Management and Leadership Roles of Learner Representative Council Members at Schools

Selma Ndeyapo Kandjengo
Directorate of Adult Education
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Namibia

Elock Emvula Shikalepo
Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning
Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia

Abstract: Public schools in Namibia are mandated to establish a learner leadership structure to assist with the management and leadership functions of schools. The purpose of the study was to establish the management and leadership functions of Learner Representative Council members in schools, with the aim of raising awareness among school communities about the exact functions of the Learner Representative Councils members in schools. A case study design was used for the study, whose sample comprised of a school principal, teachers and learners of Oshana Region. All participants were selected using purposive sampling. The data was collected with document analysis, semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, observation and journaling, and analysed by establishing themes.

The study found out that the management and leadership roles of Learner Representative Council members relate to the supervision of study and tests at school, monitoring of other learners at school and leading in organising social events and activities at school. In addition, learner leaders were also charged with the responsibility of being a conduit for communications between teachers and learners at school. The study established that Learner Representative Council members have proven management and leadership functions at school, for which the school should afford learner leaders an opportunity to exercise their management and leadership responsibilities. The study recommended that school authorities should educate the learner community about the necessity, presence and roles of the Learner Representative Council to ensure less resistance from learners towards learner leaders for a smooth execution of the management and leadership functions by learner leaders.

Keywords: Learner leadership, Learner representative council, Leadership, Management, learner voice, learner leader

1. Background of the study

In the era of a post-independent Namibia, the government has started with various reforms to unify the educational system and redress the imbalances that characterised education during the pre-independence era. The educational reforms endeavours led to the formulation of a policy document called *'Towards Education For All'* (Namibia. MEC, 1993), which guides the education sector in the country through four major goals of education, namely; access, equity, quality and democracy. The policy document further calls for democracy in education and a democratic education system organised around broader participation in decision-making for both parents, learners and teachers (Namibia. MEC, 1993). In addition to the policy document, another statutory instrument was formulated to reform education, the now revised Namibian Basic Education Act No. 3 of 2020, which among other pillars, calls for the establishment of Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) in all government-funded schools (Namibia. MoEAC, 2020). The LRC is the highest body of elected leaders of learners at school that liaise between learners and senior school management. The body symbolises democracy at school and encourage participation of learners in school activities which align with policy imperatives.

In support of leadership development, current leadership theories also embrace the participation of learners in the governance and management of schools. The theory of distributed leadership advocates for shared leadership by multiple sources in organisation (Gronn, 2008). The distributed leadership theory make a provision for all stakeholders, including learners in a school context, to share leadership responsibilities and work towards a common goal. Distributed leadership nurtures leadership development among learners and provides a platform for learners' voice to be heard (Grant & Nekondo, 2016). It is essential to clarify the concepts of management and leadership that learners are expected to be involved in at school level.

Leadership is associated with change, while management is linked with maintenance (Bush, 2003; Spillane, 2005). Similarly, leadership is tied to values of an institution while management is connected to

implementation (Bush, 2003). In addition, Christie's (2010) distinction between the two concepts is fairly different as it focuses on the human element, revealing that management is positional and thus tied to a position that one holds, whereas leadership can be practised by anyone as it is not reserved for positions. Leadership is about influencing people to bring about the required change, whereas management is about executing the activities. Hence, leadership is human oriented, whereas management is task-oriented. In the context of learner leadership, learner leaders have both a human and task-oriented functions to deal with in schools.

Although there is a clear-cut distinction between leadership and management, the two concepts have an "intimate connection" and a great deal of similarity as far as inspiring as well as directing people to the purpose of the organisation is concerned" (Bush, 2003, p. 8). Both leadership and management are equally vital if schools are to function efficiently to achieve the set goals. The school which is poorly managed, but yet has a strong leader, may fail just like a school which is over-managed but under-led, may lose any sense of the school goals. Thus, a balance in terms of leadership and management is needed for an institution to reach its goals and objectives (Bush, 2003). Learner leaders should thus have both management and leadership functions in schools.

