

**LEARNER GOVERNORS' UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCES OF THEIR
ROLE IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

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IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted for the degree of Master of Education in the Graduate Programme in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I Vikani Innocent Phillip Msimanga, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated reflects my original work and ideas.
2. This thesis has not been submitted by me to any other institution of higher learning for any degree or examination.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them have been duly acknowledged and referenced.
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References

This is a product of my endeavors under the professional guidance of Prof V. Chikoko.

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Researcher: V.I.P Msimanga

Date: 04 December 2015

.....
Supervisor: Prof V. Chikoko

Date: 04 December 2015

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my late parents and brothers who played an inspirational role in my life. I know they will take pride in all my academic achievements.

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This has been a long but worthwhile journey in which I feel it is cognizant to recognize and acknowledge people who supported me throughout. This research would have not been completed without the guidance and support of the following people:

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ABSTRACT

The advent of democracy introduced a number of policies one which is the South African Schools Act (SASA) no.84 of 1996 which was aimed at redressing imbalances of past. With the introduction of SASA, learners were then afforded a space to participate in school governance. This study explored views held by learner governors from two rural Secondary Schools in northern KwaZulu-Natal regarding their understanding and experiences of their role in the School Governing Body. Literature reviewed in this study demonstrated that learner participation in SGB is still confronted with many challenges even though we are more than a decade into democracy. This study adopted qualitative research design and case to explore indepth data from the learner governors. An interpretivist paradigm was used to collect data about their lived experiences and understanding regarding their role in school governance. Data was generated through semi structured interviews and observation of SGB meetings. The study revealed that learner governors did not understand their roles as set out in the SASA and are not supported by either the Department of Education.

ACRONYMS

COSAS Congress of South African Students

DoE Department of Education

ELRC Education Labour Relations Council

HoD Head Of Department

KZN KwaZulu Natal

EWP Education White Paper

HEI Higher Education Institution

HOD Head of Department

HSRC Human Sciences Research Council

RCL Representative Council of Learners

SADTU South African Democratic Teacher's Union

SASA South African Schools Act

SGB School Governing Body

SMT School Management Team

TLO Teacher Liaison Officer

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by exploring the background that informed a need for this study. The background provides a brief history about South African education during the apartheid period addressing the imbalances that were experienced in the past and how such have necessitated this study. It introduces the change that came with the democratic South Africa post 1994. One of the policies this study will focus on is the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996, which aimed at providing a uniform system of public education and redresses all the imbalances of the past. It explored studies conducted in this area to show the rationale thereof. This chapter further describes a problem in school governance that makes it significant for this study to be conducted and what knowledge it will contribute to the research fraternity. The critical research questions the study sought to explore are part of this section and will be explored as they the study stems from them.

1.1. Background of the study

South Africa is predominantly known by the horrors of apartheid, wherein education was used as a vehicle to perpetuate the regime. The apartheid period marked a time where participation of some stakeholders particularly parents and learners in educational matters were limited if not prohibited. Education was predominantly a vehicle of oppression with its policies such as the Bantu Education Act no. 47 of 1953 which was aimed at giving Africans inferior education so that they occupy inferior places in society. This policy further discouraged any form of education that will enhance critical thinking from an African child so that they are only skilled for labour and obedience. Harber and Trafford (1999) add that the apartheid education excluded the majority of citizens from legitimate and equal participation in educational matters. The 1980s marked an era where the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) became highly active in calling for the democratic representation of learners through Representative Councils and as a way of decentralizing power to learners. COSAS became highly active and protested against many issues during this time, *inter alia*; unequal education, unfair distribution of resources, exclusion of students for political reasons, corporal punishment, and sexual harassment. These led to the banning of this student movement (Mathebula, 2005). Subsequent to the banning of COSAS, The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was launched to intensify the call for 'egalitarianism' and

democratization of schools hence their slogan; “people’s education for people’s power” (Mathebula, 2005, p.195)

The immediate period post 1994 had a challenge to redress and heal the imbalances of the past. The White Paper on Organization and Funding of Schools (1996) was one of the ways South Africa sought to move towards promoting a “democratic institutional management, thereby introducing a school governance structure that involves all stakeholder groups in active responsible roles in order to encourage tolerance, national discussion and collective decision making” (Department of Education, 1996, p.16). Furthermore, Sithole, (1995) is of the view that decisions for effective democratic school governance should be reached through; “consultation, collaboration, cooperation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community” (Cited in Mabovula, 2009, p.220). Contents of the White Paper gave rise to the South African Schools Act (SASA) no. 84 of 1996, Chapter three; which aimed at implementing the democratic principles of the participation of stakeholders *inter alia*: parents, learners, teachers and non-teaching staff.

The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996, section 23 (2)(d) further mandates all public secondary schools to have a Representative Council of Learners (RCL) which are elected by learners themselves to represent their voice in school governance particularly in the School Governing Body (SGB). Mncube (2008) contends that this has caused ‘more heat than light’, in that some School Governing Bodies exclude learners from SGB meetings claiming that they lack experience in educational matters. This is somewhat attributed to their term of office which is only a year compared to other members who serve for three years. In light of this argument Phaswana, (2010) contends that this implies that learners are not fully recognised as equals with fellow stakeholders. These very same learners who are allegedly inexperienced in educational matters depict ones who challenged the apartheid government in 1976, when it attempted to introduce Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. The latter argument corroborates the notion that there can be nothing about learners without them. Sithole (1995) cited in Mncube (2008, p.78) argues that the role learners played during apartheid qualifies them “to take part in all discussions regarding their education”. However, some parents believe that learners are immature and therefore cannot make informed decisions (Mncube, 2001).

