mouthpiece and watchdogs for their constituency, namely the learners, and they should observe that other learners are treated fairly, squarely and with dignity with regard to

religious practices, teaching and learning activities, culturally and extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. I also advise them about the prevention of HIV and AIDS; however, it seems that the learners are not yet versed with regard to such RCL roles, since some members of RCL are unassertive in such a way that they bunk classes, they are victims of teenage pregnancy, they lack punctuality and they fail to conduct themselves acceptably and respectfully. I also tell them that should they have problems, they need to interact with me as TLO and they need to talk to their teachers before they proceed to the head of the institution, who is the principal.”

“It seems they are not yet versed since when there are some problems, they seem to ignore the protocol which goes: Class leader, TLO, Phase Manager and finally the school manager. I think in the next two years it will be much easier since we shall have some RCL members who are versed in RCL issues. Definitely we shall make it stronger and better in the next two years. Thank you.”

“My third topic is the RCL contribution in school governance:

Currently RCL is less effective in school governance since they are not exposed to the most of the acts which govern the school as the government unity, for instance they are aware that corporeal punishment has been outlawed, but RCL fail to protect other learners or themselves when educators administer it as a corrective measure. In rural areas RCL seem to fail even to deal with educators who are inefficient for instance those who bunk classes and those educators who spend few minutes in teaching-learning activities and subsequently divert to social issues and those educators who find it difficult to teach some sections of the prescribed academic work.”

“RCL is expected in terms of the school statute to be a submissive body since they are not allowed to take decisions or to apply any corrective measures to their superiors, namely, teachers. It is also quite questionable that they are required to hold their meetings in the presence of the TLO at all times. The question is how they could discuss their secrets if the TLO is always in their meetings. The RCL is therefore expected to be submissive and toothless body which is at all times

expected to accept what their superiors say and not to question or apply any strategic management style they could have.”

4.2.3 Interviews with RCL members

4.2.3.1 Interview with RCL members of BHS 1

On the 5th of December 2004, the TLO of the school organized two RCL members who have been doing Grade 11 in 2004. Because this was a Sunday, we could not get the class at school and I could not take them for too long away from their parents who had just met me for the first time. Parents and learners could only trust that I meant no harm because their teacher, the TLO was with me.

I used my car as the venue for this interview. The place was not quiet enough, so we had to keep it short.

“Elections - When RCL members are elected, four names are proposed, two boys and two girls, thereafter voting starts. The four people, whose names were proposed, go outside so that they may not influence voting. The successful candidates are one boy and one girl who get more votes. These become RCL members. Teachers advise us that the people we elect must not be the ones that we look down upon or those that we want to play for fools. We should elect people that we trust and that will help us. Each class will elect one boy and one girl. In electing the RCL members, we look for people we trust. Because the person we elect will have to control the class, it should be the person who respects teachers and does not give teachers problems. It never happens that a naughty learner is elected.”

“The time to meet with TLO depends on when he needs us and when is he free. Mostly it is during breaks that he calls us into one classroom where we can talk. We first talk to the TLO then go to the classes we represent, because each class is represented to give them feedback and then again take the responses to the TLO.”

“Our duties are like when one learner is sick in class; you do not just look and keep quiet. You must go and report to the teachers and maybe get some pills. If he/she is seriously ill, we find another learner to accompany him/her home. When there is fighting going on in class, you must go and stop it or go to report to the teachers.”

“Regarding discipline, teachers first go into class telling that the rate of late coming has increased. We therefore, report late comers to the teachers. Some learners do co-operate but others don’t. They are stubborn and this makes our task difficult.”

“We would like the SMT to support us by ensuring that the school rules are strictly adhered to; such that when a learner breaks any of the school rules, gets severely punished. Perhaps that could make learners fear breaking school rules and we might get some respect.”

“We have never attended any workshop away from school but we would love to.”

“At the beginning of the year we are still afraid to perform our duties, but we gradually overcome it as the year progresses. We have never been in SGB meetings, but we wouldn’t be afraid to raise opinions if we know what we want to achieve.”

4.2.3.2 Interpretation

- Elections - Firstly, the names are proposed. Learners whose names have been proposed are asked to leave the class so that they may not influence the voting. Voting then starts. One boy and one girl are elected per class. Learners are advised by the teachers before the election process commences that they should elect the learner whom they trust; who respects teachers. They have never elected a naughty child. The number of RCL members is determined by the number of classes from Grade 8 to 12 in a school.