Giving learners a voice to be heard in schools through learner leadership structures presents numerous benefits (Mitra, 2007; Hine, 2011). Learner leadership has the potential to improve learners' academic results and school reconstruction through shared leadership. Giving learners an opportunity to lead and hearing learners' voice in school affairs, engenders a sense of pride in their school as they start to feel that they are really part of the school community and their contribution is valued and counted on. Learner leadership can also provide adults as senior school management partners, with valuable insights into the dynamics of the school through the lens of learners. The valuable insights helps to ensure a balanced and holistic understanding of the dynamics facing the school. Scholarships have proven that learners who have limited opportunities for democratic voice in the educational process, feel their lives, beliefs and hopes are undervalued by school authorities and hence, develop hostility towards schooling (Grant, 2015). Learner voice thus plays a significant role, as it offers real democratic participation and values within schools, leading to active learner participation in the development of their schools.

It becomes clear that learner leadership is an essential component of school management and leadership. Even though the significance of involving learners in the management and leadership of the school is well established in literature, little is known about the exact managerial and leadership roles of learner leaders. This gap necessitated this empirical study to establish the specific management and leadership roles of learner leaders with the aim of raising awareness among school communities about the exact and contextual functions of the Learner Representative Councils members in schools.

The next section presents the methodology used for the empirical study.

2. Research methodology

The methods and techniques used for the study are described according to the following outline:

2.1 Research design

A qualitative research approach was used for the study, whose empirical investigation made use of a case study design, as an intensive analysis and description of a single phenomenon for enriched understanding of what is going on with the phenomenon being studied (Simons, 2009; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The case study design was an ideal research design to use as the researchers intended to get intensive description of the management and leadership roles of LRC members. Case study designs enabled researchers to acquire a comprehensive understanding of how participants relates to the subject being studied, and how they interacted with each other in their specific setting (Maree, 2007; Simons, 2009). The interaction with different teachers and learners brought multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of learner leadership and management roles in a real-life context.

Since case study help researchers set boundary for their studies (Berg, 2001), the researchers were able to focus on a particular, specific group of learners which was the LRC members. The set boundaries helped researchers to concentrate and focus on the participants and the essential functions of the members of the LRC. In addition, the flexibility inherent in case study designs (Maree, 2007), allowed the study to be conducted for numerous days and collected data at different times and places during the research for richer analysis and enriched understanding of the phenomenon which was studied. The flexibility also allowed researchers to use multiple sources of data and different techniques in the data gathering process, which enhanced the validity of the data collected and subsequent results obtained.

Despite the benefits associated with the case study, case study investigations are associated with certain limitations. The findings of case studies cannot be generalised (Maree, 2007). This limitation does not apply to this study as the researchers had no intentions to quantify the findings and generalise findings over large populations. The findings were meant for application in the population from which the data was collected. Notwithstanding the centrality of the findings for the cases studied, the researchers have provided a thick

description as a measure of minimising limitations related to generalisation of findings (Rule & John, 2011). In reporting the research process, researchers provided adequate and rich information related to the research processes, findings and conclusions to enable other scholars and readers gain a level of reader-determined transferability, if they believe that the research setting and processes, as well as the findings established resonates quite well with other cases familiar to them. Reader-determined transferability implies that readers can infer from the detailed descriptions of the study as provided by researchers, whether the findings are applicable to their settings, without necessarily being provided with statistical accounts which are traditionally associated with generalisation of results.

The next section presents the research site and participants of the study.

2.2 Sampling and participants

There were a total of seventeen participants in this research, comprised of twelve LRC members at the case study school, who were all learners and were considered the primary participants; two other learners who were class monitors and were involved in piloting the questionnaires; the School Principal, a Head of Department (HoD), and the Liaison teacher for the LRC. Purposive sampling was used as a sampling technique for the researchers to select individuals for the sample, depending on the typical characteristics that the researchers were looking for (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009). The criteria that informed sampling included leadership positions, leadership potential and the ability to provide insight into the phenomenon of the study. Purposive sampling made it possible to choose participants that were knowledgeable of the data needed for the study (Maree, 2007). LRC members were chosen because they were the prime focus of the study. The principal and the HoD were better positioned in the school management and were thus knowledgeable of the management and leadership roles and practices at the case study school. The Liaison teacher was a focal teacher to the LRC structure, charged with the function of mentoring, coaching and guiding LRC members within the school, thus knowledgeable of their roles. The purposive nature of the sampling decisions in respect of the research site and participants enabled researchers to obtain the richest possible source of information fit for addressing the intents of the study.