After two decades since South Africa got emancipated, one would expect that learners are now part of school governance and understand their role. Many studies including Mncube (2008), Mncube (2013) and Mabovula (2009), conducted in this area have shown, that learner participation in school governance in rural areas is minimal compared to urban areas. Numerous writers such as Mathebula (2005), Nkwinti (2001), Sithole (1995), and Chinsamy (1995) cited in Mabovula (2009, p.220) highlighted that at times the learner governors are used as a form of “window dressing” just to show them on paper to please Departmental officials. Many studies have explored the functioning of SGB and learner participation in SGB. However, focus on learners’ understanding of their role in school governance has not been shed much light on. Mncube (2012) compares South African provinces, very little research is conducted in exploring experiences and understandings of learner governors’ understanding of their in school governance from rural contexts.

The functioning of the SGB is guided by chapter three of the SASA no.84 of 1996, section 20 (1) to avoid any collision between the SGB and the SMT. Pampallis (2004) partitions school governance functions into three categories which includes: Provision of democratic space for all constituencies to partake in the running of the school; Ensuring that the interests of all the constituencies are taken care of, in order to avoid conflict; and enhance the creation of a conducive climate for effective teaching and learning. Moreover Joubert (n.d., p.2) divides the functions of the SGB into “those that they ‘must’ fulfil (section 20 of SASA) and those that they can ‘apply for’ (section 21)”. Section 20 and 21 of SASA no. 84 of 1996 mandates the SGB to perform the following functions as summarised below:

- Policy related matters (adopting a constitution; developing mission statement; admission and language policy; religious observances; code of conduct for learners; finance policy)
- Operational matters (promoting best interest of the school through striving for quality education for all; determining times of school day; support the principal and other staff in the performance of their professional duties; administration and control of the school’s property; buildings and grounds; encourage learners, educators and other staff to render voluntary service to the school; recommendation of appointment of staff and determine the extra-mural curriculum and subject packages for the school)

- Financial matters (purchase textbooks and other learner support materials; establish a school fund, pay for the services of the school; maintain and improve school property; raise funds and report to parents on use thereof)

It is worth noting that minors under the age of eighteen are barred from making contracts on behalf of the school. They may not vote on resolutions of the SGB that impose liabilities on third parties of the school and can incur no personal liability as a result of being a member of the SGB (SASA no.84 of 1996). The intentions for the limited participation of learner governors in the matter outlined above may be for their best interest. However, Sithole, (1995) strongly contends that learners must fully participate in school governance and the reservation provided by SASA infringe on their democratic right. Learners themselves have also not been welcoming of the clause due to its limit to their participation. This was revealed in studies conducted by Ngcobo (2002) cited in Magadla (2007); Mncube (2008) and Phaswana (2010).

The Department of Education (1996) stipulates that the RCL must formulate their own constitution which gives guidance as to how often they meet to discuss issues that their constituency confront. This enhances communication between learners and their representative and such issues are brought to the attention of the SMT and subsequently the SGB to address and resolve. In this regard Mncube (2013, p.4) adds that RCL members should be exemplary in loyalty, respect, punctuality, academic excellence and promote good relations among all stakeholders of the school community. These expectations for learner governors promote responsibility; sharpens the skills of leadership and good citizenry.

The functions of SGB as outlined presents many complexities, therefore the type of governor envisaged is one who is diligent, willing to learn and commit to performing duties as outlined in SASA. A number of studies conducted in this area have revealed that there is a gap between policy and practice. Karlsson and Sayed (2002) cited in Van Wyk (2007, p.133) argues that “this imbalance or ‘policy gap’ between policy intentions and practice outcomes highlight the need for special efforts to ensure participatory democratic processes in school governance in all schools”. It will be interesting to find out how the study discovers this with regards to whether the policy is only for window dressing or is in practice.

Therefore the purpose of this project is to shed light in this area and contribute meaningfully in closing such identified gaps. This study aims to further explore the understandings and

experiences of the learner governors of their role in school governance. The study seeks to further explore learner governors understanding of their functions in particular as stipulated above.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 says:

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all actions affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child cited in (Mncube 2012, p.136).

As part of healing and redressing the imbalances of the past, South Africa decentralised power to local authorities as a move towards self-governing or self-reliance in schools. This gave certain power to the school governing body which is represented by parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and learners. Many researchers among others: Mncube, 2005; Mncube 2008; Sithole, 1995; Sayed, 1999) have focussed on the functioning of SGB in South Africa. However, there has been little focus on researching what the learner governors understand as their role in school governance. Moreover, the SASA no.84 of 1996 is now eighteen years since it was enacted in 1997 which in a way suggests that many schools should have moved towards total democratisation by recognizing learners as legible stakeholders. One would expect learner governors and other stakeholders within the SGB to be working harmoniously towards achieving a common goal of effective school governance. However, many studies like Cockburn, (2006) reveal that participation of learner governors have been limited due to a number of reasons.