- Functioning of the RCL - Their functions in class are mostly those of the prefects i.e. attending to the sick fellow learners and stopping fighting in the classrooms. The school informs all learners in a school about the developments through the RCL.

4.2.3.3 Interview with RCL members of BHS 2

On the 6th of December 2004, I interviewed the RCL members of the Black High School 2 (BHS 2), a Grade 11 boy and a Grade 12 girl. This is what they had to say:

“Elections - The TLO goes into each class conducting elections of RCL. We vote. Voting is by secret ballot. The TLO counts votes. The names of people with more votes are written on the board. These people will be requested to leave the class. Voting by secret ballot continues, only now for people whose names appear on the board. It is usually about three boys and three girls. One boy and a girl who obtained the most number of votes become president and the deputy president. We do not have specific qualities for the elections. We only elect the person that is not shy, that will be able to lead us in everything that we want as a class.”

“The role of the TLO - The TLO helps us when we have a problem with a certain teacher and we can't approach him/her, we report to the TLO. He will then talk to the teacher on our behalf.”

“Duties - Our duty is to convey the complaints of classes to teachers who do not treat the class well, so that whatever bad thing he/she is doing, whether it is bad remarking or something, must stop so that we can work well and respect one another. Regarding extra-curricular activities, we wanted to organize a tour this year, but the person who was given charge in sports is shy and could not take the initiative. We could not take the lead in her presence because we also have our responsibilities.”

“Assistance by SMT - We would like the principal and SMT to support us in our learning. We wish that they could organize teachers from other schools to come

and help us in those subjects that we have problems with so that we gain more knowledge.”

“Addressing other learners - We get time to address the classes during the study time although some learners stay outside the classrooms at that time and we cannot force them to stay in classrooms. Usually those are the people who complain about the functioning of the RCL representatives of their classes. Some learners co-operate, some do not. We as the RCL members are committed and dedicated to our work with the exception of a few like our secretary who just wouldn't take minutes in any meeting. No one helped in taking minutes. Our TLO was not fully aware of that or should I say that he did not follow that up. He just said that he will continue working with those who are willing to work.”

4.2.3.4 Interpretation

- Elections - Elections of the RCL members are delegated to the TLO at this school. We do not hear that the TLO has time to prepare learners for the election process, which is why they do not have a clear idea of what kind of a person they should elect.
- Functioning of the RCL - The learners seem to be willing to learn, that is why they will tell their TLO if there is something going in class and that hinders learning. Every member of the RCL has a specific role to play, but the TLO does not follow on if the respective roles are carried. The study time at school is used by the RCL members to address the classes on certain issues, but there is not teacher to help them in controlling the classes which leads to their tasks being not well executed.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW DATA

In conclusion, the following summary can be made on the data that was analysed in the chapter above. The three main categories of participants were the principals, the TLOs and the members of the RCL's. In each of the instances a

description of the context and the environment of the school were given in order to form the background against which the gathered information could be interpreted, whether being it a Black, White or combined type of school. Once the data was written down, an interpretation by the researcher followed, and here again, a categorical structure came to the fore in the themes of taking care of the elections first, then looking at the functioning of the RCL's in the various schools, and closing with some recommendations made by the respondents of how they perceive the activities of the RCL's should function.

All famous researchers usually classify to clarify, and what follows here is an effort to classify the material that was described above in order to clarify and make meaning out of the data that was given so abundantly and richly by our more than willing participants.

4.3.1 The general perceptions of the school principals

- Elections - Principals feel that they should not get involved with the election process of the RCL's, simply because they do not know the procedures and practices of the process.
- Functioning and duties of the RCL's - Principals feel that the RCL's should be their watchdogs or else rather do nothing at all. They neither guide nor motivate the TLO in performing his/her duties. They don't follow up on the duties of the TLO. He/she (the TLO) is all by himself/herself. Principals in White Schools still prefer the prefect system to the RCL. They feel that the term of office given to RCL's is too short for them to get anything worthwhile done.

4.3.2 The general perceptions of the TLO's

- Elections - TLOs are teachers, mostly for Grade 12 classes. They need to spend more time teaching. They therefore, do not have enough time to go from class to class preparing learners for the elections of the RCL members; all they do is conduct the election process without any election campaign.