The data was collected with the data collection techniques as described in the following section.

2.3 Data collection techniques

The data for the study was collected using document analysis, semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, observation and journaling. The range of data collection tools was valuable for the study, as it allowed the techniques to offset their respective weaknesses and capitalise on their individual strengths. The counter balance that comes with multiple techniques provided rich and meaningful data for analysis and presentation. With the permission of participants, an audio recorder and camera were used for data capturing. The specific data collection techniques are highlighted next.

Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating relevant printed and electronic material for extracting information useful for answering the research questions (Bowen, 2009). Specific documents were analysed by the researchers in order to gather evident information on leadership opportunities and roles that existed at the school. The document analysis further provided researchers with useful insights about leadership functions at school, which then informed the planning, design and administration of subsequent data collection techniques.

Semi-structured questionnaires

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a semi-structured questionnaire has a degree of open-ended questions that participants may answer as they like, in the space reserved. The purpose of the semi-structured questionnaire is to enable researchers to standardise the questions asked, while at the same time control the amount of information that respondents provides (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). All twelve LRC members were given the questionnaires and they provided a "written collection of self-report" based on the questions (Gay et al., 2009, p. 373). The questions revolved around the roles of learner leaders at school.

Individual interviews

Thomas (2009) defines interviews as a discussion with someone from which the researcher tries to get information useful for answering the research questions. Interview is a conversation with a purpose of obtaining needed information. Interview enabled participants to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live, and express to the researchers how they regard the situations from their own point of view (Cohen, Manion &

International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science (IJLRHSS)
Volume 03 - Issue 10, 2020
www.ijlrhss.com || PP. 22-31

Morrison, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Liaison teacher, Head of Department and School Principal.

Interviewing assisted in gathering an understanding of participants on the subject of learner leadership and their roles at school, as well as obtaining essential information on leadership opportunities at school. As the interview was used with other methods in the gathering of data, it enabled triangulation of the data collected. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide opportunities to ask the prepared questions according to the interview schedule, while at the same time present the benefit of probing from participants for clarifications (Thomas, 2009). The interview allowed researchers to probe for detailed information on the management and leadership roles of learner leaders at the case study school.

Observation schedule

Observation is defined as the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information related to the study, by studying people and places at a research site (Creswell, 2014). Observation examines behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researchers observed LRC meetings, a staff briefings, the morning devotions, the rotational process and Change Laboratory sessions. During these observations sessions, researchers noted down striking features about what functions the LRC members were performing. Observation is a method of generating data which entails the researcher getting fully involved in a research setting, in order to experience and observe first-hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting (Mason, 2002). Hence, researchers were participant observers, which is "when researchers participate in the situation, while observing and collecting data on the activities" being observed (Gay et al., 2009, p. 366). Being participant observers helped researchers to gain better insight and develop fruitful working relationships with the participants, which relationship might not have been attained without being participant observers in the study.

Observation was beneficial for three main reasons; it provided an opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting; enabled researchers to study actual behaviours, and; enabled researchers to study individuals who have difficulty verbalising their ideas (Creswell, 2014). The researchers were able to record the information on learner leadership development from participants based on the live data as they were derived from observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The observation schedule was an ideal data collection technique since it assisted to compare and verify what was expressed in interviews, with what was actually happening on the school ground, and further afforded an opportunity to triangulate with data collected using other data collection techniques.