1.3. Objectives of the study

This study aimed at discovering, examining and understanding learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance. The main objective was to explore whether they understand their functions within the SGB as set out in the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996, Chapter 3 Section 20(1) a-m and what they have experienced in carrying out their mandated duties as carried out in the Act.

1.4. Research Questions.

1. How do learner school governors understand and experience their role in school governance?
2. What factors affect learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance?
3. How can learner governors' involvement in school governance be enhanced?

1.5. Significance of the study

The study sought to tackle what learner governors understood to be their role in school governance, and further explored what they experienced while carrying out their mandated duties. I specifically chose to work with learner governors as a result of them being at the centre of teaching and learning and representing the largest constituency. I acknowledged the importance of every stakeholder in school governance but gave particular attention to learner governors to find out their understanding of governance after eighteen years of the SASA no 84 of 1996.

I chose this field of study due to a number of research reports which constantly argue against the involvement of learners in the SGB citing a number of reasons outlined in the background. Most researchers; Mncube and Naicker (2011), Mabovula (2009), Phaswana (2010), Mncube and Harber (2009), Mncube (2009, 2012) have focused more on learner participation and how other stakeholders perceive them. It is evident that no research has been conducted focusing on their understanding of their role in Northern KwaZulu Natal.

1.6. Clarification of concepts

Learner school governor is one or two member(s) of RCL chosen by fellow RCL members to represent learner component in the SGB.

Role means "a function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation" (Online Dictionary)

School Governing Body (SGB) "is a statutory body of parents, learners, non-teaching staff and learners (eighth grade or higher) who seek to work together to promote the well being

and effectiveness of the school community and thereby enhance learning and teaching” (Western Cape Government online, 2015)

School governance is “the relationships and procedures that determine how authority is exercised and resources are managed, how other role-players make their voices heard, and how those in authority are held accountable”(Pendlebury, 2010/2011, p.43)

The literature will modify and work towards my own meaning of the terms described

1.7. Organization of the report

The study is divided into five chapters, structured as follows; the first chapter introduced the study outlining the background which formed basis for the study. Chapter two of the study explored both local and international literature on governance related issues and learner involvement in such. Chapter Three of the study described the research design and methodology of the study taking into account amongst others the paradigm where the whole project was housed, how data was generated for this study and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter four of the study presents and discusses findings of the study using actual responses and observed action in response to the critical questions the study sought to explore. Chapter five of the study concluded based on the findings of the study in relation to the critical question and further suggested recommendations of the study for both future action and future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter sought to review both local and international literature on school governance with the hope of exploring learner involvement in governance. Understanding of learner governance and the roles expected of them was of paramount importance. Since the inclusion of learners in governance, there has been mixed feelings which this study sought to explore. This chapter further sought to explore what other researchers have discovered in terms of learner governors understanding of their role in governance. This chapter started by explaining key concepts that related to the study, to enable the reader to understand the main words or phases in the study. I explained the political and collegial theoretical frameworks and justified their relevance in this study. I further reviewed literature on both local and international perspectives on learners' role, understandings and experiences in school governance.

2.2. Key concepts

Learner governor is a learner elected from the Student Representative Council (RCL) to represent learner fraternity as a member in the School Governing Body (SGB). They are sometimes referred to as learner councillors.

Learner participation (role) was endorsed by the SASA of (1996) which gave learners power to elect fellow learners at a secondary school with grade eight or higher. Phaswana, (2010) views it as adults working with learners to develop ways of ensuring that their views are taken into cognisance in decision making. This chapter will expand on the extent of real learner participation in school governance. This study defined it as the extent at which learners deliberate on issues affecting them and a space created for such.

School governance is explained as “the process by which a small group, usually on behalf of others (constituencies), exercise authority over educational system and dictates the way the system organizes itself to make and implement decisions” (Carver, 2000, p.26). Magadla, (2007) defines school governance in terms of their function to formulate and implement school policies that maintain order and control thereby ensuring democracy is adhere to. In this, power has been decentralised from educational authorities to school level. This study

defines school governance as day-to-day activities in the school aimed at providing support to the school on matters affecting all stakeholders.

2.3. Contesting views regarding learner participation in School Governance

SASA 1996 advocates that secondary schools with Grade Eight and higher must include learners in the SGB. Some studies revealed that other stakeholders argue against participation of learners in school governance, citing that they are too young to participate maximally. According to Chapter 2 of SASA no. 84 of 1996, schooling is compulsory from age seven until a learner is fifteen or reaches grade nine. This means that if a learner did not fail any grade s/he will reach grade eight at age fourteen. This is such a tender and vulnerable age since most learners are still undergoing many physical, psychological and other growth related challenges. Within this age range, Erik Erickson a famous psychologist (1959) cited in Louw and Louw (2012) called this stage *identity versus role confusion*. This stage is characterised by “a lack of direction, vagueness about one’s life’s purpose and an unclear sense of self” (Louw & Louw, 2012, p.148). If a learner in grade eight is elected into the RCL and further elected by fellow RCL members for representation in the SGB meeting, they will be expected to participate fully. It is frequently on these bases that many stakeholders often questions learner governors’ participation in educational issues. However, there has been mixed feelings on the involvement of learners in decision making.