- Functioning of the TLOs - Empowering RCL members is their main function. They usually use their break times to hold meetings with the RCL, which make the task of the TLO a very difficult one. They cannot disrupt teaching and learning, nor can they force or request learners to stay behind after school hours to hold meetings with them.
- Recommendations – The TLO needs training himself, especially in policy on the implementation of RCL's. It is also urgently important to be knowledgeable in the physical, psychological, social, cognitive and even spiritual developmental stages of the adolescents they are working with. Only when he/she knows their learners well can they assist them in becoming the leaders they are supposed to be. It is also recommended that the TLO has more “free” to manage the process of running the RCL's effectively.

4.3.3 The general perceptions of the RCL members

- Elections - A campaign is conducted before the elections wherein the TLO advises the learners about the kind of a person they need to look for when electing. The appropriate candidate will be the one who is trusted by other learners; respects teachers; and is not too shy; etc. During the process of election, four names are proposed; two boys and two girls. The four people, whose names were proposed, have to go outside so that they may not influence the voting process. Voting then starts. Voting is by secret ballot. The TLO counts the votes. Eventually one boy and girl are elected in each class.
- Functions and duties of the RCL members - The functioning of the RCL is confined to conveying complaints of the classes to the teacher; attending to sick fellow learners; resolving and reporting fights. They feel that some learners are co-operative whilst others are not. They feel that in some instances very little is done by the RCL members. More time is spent on guiding them (the RCL members), than what they yield in terms of service, and they find that some RCL members are not good examples to other

learners at school. As far as the RCL empowerment is concerned, the RCL members are summoned into a meeting whenever the TLO is free to attend to them; this is mainly during the break time. Those RCL members that I spoke to had never attended any workshop over and above their meetings with the TLO.

- Recommendation for better performance of the RCL's
Learners feel that if the SMT can support them by ensuring that every learner at school adheres strictly to school rules and regulations, their functioning will improve.

4.4 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

It is difficult to expect the schools (farm schools) to involve learners uniformly in school governance. Schools interpret the policy in different ways, therefore they will implement it in different fashions. Principals of schools have to be invited into the workshops, so that the suspicions and fears that some principals have that involving learners in school governance will make schools unruly, will be proved to be untrue.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the final conclusions will be drawn from the findings from both the literature review and the empirical investigation on the role played by the learners in the school governance. Together with the conclusions, the recommendations will serve as guidelines for effective future involvement of learners in school governance.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

In Chapter 1, a comprehensive orientation and background to the research was provided. The problem statement was formulated by research questions of which the central question was: How can the involvement of learners in school governance be made effective?

The following questions came to the fore:

- What is the purpose of RCL?
- How are the RCL members empowered?
- What roles and functions do these council members perform?
- How can the functioning of the RCL be improved?

The literature review in Chapter 2 yielded the findings that the purpose of the RCL's is provided in the Policy that is prescribed by law and needs to be abided by. As described in Chapter 3 the research interviews were conducted and the categories that were identified from the data on the Policy confirmed these facts and were eventually categorized and clustered into the following themes, i.e. the election itself of members of the RCL, participation in the election, the nominations, voting procedures, the electoral officer, etc. From the data analysis in Chapter 4 the categories of empowerment of the RCL members ascended to the surface, as well as the suggestions on the improvement of the functioning of

the RCL as a governing council for the learners. The importance of the Policy and the themes that emerged from the research can never be under-estimated and therefore the following categories are highlighted in the final conclusions and recommendations of this chapter, Chapter 5:

5.3 CONFIRMATION OF THE POLICY

The main theme of the elections and everything in connection therewith came forward as the most problematic of all the issues identified by the respondents. This is what they felt should happen:

- The ***election of members*** of the RCL's should take place on a date determined by the principal of the school. The election should take place during the first term of each year. RCL elections are held once a year as the term of office of the RCL members is one year. All learners in Grade 8 or higher classes are allowed to participate in RCL elections. Elections will be conducted in each class group separately, for example if there are six classes in Grade 9 then there will be six separate elections. The learners should be given sufficient notice of the date, time and venue of the elections for each class group. Learners can be informed verbally or notices could be displayed in prominent places in the school. The election should be regarded as an opportunity to educate the learners about elections, electoral procedures and democracy in practice. Classes should be encouraged to conduct some form of election campaign with speeches, election manifestos, placards and so on.
- The first part of the election meeting sets out to get nominations. Learners may nominate representatives for the election immediately before the election is to take place. ***Voting*** is by secret ballot. Each learner has one vote for the election of a representative for his or her class. A representative is elected if he or she receives the majority of votes in the class. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, the name of the candidate with the least number of votes must be deleted from the list of candidates, and thereafter voting must be repeated. This procedure must

continue until a candidate is elected. If there is a tie between two candidates, the representative must be determined by the lot.