Journaling

Journaling requires researchers to be self-reflective in the conduct of the research (Janesick, 1999). The tool allowed researchers to reflect on the research process as it progressed. The researchers were able to note down the positives, the negatives, what the process meant to them at specific times and what was learned from the experiences. The advantage of keeping a journal is that it offers "interesting and vivid experiences that may be subjective, however, bringing them up front allows future researchers to find ways around problems in their own research" (Berg, 2001). The researchers noted down details that unfolded during their journey, throughout the research process to intensify professional awareness, as well as to allow for informed professional decision-making (Borg, 2001). The journaling was able to contribute meaningfully to the study by providing useful insights for the interpretations and discussions of the research findings.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data collected (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis involves the researchers conducting a data reduction process by selecting, simplifying and transforming the raw data as gathered in the field, into data segments useful for presentation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The data collected was analysed inductively, by establishing themes. During the inductive thematic analysis, the raw data was examined, labeled and coded according to the responses of the respective research questions (Rule & John, 2011). The data set were coded on sticky notes which were later pasted into a visual form for an enriched understanding of emergent findings as possible themes and sub-themes. Figure 1 below illustrates the visual forms of data coding as applied in this study.
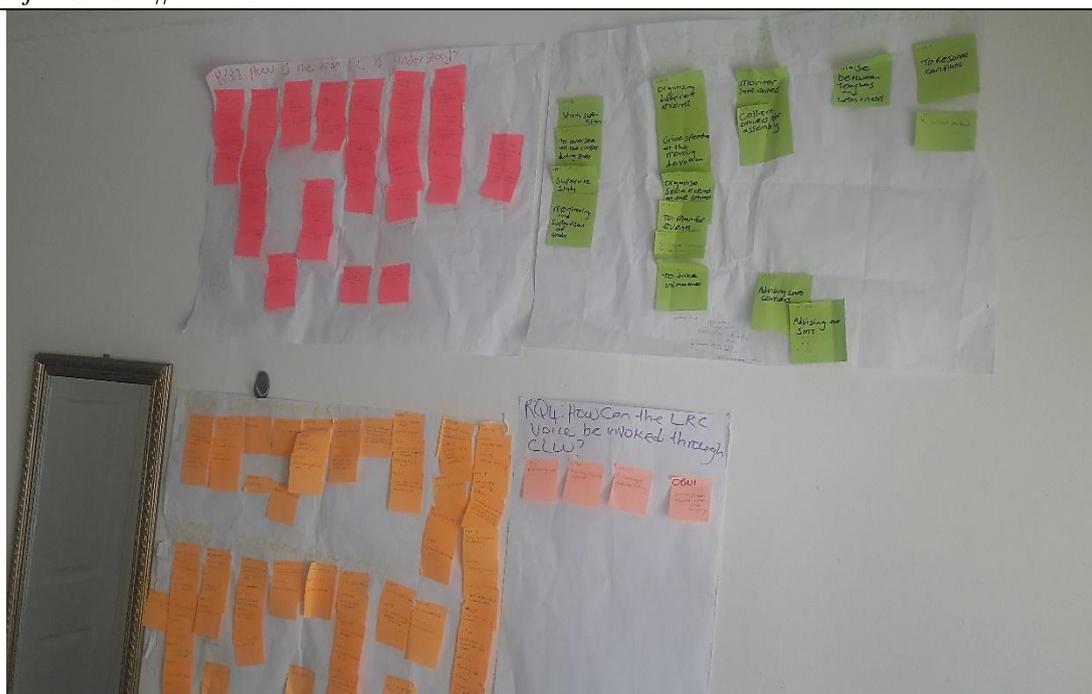
Figure 1: Data coding

Figure 1 above shows how the data was coded as the analysis process was being carried out. The coded portions of data were then grouped logically into categories, which were constructed based on patterns and similarities emerging from data (Merriam, 1998). Similar data were coded with sticky notes of the same colour. Thereafter, themes were created as research findings. After creating themes, researchers scanned through the data again several times to look for other pertinent information that could enhance the interpretation and to ensure that no significant information was overlooked, and in the process of scanning through the data, more categories were formed for a richer interpretation and discussion processes (Lichtman, 2014). The themes were interpreted and discussed drawing useful insights from the theoretical frameworks, citing empirical prior evidence and backing up the discussions with verbatim excerpts of the participants. Relating the discussion to the theories helped to validate the theoretical framework as adopted, and relating the discussion to prior empirical evidence and participants' excerpts helped to confirm the correctness of the literature as it correlated with current research establishments.
The trustworthiness of the results was established through the measures described in the following section.