Magadla, (2007) cites Sithole (1998) to explore four main contesting viewpoints on how different interest groups perceive learner participation in the SGB. The first viewpoint suggests that learners must be passive recipients of instructions and adhere to instructions given by parents and teachers. This implies that learners’ participation is only through observation and has no input on policy formulation and deliberation on issues that affects them. It is unfortunate that these policies will be implemented and learners are at the receiving end. In light of this argument Mabovula, (2009, p. 231) is of the view that “when all stakeholders see that the schools are serving their purpose, they tend to take ownership of ‘their’ schools, and when schools have an active and explicit mandate from the public, they are more likely to be orderly and excellent”. The opposite of her argument is a school that does not invite learners’ contribution, as a result of their frustration of them being sidelined chaos is the order of the day in such a school.

The second viewpoint acknowledges the role of South African learners in the liberation struggle but argue that they should shift their focus from school governance to their school work. I am of the view that limiting participation has detrimental effects on both the school and learners in that if they are encouraged to only focus on their school work; holistic development and leadership skills is inhibited. Mncube and Naicker, (2011) corroborate this view in that if learners are afforded a space to participate in decision making; this could develop their social and leadership skills that will cherish the democratic principles.

The third viewpoint allows for a limited participation of stakeholders to a certain degree. In this they not allowed to discuss issues that concern educators and curriculum. Mncube (2008, p.83) discovered that when certain issues are discussed learner governors are requested to 'leave the meeting' citing that they are minors. When learners were asked about the contents of SASA that prohibit them from participating in financial management of their school, they felt strongly that this was an infringement of their right to participation (Mabovula, 2009). Learners are also left out when educators and non educators are employed in most schools. These educators to be employed will be teaching the same learners who are excluded in processes that are aimed at employing the best suitable candidate. I strongly feel that learners in this case should also be allowed to participate in the employment of educators or managers of schools so that they provide necessary support to the candidate which they partaken in selecting. This will help reduce riots that are brewed to create unrest for the newly appointed educator or manager who they did not prefer. Dean (1993) cited in Magadla, (2007) adds that involvement of learners in decision making lessens vandalism in schools.

In the fourth viewpoint, they vehemently argue that learners should never be left out in school governance. Sithole, (1998) recognises the role that learners played during the apartheid era in rejecting the forceful implementation of Afrikaans as medium of instruction. If they managed to fight for the right course then, therefore their relevance is paramount now. Magadla, (2007) assert that involvement of learners in decision making brings 'harmony' to the school and enhances the relationships among members of the school community. Sithole, (1998) argues for full participation of learners in governance in accordance with their role during the liberation struggle. However, I partially agree with this viewpoint that learners should be given full participation in educational matter but, this should be guided by giving them necessary support to empower responsibly.

On another hand, a study conducted by Mncube and Naicker, (2011, p.157) on learner participation discovered that learners did not participate actively in SGB citing that their participation is “tokenistic, window dressing, and that learners are just spectators”. Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) conducted a study in Kenya; which revealed there were attempts made to include learners’ views in determining school policies and learner welfare, which they also find ‘tokenistic’. They view it as tokenistic because learners are not allowed to participate in core management issues, managing of funds or participating in curriculum issues. Mncube, (2008) argues that this is prevalent in rural areas and in townships due to parents unwilling to move with time and enter into discussions with children. It is therefore imperative that a space for learners be created to enhance their participation. Supporting them through ongoing workshops could close the gaps identified. Empowering learner governors to participate actively helps schools govern learners’ affairs with diligence. Guerra and Nelson (2009) suggest that one of the means to improve participation is to reach out to the stakeholders and provide support they need. Many researchers have argued against the inclusion of learners in SGB to window dress and appease the departmental officials citing that silencing their voice means that issues of social learning, democracy and social justice are disregarded (Mncube, 2008; 2012; 2013; Mncube and Naicker, 2011; Mabovula,2009; Phaswana, 2010).

2.4. Power relations in SGB

This study adopted the political theory as its theoretical framework in recognition of the different stakeholders that represent different interest groups. It acknowledges that these interest groups could be working in collegiality towards achieving a common goal. However, many studies conducted in this area reveal the dominance of the principals in SGBs; since they are automatically elected members of the SGB. The dominance of the principal in SGB aligns this study to the political theory in that one stakeholder is the centre of power over others. This section reviews such studies as this appears to impact on effective learner participation. It is imperative that this study starts by exploring the role of the principal in policy and in practice in the SGB. According to section 16A of SASA no.84 of 1996, p.23, the role of the principal amongst others includes:

- prepare a plan setting out how academic performance will be improved at a school and table this at an SGB meeting then submit to the Head of Department (HOD);

- reports to the SGB on progress made in implementing the plan as endorsed by the HOD;
- attend and participate in all meetings of the SGB;
- assist the SGB in handling all matters of discipline that relate to learners;
- inform SGB about policy and legislation;
- assist the SGB with management of all finances of the school by providing information on policies regulating use of finances;
- gives advice on the financial implications of decisions relating to financial matters of the school; and
- is a member of a finance committee or delegation of the SGB in order to manage any matter that has financial implications for the school and report any maladministration or mismanagement of financial matters to SGB and HOD.