- The school principal or the deputy principal or any teacher appointed by the principal, is the **electoral officer** in charge of the election of the RCL. The electoral officer may appoint as many assistant electoral officers as required; this must be done in writing and the electoral officer must sign an oath of confidentiality. The electoral officer must be familiar with aspects of the legislation, regulation, departmental circulars and procedures relating to school elections. The electoral officer should consult with the relevant stakeholders before the setting the date for the election. The electoral officer must do the following:
 - explain the procedure for the casting of votes;
 - ensure that every voter is given a ballot paper;
 - allow learners to cast their votes, ensuring that the procedures outlined are followed;
 - check that all learners who wish to do so, have cast their votes and then declare the voting closed.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESEARCH

5.4.1 On the Policy

It is an obligation that all schools offering Grade 8 or higher classes establish the RCL; however, from the findings it appeared that some of the farm schools visited by the researcher, have not yet established the RCL, because the principal fears of what would happen to the smooth running of the school when learners are given power. Each class is expected to elect at least one representative, but if the class consists of both boys and girls, it is recommended that one boy and one girl be elected as a class representative. It is further stated that the learner representatives who play a very vital role in school governance will be those who are members of the SGB. These learner representatives in the SGB are elected by those learners who have been elected from the classes. It is important to note

that learners who are elected to the SGB need not necessarily be members of the RCL; in other words these learners form a link between the entire constituency of learners, the RCL, the SMT and the SGB.

The RCL has to perform some duties and responsibilities which include the following:

- to promote the culture of learning in their school
- to support the principal, teachers and the non-teaching personnel in the performance of their duties
- to help organize the cultural and sporting events

Each school unpacks these duties to suit its settings and to make them fairly easy for the learners to execute. Below is the example of how they can be unpacked:

- they represent learners in the adoption of the learners' Code of Conduct by the governing body. The RCL is supposed to support this Code of Conduct which sets out to establish discipline in the school and an environment that is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process;
- they are the link between their constituencies and the School Management Team and the School Governing Body;
- they keep learners informed about events in the school and in the community;
- they encourage good relationships between learners, educators and non-educators.

When performing their duties, it should be borne in mind that they do not substitute the teachers. The RCL may be involved in the discipline of other learners, but they need to be trained very well to be able to handle it. The RCL members can only report late comers to the class teachers or talk to the fellow classmates who come late. To be able to do that, they themselves have to be punctual at all time and they should observe the Code of Conduct of learners at all times.

In order for the learners to be able to execute their duties, they need the guidance of the TLO. That is why it is important that the TLO be the person whom learners can trust and open up to.

One of the differences between the SRCs, prefects and the RCL is that the former two were nominated or picked by the headmaster or the class teacher; whereas, the headmaster and or the class teacher has no say as to who should be elected into this council.

5.4.2 On the empowerment of RCL's

TLOs are supposed to unpack their duties and functions. They need to simplify the functions of the RCL. They need to guide them on daily, if not weekly basis as to what they should be doing. It appears that TLOs do not have sufficient time to do that, because they are more often the Grade 11 and 12 subject teachers, who have to rush into finishing the syllabus for the said classes. Even when they do make some time to meet the RCL, other teachers need them (learners) in class to make up for the time taken by workshops and cluster meetings. More so, because in the farm schools teachers believe that learners need to be with the teacher at all times if they are to perform well in their Senior Certificate examinations. This also becomes the factor during the third and fourth terms of the year; teachers and learners focus more on their academic work. It thus becomes rare for the RCL members in especially Grades 11 and 12 to be invited into the SGB meetings. The RCL meetings come to an end. Most TLOs will have finished their task when the RCL has been established; the rest is for the principal to run. With so many responsibilities, the principal has little time to empower learners in RCL.

5.4.3 On the roles and functions that RCL members have to perform

The majority of the farm schools use the RCL as the prefects or the SRC. One would then ask oneself if there were any need at all to change the SRCs to RCL's? Sometimes the functioning of the RCL is hindered by the commitment of teachers to teach the African child. This leaves no time for the RCL to listen to the

wishes, complaints and contributions of learners. There is also no time to give the feedback from the SGB meetings through to the other learners at school.