2.5 Trustworthiness of findings

To ensure the credibility of the results, the study collected sufficient data using multiple data collection technique and the resultant discussions provided were rigorous enough to provide convincing justifications. Two class monitors were given questionnaires prior to the main study as piloting. The piloting was done with the intention "to check for clarity and to remove ambiguities" in the data collection technique (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 402). Elimination of ambiguities in the data collection techniques means that the questions were refined and clearly understood by the respondents and participants, and correct answers were thus provided. Interviews were recorded and the participants were given an opportunity to change any wording that they felt did not capture the exactness of their words and intentions. A very good rapport was built with the participants before the commencement of the interviews, which ensured that participants were open to express their ideas freely to the researchers. The use of data triangulation, which is the use of multiple methods to collect data, strengthened the validity of the qualitative data (Gay et al., 2009). The data sets were corroborated by relating findings from one data collection technique to the data collected with another technique (van der Mescht, 2002). Corroboration ensured congruence of the data, eventually producing results that draws on the strengths of individual data collection techniques as used.

In addition, one of the researchers works for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, which exposed the researcher to insider positionality in this study. The researcher has also previously worked at school. According to Chavez (2008, p. 475), insider positionality is about "sharing multiple identities such as race, ethnicity and class with participants". The advantage of insider positionality was that the researcher had commonalities with the participants which helped obtaining efficacious data from the participants. The influence

of the researcher was minimised by building rapport with the teacher participants before the interview, and by code switching to using Oshiwambo, the language that most participants were comfortable with.

2.6 Ethical considerations

All the participants were treated with respect and dignity. The researchers explained all the details related to the study to the participants so that participants were well informed with the intentions of the study, to enable them to make an informed, deliberate and conscious decision whether to participate in the study or not. Permission to research sites was obtained. A "permission to conduct research in a school does not substitute the informed consent of parents" (Wassenaar, 2007, p. 73). Hence, informed consents were obtained from the parents and teachers as well as assenting from learners.

As the participants indicated that they wished to have their true identities concealed, pseudonyms were used for both the school and the participants in reporting the findings. In reporting the research, the interview with the mentor teacher is captured as IMT, interview with the school principal is captured as IPR, and the interview with the Head of Department is captured as IHOD. The questionnaires that were administered to respective LRC members are captured as LQ1-12. Findings collected with different techniques were also coded differently, such as DA1-7 for document analysis, JE1-7 for journal entries and OBN1-2 for observation notes. Participants were informed of the confidentiality of the data and were assured that the data would not be made public, and will be stored in a locked desk drawer and backed up as soft (digital) copies and saved on the cloud.

The next section presents the discussions of the findings that were established.

3. Discussion of findings

The study focused on establishing the management and leadership functions of learner leaders at school. The data from the empirical investigation and the literature study was analysed inductively and found that each of the twelve LRC members at the case study school was given a portfolio to serve (DA4). For the LRC members to really make an indelible mark on the management and leadership landscape of the school, it was necessary that they were allocated with roles, and that opportunities were created for them at school to execute leadership roles as allocated to them. The findings established that the LRC members were involved in their managerial and leadership roles. The researchers acknowledge that leadership and management are related concepts as revealed in the previous sections. In discussing the findings, researchers have tried to distinguish between the two concepts by revealing whether it is leadership or management function that is being discussed.

The following section discusses the managerial roles fulfilled by the LRC members. The roles relate to supervision of study and tests, monitoring other learners at school, organising events and liaising with other learners and staff members. The discussion of the roles follows next.

3.1 Supervision of study and tests

The role of supervision was perceived as a leadership function for LRC members by the participants in the study. As leadership implies the ability to influence others towards a common vision, learner leaders were involved in supervising other learners when they were executing a variety of activities at schools. The members of the Learner Representative Council were *"involved in supervising the study sessions to control the noise level of other learners"* (IMT). Ordinarily, the study session would have been supervised by teachers as it has been teachers who *"use to supervise learners during study time but teachers allocated for supervising study sessions are not enough to oversee supervision to all the classes"* (IHOD). The insufficiency of teachers to supervise all classes during study sessions warrants the deployment of LRC members to offer a helping hand and supervise classes beyond the reach of teachers.