This policy stipulates clearly that all stakeholders in SGB should have a role to play in carrying out their mandated duties to enhance democratic school governance which shift towards self-reliance in schools. If all stakeholders are part of school governance, they develop a sense of ownership to the school which in turn benefits the school community. However, in practice this is not the case since “the governance of schools is a political activity, because it deals with both allocative and distributive resources, and also involves education professionals and lay people who have their own views on what school is about and the way in which it should be organised” (Giddens, 1984 cited in Mncube 2009, p.33). In many instances, SGB members willingly or unwillingly afford their powers to the principal whom they believe is an expert in educational matters. Van Wyk, (2007) corroborates the argument that intentions of SASA involving all stakeholders (parents, learners and teachers) are good but parents choose to bestow their responsibilities to the principals and teachers whom they believe are experts.

Naidoo (2004, p.35) views the principals’ domination in SGB as “the lowest level of democracy where all decision-making power resides in the hands of one individual”. This in my view highlights the fact that total democratization lies with the extent of devolution of power in governing the school. While on one hand I also argue for total democratization, I

cannot ignore the common English saying which says “knowledge is power”. This alone puts certain members of the governing body especially the principal at an advantage since they are more knowledgeable in educational matters than their counterparts. The SASA as outlined gives the principal a responsibility to ‘inform SGB about policy and legislation’ which put them at an advantage already. If they are not willing to distribute and disseminate this critical information to empower others, then school governance will be centred on them and democracy will be in jeopardy.

Principals are expected to play a crucial role in encouraging learner governors to participate adequately in SGBs. They are expected to create a conducive climate that will enable their democratic participation without prejudice. This results from their function of being a resource in that they inform SGB members about the policies and legislation. In a study conducted by Mncube, (2009; 2013) the role of the principal to encourage participation of learners in SGB was highlighted in the findings. This study emphasized that “the principal should endeavour to make learners feel equal partners by giving each member a chance to speak his/her mind, so that what Martin and Holt term ‘joined-up’ governance can be achieved” (Mncube, 2009, p.40). I strongly feel that principals coming from a neutral position can assist break this barrier to enhance their participation. The ‘power’ that the principal is revealed to have may benefit learners in this regard and ensure they are active in meetings.

2.5. Related studies on experiences of learner governors in school governance

Learners’ involvement in school governance has presented many experiences to them and the school community. Some of these experiences have been challenging to learners since it limits their effective participation in the SGB. The literature reveals that learners are commonly faced with the following challenges: knowledge on how to participate; cultural beliefs; term of office; and academic commitments (Mncube & Naicker, 2011; Phaswana 2010; Mabovula, 2009; Mncube, 2008; 2012; 2013). However, their involvement can also be of benefit to them and the school. This section of the review explores challenges and benefits of learner governors in the execution of their duties.

Culture has been reported by numerous studies to have an impact among Africans especially in rural settings which are culture bound where men are regarded as superior to women. Cockburn (2006) cited in Mncube, (2008) discovered learners’ voice will only be effective if

they attend the proposed meetings and take part when agenda is formulated. Furthermore, learners are expected to make contributions in meetings when given a chance, schools that afford this opportunity to learners are said to be more democratic (Mncube, 2005). However, a study conducted by Chiwela, (2010) in Zambia discovered that learners do not fully participate in meetings as a result of a 'cultural attitude'; in that learners are not allowed to speak in the presence of adults as a sign of respect. Therefore learners who challenge or question the adult members of the SGB are deemed disdainful. Mncube and Naicker (2011) discovered similar findings in some South African rural areas that participation of learners in school governance challenges the traditional adult-child relationship. Mncube and Harber, (2013) argue that the cultural attitude of being silent in the presence of elders is a barrier to change in education. Besides cultural issues, gender issues also play a role in South African education. To corroborate this argument, Mncube (2008) discovered that female learner governors were more overshadowed by their male counterparts in that they are less vocal as a result of gender issues in South African society. Moreover, Mncube (2013) adds that this cultural attitude can be associated to the one way traditional method of teaching. He argues that the teacher (adult) does the talking while learners listen. This therefore calls on parents to change their attitude towards learner governors so that they are free to communicate their ideas.

One of the challenges that learner governors face is the language often used in the SGB meetings. At times even if they do want to share their ideas in the meeting they do not know how to phrase them. Mabovula (2009) discovered that they would ask educators in the SGB to communicate their views. Mncube and Naicker, (2011) reveal that most of the issues discussed in the SGB are beyond them. They further discovered that educators feel learners interfere with school administration if they assume some of the responsibility of planning and executing the activities of the schools. On the other hand, the language used in the policy is beyond learners (Karlsson, McPherson & Pampalis, 2001). It is in this regard that this study seeks to discover learners understanding of SASA as one of the most relevant policies. For learners to participate and let their voice heard, support is paramount in developing their social and leadership skills so that they gain greater appreciation for democracy (Mncube & Naicker, 2011). It is paramount in this regard to create space for learners to participate and to respect them and their views. Respecting their views would be to implement and give support where needed to ensure that they have a meaningful role to play.