There is less time available in the year to allow the functioning of the RCL; this is only before the preparations for the trial and final examinations. Because most learners in the farm schools reside in the poverty stricken areas, they cannot have money for transport to and from schools on weekends, over and above the fare for the monthly coupons. That's why they cannot come to school for empowerment meetings on week ends.

The following have been found to be the general activities of the RCL in farm schools:

- classroom management - making sure that there is no noise in class in the absence of the subject teacher who may be attending a development workshop or is just relaxing in the staffroom, chatting, sorting out fights that occurred in the classroom when the learners were left alone all by themselves;
- attending to sick classmates;
- controlling late coming and
- marking the class attendance register.

The involvement of learners (RCL) in decision-making regarding extra-curricular activities was found to be very minimal.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE RESEARCH

The following recommendations can be made that will hopefully be a valuable contribution to the implementation of a Policy that could mean a lot in the improvement of the learners' leadership skills and their development towards becoming empowered citizens of our democracy.

5.5.1 On the Policy

The researcher recommends that the SMTs, including the principals of High Schools (secondary and combined schools) be called into a workshop where the duties and the functions of the RCL according to the Policy will be unpacked. It is absolutely compulsory that every school principal, and for that matter, every teacher should be enlightened and equipped on the functioning of the RCL's in order to cultivate good teaching and learning in the school.

5.5.2 On the empowerment of RCL's

The following recommendations will, in the researcher's point of view, go a long way in assisting with the empowerment of the RCL members:

- The term of office of the RCL need to be revised; it actually needs to be extended into at least two years. In this way learners will have time to learn from and correct their mistakes.
- Provision from the school funds should be made for the RCL to attend SGB and parents' meetings which are planned for the weekends.
- The TLO should be allowed a certain number of hours less in his/her workload than the rest of teachers on the same post level to allow him/her enough time to hold meetings regularly with the RCL.
- Every school where the RCL exists should have a simple plan of action for the term, quarter or year which will be followed by the RCL and the one which the headmaster/principal will be able to use when monitoring the functioning of the RCL.
- As the governing body members are required to attend development workshops away from their schools, and thereafter be reimbursed by their treasurer, the same should occur with the RCL. This could help the TLO to organize some time to hold some development workshops with the RCL when they will not be required to be in classes, preferably on weekends.

5.5.3 On the roles and functions that RCL members have to perform

The TLO together with the principal have to sit down and simplify the role of the RCL in terms of what is applicable and practical within their institution. The roles and functions must be assigned to the different RCL members according to their level of maturity and intelligence or according to their ages. RCL members or the SGB members representing learners should not be made to discipline other learners in any way than peer mentor, at least not when the teacher is present at school. If they have to deal with discipline of learners in every respect, this could result in serious conflicts.

5.5.4 On improving the functioning of the RCL

As a researcher, I feel that the support from all staff members will help improve the functioning of the RCL. Staff members should see the RCL as belonging to the school and contributing in the smooth running of the school, rather than seeing it as a responsibility for one person only. Teachers will allow these learners some time to attend meetings and be understanding when there is a need to give them an extension to finish off some tasks given while they were in a meeting.

The school principal must address the parents in meetings about the role of the RCL; in this way parents will understand why these learners have to remain behind on some days or even be at school when all others who are in similar classes are not.

There should be a form of assessment of the functioning of the RCL, done not only by the SMT but also by other learners in the class, carried out at least twice a year. This assessment could help revive the council even when they carelessly fade away. This assessment would also play a role in the elections of the succeeding year. Experienced and empowered learners can be re-elected because their working has been witnessed by the rest of the class.

5.6 FINAL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, a summary of the research project has been given. The findings as well as the recommended guidelines for the involvement of learners in school governance were also presented.

The Representative Council of Learners is the official body representing learners in the governance of the school. The principal has to see to it that it is involved in decision making, i.e. those members of the RCL who form part of the SGB, should always be invited to the SGB meetings. The TLO has a duty of capacitating the RCL even though he/she is the subject teacher with as much the load as all other teachers at similar post level. The principal must see to it that the TLO does his/her duty in this regard.

The Department of Education must first ensure that schools establish RCL's as they should. It must also not only train TLOs but also ensure that the principals are empowered regarding the establishment and the functioning of the RCL. In this way, and in this way alone could disciplinary problems be addressed and the culture of teaching and learning be rekindled in our schools.

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