During the stay at the school, the researchers noted that the LRC members, apart from supervising the studies, were also *"supervising tests across all grades that were writing tests in the afternoon"* (JE4). By sharing leadership roles with the LRC members, the school had distributed the leadership and thus lessened the workload of the teachers (De Villiers, 2010). Supervision of study sessions involves LRC members ensuring that learners were quite in their classes during the study sessions and that learners were studying without noise disturbance from other learners. The supervision exercised by learner leaders ensured that school activities, which included study sessions and writing of tests, ran smoothly. Supervision is regarded as a leadership role as learners were executing their activities such as studying, on their own, and the LRC members were only turning up occasionally to ensure that other learners were studying according to established rules.

3.2 Monitoring of learners on the school premises

The study revealed that it is the management role of the LRC members to monitor others around the school. LRC members were charged with the function of monitoring the behaviours of other learners within the school premises to ensure that learners behaved according to acceptable behavioural standards. LRC members were *"tasked with gathering other learners for the morning assembly or any other assembly that may be*

arranged" (IPR). During the morning devotions, researchers noted *"LRC members going around the school ground telling other learners to gather at the assembly point for the morning devotion"* (JE4). In addition, the LRC members were tasked to *"monitor latecomers when they were coming to school in the morning"* (IMT). Owing to their management functions, learners in the Representative Council were expected to arrive to school earlier compared to other learners and stand at the school entrance gate, noting down other learners who were arriving to school late. Whilst at the gate, the LRC members advised the latecomers to improve their time management and change the habit of coming late to school.

The tasks executed by the LRC members were meant to maintain the functionality of the school, and were thus considered as management tasks (Bush, 2003). This paper argues that standing at the gate and noting down latecomers, was a managerial role as it was meant to enforce punctuality among learners, as managerial roles are associated with upholding institutional goals by maintaining the effectiveness of the institutional arrangements and policies (Bush, 2003). LRC members ensured that other learners complied with established policies and practices, and were able to assist those learners who could not live up to policies to do so, by enforcing policy compliance upon them.

3.3 Organising social events and activities

The study established that LRC members were taking the lead in organising social events and related activities at school. LRC members *"organised cleaning campaigns for the school and its immediate surrounding"* (DA). LRC members were able to organise other learners and lead them in ensuring that the school premises and its surrounding areas were cleaned. The study also established that the Learner Representative Council members organised social activities meant to entertain other learners, such as getting involved in *"organising Miss Valentine, the activity which they initiated and organised it, and went smoothly"* (IMT). Other activities that LRC members organised included sports tournaments and Grade 12 farewell party.

Apart from organising social events, LRC members gave speeches during the morning devotion. The researchers noted that "*LRC members occasionally gave motivational speeches during morning devotion*" (JE4). The motivational speeches by LRC members was a trend at school as evidence reveals that *"from time to time you will hear one or two LRC members organising a speech for the morning assembly to motivate other learners"* (IPR). As leaders, LRC member would "*stood on the podium and motivates other learners to study hard and to stay disciplined"*. The LRC members seems to have been motivated by the attentive teachers and learners, who *"listened attentively and seemed like they were enjoying the speeches, judging from the loud applause at the end of the speeches"* (JE). Giving learners a platform at the assembly to advise and motivate other learners was evident of the fact that the school is an engaging place, where learners are granted active roles to play (Mitra& Gross, 2009; Smyth, 2006).

This article argues that organising events and social activities is a leadership role as the organising of events at the school lay solely in the hands of the LRC members, where they take lead in "*organising events on their own, without the assistance of any other person at school*" (JE6). It was observed and noted that the events that learner leaders organised always produced fruition. This observation was confirmed by one of the teacher participants who stated that the learner leaders organised events on their own with *"minimum guidance and involvement of teachers"* (IHOD). This revelation manifests that the school was indeed carrying out the functions as stipulated by the Basic Education Act No 3 of 2020, whose Regulations requires LRC members to promote the best interest and welfare of the school and its learners (Namibia. MEAC, 2020). Therefore, when learners in the representative Council organised various social events as mentioned earlier, they were promoting the interest and welfare of the school and that of other learners, as required by legislative instruments.