SASA mandates parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and the principal as an ex-officio member to serve the SGB for three years. Contrary to this, the same the SASA prescribes that a learner governor should only serve for one year. Phaswana (2010) argues the term of office learners serve hinders on effective learner participation. Mncube and Naicker, (2011) corroborates this view, they feel that learners are the ones who deserve a longer term of office because they need to adapt to the proceedings in the SGB and are ones with an inadequate experience. They further claim that by the time they acclimatize to such, it actually is the time when they are forced to vacate their positions. I feel the policy can make provisions for learners who are returning in the following year to continue with their roles in SGB. My argument is based on ensuring continuity and having confident learners with a better understanding of their role to enhance efficient school governance. However, the calibre of such learner governors I argue for should be under scrutiny so that the SGB is not served continuously with learners who are not willing to learn and consistently silent in meetings when issues of their concern are addressed.

It has become common practice that learners elected to serve as learner governors are normally in their final year of study. Being in Grade 12 presents many requires focus and time. Learners are always encouraged to halt other commitments they might have and focus solely on their studies. A study conducted by Phaswana (2010) revealed that learner governors who were in Grade 12 struggled to balance between their studies and participation in SGB. The respondents in her study further argued that when they are in Grade 12 most teachers focus on them particularly and they are constantly reminded by fellow learners that they declared their trust in them through votes. This indeed confirms that their priorities are competing. I believe this is genuine but can teach them an important skill of effective time management and balancing between academic work and SGB activities. This skill will also help them in the field of work and in this regard their role in the SGB benefits them in time management.

Numerous literatures on school governance locally and internationally have commended the inclusion of learners herein. Cockburn, (2006) contends that in democratization of schools, learners are expected to play a role in distributed leadership and decision making since they have the largest constituency compared to their SGB counterparts (in Mncube and Harber, 2013, p.2). Many studies have cited the advantages of the inclusion of learners as benefiting the institution as well as the individual personally (Mabovula, 2009). If learners are part of

school governance, they can benefit the institution in creating conducive climate for effective teaching and learning. They do this through promoting good human relations among fellow learners and staff personnel, thereby support in maintaining order and ascertain that their constituencies abide by school rules (Pendlebury, 2010/2011). Therefore learners who participate in the SGB benefits from a strong sense of control; increased self-esteem which in turn improve relations among them and teachers; teachers have high expectations on such learners which enhances their academic commitment; they acquire communication skills; learn to accept views of perspectives of others; and receive preferential treatment from teachers (Wilson, 2009; Quane & Rankin, 2006 cited in Phaswana, 2010).

2.6. Election and training of learners into RCL and SGB

A school principal can either appoint a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) or afford educators an opportunity elect one. The TLO is then an electoral officer tasked with an obligation to observe fairness the RCL elections at a school with Grade 8 or higher. The RCL Guidelines from The Department of Education stipulates the steps for election of members of the RCL as follows:

- Each class of learners in the school elect at least two representatives, one male and one female in cases where the school has both;
- Such nominated learners should be seconded verbally or in writing and they must also indicate their availability by accepting nomination;
- These learners will be candidates which will appear on a secret ballot paper;
- Each learner in a class shall be entitled to vote for each candidate;
- Seven or a maximum of ten (depending on school enrolment) candidates with a maximum number of votes stand elected as members of RCL;
- The elected members of RCL in the presence of the TLO elect Executive Committee members which are; a president, a vice president, a treasurer, a secretary and additional members.
- Subsequently they elect two learners to represent them in the SGB as learner governors (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 1996).

However, in some schools election of RCLs is not as democratic as expected. Some learners are elected by the educators on the basis of their good conduct or academic excellence. A study conducted by Duma, (2011) exploring views held by educators on the role of student leadership in governance confirmed that the principal and educators should be allowed to nominate some members of the RCL. This is contrary to the principles of democracy where learners are free to elect any learner of their choice whom they believe will address their issues of concern. Some educators are of the view that the RCLs should coexist with the Prefect structure which the SASA does not recognize (Duma, 2011). If these two structures coexist; this will cause anarchy among learners fighting for space and legitimacy. Therefore, compliance to the SASA regulation is mandatory on the recognized structure.

Elected learners serve for one year both in RCL and SGB compared to others stakeholders who serve for three years. According to SASA, the newly elected SGBs with the inclusion of learners should be inducted by the MEC's office on their roles so as to ensure that they perform them with diligence. A study conducted by Van Wyk (2007) revealed that there is a need for training of SGB members. A teacher interviewed in her study emphasized that "the workshops for the training of SGBs should be improved; follow-ups should be made to evaluate their performance and no follow-ups, no improvement" (Van Wyk, 2007, p.137). The department of education has made numerous attempts to train and capacitate school governors in execution of their duties. However, Xaba, (2011) quotes many researchers who discovered that despite the training, governance of South African schools is faced with numerous challenges. In addition Xaba, (2011, p.201) contends that "the very essence and effectiveness of the training that school governors receive are often questionable". To corroborate this argument Mabasa and Themane (2002) cited in Xaba (2011, p.201) reported that SGB members are not trained as they start their assigned responsibilities:

This manifests in problems such as unfamiliarity with meeting procedures, problems with the specialist language used in meetings, difficulties in managing large volumes of paper, not knowing how to make a contribution, not knowing appropriate legislation, feeling intimidated by the presence of other members who seem knowledgeable and perceiving their roles as simply endorsing what others have already decided upon.