3.4 Creating communication channels and resolving conflicts

One of the leadership role for the LRC members was to liaise between other learners and teachers. The liaison function of the LRC members involved acting as a communication link between learners and teachers, as well as being a conflict resolver between learners at school. LRC members serves as spokesperson for other learners as "*they help communicate issues from learners down the hierarchy to the top management of the school*" (IHOD). Learners in the Representative Council brings concerns expressed by other learners to teachers and school management team and have the concerns addressed. Similarly, LRC members relay information from teachers and school management to the learner community. Regarding learner leaders as conduits of the communication at school, manifests that communication was not only centred around the school principal or school management team, but that communication was distributed across the school and involved learner leaders, which practice is essential for manifesting the essence of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005; Hamatwi, 2015).

Apart from keeping the communication line open, the LRC members were expected to resolve conflicts that occurred on the school ground between learners. Conflicts were frequent among learners and they were

successfully addressed and resolved by the learner leaders. The ability of the learner leaders to resolve conflicts at school enabled smooth school operations even on days when teachers were not around, as it was established that, *"LRC members were always on the school ground even when the teachers were not there in order to resolve conflicts among other learners and keep order"* (IPR). The role of conflict resolver requires LRC members to have interpersonal leadership skills, which could allow them to build proper interactions with other learners and to resolve conflicts between learners. This role requires a high level of emotional intelligence and understanding. Hence, the ability to communicate effectively and resolving conflicts relates to leadership, as learner leaders are required to know how to work with people and handle them appropriately. LRC members were also assigned to different portfolios, which included *"hygiene, disciplinary affairs, sport and culture, entertainment and academic affairs"* (DA4). Each LRC member was then expected to liaise with the school management team on issues related to their respective portfolios.

4. Conclusion

It becomes evident that LRC members performs both management and leadership functions at school. The common feature of management and leadership is that both practices require people to complete numerous tasks that will lead to the successful hosting of the events or attainment of organisational goal. Involving learners in management and leadership functions of the school resonates well with distributed leadership which promotes the involvement of different people in leadership activities (Harris, 2004). LRC roles such as supervising other learners and leading in organising social activities relate to leadership functions as they are not instructional in nature, but one that requires individual to work on their own with minimum supervision and direction. In addition, functions such as monitoring punctuality of learners to school or assembly point can be regarded as management functions due to their instructional nature. Despite this classification, different school of thoughts could view a set of functions as being management or leadership, contrary to what other schools of thoughts has established, because they might not see the crucial difference between leadership and management or the vital functions that each concept plays. Furthermore, some people might view everyone at the top of the hierarchy as a leader, implying whatever tasks they execute is considered as a leadership role. Such viewpoint and implication might not be surprising since the two concepts are interrelated and often used interchangeably, despite the differences between them.

Available evidence reveals that leadership and management have a close link and a great deal of similarity as far as inspiring, as well as directing people to the purpose of the organisation is concerned (Bush, 2003). Leadership and management are vital if schools are to function efficiently and achieve set goals. The school which is poorly managed but yet has a strong leader, may fail just like a school which is over-managed but under-led may lose any sense of the schools' set goals. Thus, a balance of leadership and management is needed for an institution to reach goals and objectives (Bush, 2003). Therefore, the LRC members need to be entrusted with both leadership and management roles for the LRC structure to function efficiently and effectively.

This study established a management and leadership model of the duties and responsibilities of LRC members. The findings of this research can serve as guidelines for schools and their LRC leadership structures for benchmarking the roles required of the LRC members at their schools. It is observed that many schools establish learner leadership structures as required by legislative instruments, but were failing to enable the learner leadership structures exercise their roles effectively due to limited understanding of what the learner leaders supposed to do. The finding of this study is deemed as fit for filling such established knowledge gap, by ensuring the availability of a model with empirical defined terms of references for learner leaders in schools.

5. Recommendations

In view of the above conclusion, the study recommended the following proposals:
- School authorities should educate the learner community about the necessity, presence and role of the Learner Representative Council as a legitimate body of learner leaders at school. The required knowledge will help to ensure less resistance from learners towards learner leaders, for a smooth execution of management and leadership functions by learner leaders.
- School management structures should expose learner leaders to periodic management and leadership training interventions in order to capacitate them to become competent management and leadership change agents in schools.
- School principals and teachers should create a good working relationship with learner leaders so that the learner leaders are open to communicate openly, respectfully and as required with teachers on matters of school development.
- Learner leaders should be encouraged to communicate to school authorities any attempt that seeks to undermine the execution of their management and leadership functions. Addressing any threat to

learner leadership will help to ensure the viability and sustainability of learner leadership structures among schools.

It is believed that the consideration of the above recommendations and their subsequent implementation can help to boost the execution of management and leadership functions at schools by learner leaders.

References

[1]. Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for social sciences* (4[th]ed.*).* Boston: Allyn& Bacon.

[2]. Bertram, C., & Christiansen, L. (2014). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

[3]. Borg, S. (2001). The research journal: a tool for promoting and understanding researcher development. *Language Teaching Research, 5*(*2*), 156-177.

[4]. Bush, T. (2003). *Theories of educational leadership and management* (3[rd]ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

[5]. Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from inside: advantages, complications and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(3), 474-494.

[6]. Christie, P. (2010). Landscapes of leadership in South Africa. *Educational Management & Leadership*, *38*(6), 694-711.

[7]. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in Education* (5[th]ed.). London: Routledge.

[8]. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7[th]ed.). New York: Routledge.

[9]. Gay, L., Mills, G., &Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: competencies for analysis and applications.* London: Pearson.

[10]. Grant, C. (2015). Invoking learners' voice and developing leadership: What matters to learners? *Journal of Education*, *61*, 93-113.

[11]. Grant, C., &Nekondo, L. (2016). Learners as leaders in Namibian schools: Taking responsibility and exercising agency. *Namibia CPD Journal for Educators*, *3*(1), 13-29.

[12]. Gronn, P. (2008). The future of distributed leadership. *Journal of Education Administration*, *46*(2), 141-158.

[13]. Hamatwi, I. (2015). *Exploring teacher leadership: A case study at a secondary school in the Ohangwena Region.* Unpublished MEd thesis. Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

[14]. Harris, A. (2004). Distributed leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership,* 32(1), 11-24.

[15]. Hine, G. (2011). *Exploring the development of student leadership potential within a catholic school: a qualitative case study.* University of Notre Dame. Australia, Research online @ ND

[16]. Janesick, V. (1999). A journal about journaling: Writing as a qualitative research technique history issues and reflections. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*(4*),* 505-524.

[17]. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4[th]ed.). London: Pearson.

[18]. Johnson. B., & Christensen. L. (2012). *Educational research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

[19]. Lichtman, M. (2014). *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

[20]. Maree, K. (2007). *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

[21]. Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2[nd]ed.). London: Sage Publications.

[22]. Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[23]. Mitra, D. L., & Gross, S. (2009). Increasing student in high school reform: Building partnership, improving outcomes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *37*(4), 522-543.

[24]. Mitra, D. L. (2007).Student voice in school reform: from listening to leadership. *In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), International Handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school (pp. 727-744).* Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Publishers.

[25]. Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture. (1993). *Towards Education for All: A development brief for education, culture and training*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan.

[26]. Namibia. Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. (2020). Basic Education Act No 3 of 2020. Windhoek: Government of Republic of Namibia.

[27]. Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Interpreting the case & presenting the data: Your guide to case studies*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

[28]. Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice.* London: SAGE Publications.

[29]. Smyth, J. (2006). Educational leadership that foster student voice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, *9*(*4*), 279-284.

[30]. Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Education Forum, 69*(2), 143-150.

[31]. Thomas, G. (2009). *How to do your research project*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

[32]. Van der Mescht, H. (2002). Four levels of rigour in interpretive qualitative research. *Education as Change,6*(1), 45-51.

[33]. Wassenaar, D. R. (2007). Ethical issues in social research. In M.T. Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for social sciences (*2[nd]ed.) (pp. 60-79). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.