In my own observation since I have been a TLO and a teacher representative in SGB I have observed with greater concern that the induction workshop are only for compliance with the

regulations of SASA. In the recent induction workshop I attended only, the SGB Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, one teacher representative and the principal were invited and learners were left out. This in my view is intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the importance of learner participation and support. Welgemoed (1998) cited in Mncube, (2013, p.15) recognize the training of learners as pivotal to the successful implementation of democratic structures in South African schools. Mncube (2013) discovered lack of training as a major hindrance for learner participation and suggest that learners should have as many ongoing workshops as possible to develop their skills. Guerra and Nelson (2009) corroborate this view and argue that one of the ways to improve participation is to bring all stakeholders on board and provide support they need so that their participation can be enhanced. If training is ongoing learners will benefit to learn about important basic skills since among all other stakeholders they are the only ones who only serve for a year.

2.7. Theoretical framework:

2.7.1. Collegial and political theory

When exploring the learner governors' understanding of their role it is imperative to focus on their experiences that they confront in effective execution of their duties. This study links learner participation within democracy. School governance is explained as "the process by which a small group, usually on behalf of others (constituencies), exercise authority over educational system and dictates the way the system organizes itself to make and implement decisions" (Carver, 2000, p.26).

In this context, school governance includes all stakeholders that are mandated by their constituencies to make decisions and implement them for the betterment of the school. Within the governing body, members could be working together to achieve a common goal. Bush (2008, p.14) refers to this as collegiality, which "assumes that leaders and staff have shared values and common interest". In this all stakeholders have a role to play and values each other's inputs and expertise. It suggests that learner governors are equally important as parents and teachers in school governance. However, the collegial theory assumes that decisions are reached through consensus rather than conflict. This is ignorant of a notion that; to reach consensus, conflict is inevitable since the governors represent constituencies with different expectations and demands. Many studies including Sithole (1999), Karlsson et al (2001) and Davies (2002) have discovered contrasting views on learner participation in

education with some arguing for participation of learners in school governance and some were arguing against. This therefore limits participative facets of collegiality in decision making since many have been negative towards their participation in governance.

On the contrary, the political theory differs from the collegial model in that it stresses the goals of ‘sub-units’ rather than those of the institution. The political theory assumes that there is a conflict within these groupings or sub-units, wherein each group fights for their own interest (Bush, 2002). In this case the SGB is made of representatives representing various constituencies including; teachers, learners and parents which are jostling for power over each other. Each group strive to dominate over others in ensuring that they promote their interest, as such conflict is inevitable. In this regard Murphy, (2000) cited in Mncube & Naicker (2011, p.147) argues that “education is about control” therefore the ‘driver of the educational bus’ must be known. However, “principals have significant resources of power which they are able to deploy in support of their interests and objectives” Bush (2002, p.141). If the stakeholders have differences, such should be accommodated so that through a robust discussion they come across them (Young, 2000). This theoretical framework will be used to determine whether the findings suggest collegiality or jostling of power among stakeholders.

2.7.2. Other relevant theories

Since the advent of democracy, several studies have been conducted exploring the implementation of democracy in schools (Carter, Harber & Serf, 2003). The values that schools strive to promote include; tolerance, democracy and accountability (Mncube, 2008). Democracy is “the belief in freedom and equality between people, or a system of government based on this belief, in which power is either held by elected representative or directly by people themselves” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2005, p.330). This suggests that democracy advocates for equality among people since they possess power from the constituencies that elected them.

Numerous studies conducted in school governance are underpinned by the deliberative democracy and social learning frameworks (Phaswana, 2010; Mncube, 2005; 2008; 2012). Mncube and Naidoo, (2011, p.146) borrow from other academics and view democracy as underpinned by four principles which includes; “rights, participation, equity and informed choice”. One of the facets of democracy is participation and values thereof are tolerance, and responsibility (Mncube, 2008). Democratic and other human rights are protected by the

supreme law of the country enshrined in the South African Constitution and other relevant policies. These rights are coupled with responsibilities which schools ought to promote. Participation advocates for involvement of individuals in the decision making process. In the case of this study, participation of stakeholders stated in the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 to take and implement decisions to enhance school governance is pivotal. Equity as a third principle promotes fairness and equality of all individuals and groups. The school governing body is constituted by different stakeholders representing different interest groups; therefore equity hopes to achieve fair treatment and giving space to all to contribute freely without prejudice. Lastly, “informed decision refers to the tools employed in decision making which are based on relevant information and reason” (Mncube & Naidoo, 2011, p.146). This can be achieved through training of governors for them to have relevant skills and knowledge to deliberate vigorously. The deliberative democracy theory can help schools teach good citizenship. This enhances good governance and affords space for maturation of learner governors.

The deliberative democracy theory as outlined was popularized by Young, (1990; 1996; 1999 2000). She advocates for inclusion of learners in governance which she defines as the foundation of democracy. She argues that schools should afford space for “interaction among participant in a decision-making process in which people hold one another accountable even if they have differing positions...a decision is arrived at through an inclusive process of public discussion” (Mabovula, 2009, p.222). In her view for stakeholders to achieve a common goal, it is of utmost significance to listen to one another’s individual perspectives as it promotes mutual respect. Young (1999) acknowledges that some individuals may be more capacitated to deliberate on issues than others and through expression she hopes that they will be listened to and capacitated. In this case, learners are the most relevant due to their vulnerability in their tokenistic inclusion that many studies have revealed. Capacitating them is paramount towards total democratization and the deliberation democracy that Young aspires.

The second theory that relates to this study is a theory that Phaswana, (2010) draws from the work of Wildermeersch, Jansen, Vanderbeebe and Jans (1998): social learning theory. This theory emphasises that people learn from interacting with each other and “strike a balance between different tensions that influence decisions and directions of the learning system” (Phaswana, 2010, p.108). Wildermeersch *et. al.* (1998) defines social learning in terms of the

following; action, reflection, communication and cooperation. They view action as being necessitated by a challenge or need wherein knowledge and skills and other resources are employed to overcome it. There is cohesion where members complement each other inadequacies. The second dimension of reflection is viewed as the ability to ‘stand back’, challenge the assumption that stakeholders have about each other and reach common understanding. They view communication (third dimension) as the ability to listen to every input during deliberations from all stakeholders involved so that social learning is enhanced without any grouping feeling prejudice. Lastly, cooperation sought to enhance participation which in turn allows people to find themselves in a process of negotiation (Wildermeersch *et al.*, 1998 cited in Phaswana, 2010)

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed both national and international literature on issues around learner governors and school governance. With the literature reviewed, the study hoped to establish relevant studies and findings in relation to it. The literature reveals that there are many contesting views on learner participation. It was prominent that learner participation is faced with numerous challenges. The challenges outlined include the inclusion of learners in governance just for window dressing and to comply with the prescripts of the department. It is therefore imperative that learners be empowered to participate maximally in the SGB. It is highly recommended that the department offers ongoing support to the learners so that they have the confidence and skills to raise issues that affect them. Learners should be allowed to observe and have a voice in the employment of any staff member any capacity since they are at the receiving end. This will confirm the department’s commitment in putting learners first. It was noted in the literature explored that the principals seem to have more power than other stakeholders as a result of being resource personnel of the department. I am of the view that they must be empowered on how to devolve their power amongst all other stakeholders. This is because most of such principals might have inherited the dominance and keeping of power from the apartheid regime and are not equipped with the democratic methods of governance.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to outline the methodological components that have been used to in response to the critical questions of the study. This chapter describes the research design in detail focussing on the tools used to collect and analyse data. I will define the tools chosen and provide reasons for their relevance in this study. The chapter is made up of the following sections which are arranged in a particular sequence: paradigm; design; methodology; data generation instruments, procedures and analysis; ethical considerations; trustworthiness and conclusion. I started with the paradigm since it houses the entire project shedding light to the aspects of design and methodology.

3.2. Paradigm

A research paradigm guides the process of inquiry and forms the basis for the practice of science by directing the researcher towards appropriate research methods and methodologies, depending on the nature of the phenomenon being investigated (Clarke, 1999; Kuhn, 1970). This study was located within the interpretivist paradigm, which was used in order to gain and explore the learner governor's understanding of their role in school governance. This approach enabled me to have an in-depth understanding of how they perceived and felt about it. Furthermore, I then deduced and described meaning from their responses. Without this approach, responses from the participants would not have made any logical sense.

Through an interpretivist approach it was possible to acquire insights from each participant's response. Cavana *et al.*, (2001) cited in Guba and Lincoln, (1994) argues that this paradigm considers reality as a socially constructed phenomenon where individuals ascribe meanings to events they can relate to. Moreover, it served as a way of acquiring their insights through discovering meanings of their responses. This confirms the argument by Guba and Lincoln, (1994) in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000, p.24) that "results are out there waiting to be found or discovered by the researcher, but created through interpretation". This study sought to discover the understandings of participants and consider them without prejudice.

3.3. Research Design

A research design is “an action plan for getting from here to there, where ‘here’ may be defined as an initial set of questions to be answered and ‘there’ is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions” (Yin, 1994, p.19). This study adopted a case study as its research design. Case studies are commonly used in social science research to explore meanings and understandings of particular group in this case the learner governors who are a pivotal stakeholder in governance source. A case study is relevant in that it explores “what it is like to be in any particular situation...the researcher aims to capture the reality of the participants’ lived experiences of and thoughts about a particular situation” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.182). A case that was explored in the study was a particular group of learners that are elected to serve in school governors as representatives of learner constituency within the school. This was achieved by exploring their lived experiences of serving in the SGB. This was a multi-site case study since it explored town sites with different contexts in order to compare results.

This study explored what learner governors understood as their role in school governance. This involved their thoughts and perceptions which they communicated verbally through an interview. Moreover, qualitative approach is instrumental in obtaining textual data and explains social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions of people (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). It is for this reason that this study is located within qualitative rather than the quantitative approach. Qualitative approach helped me access more in-depth responses about the learner governors’ perceptions regarding my topic. As described by Cresswell (1998) in Myeza, (2005, p.20) that qualitative research is “an enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions and enquiry that explores social or human problems where the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in natural settings”. This assisted me derive meaning from their responses and get comprehensive opinions on what they perceived as their role in school governance.

3.4. Methodology

This research methodology is generic and embraces two subsections namely; the delimitations of the study and sampling of participants. Each subsection’s relevance to the study is explored comprehensively.

3.4.1. Delimitations of the study

The study was confined to two schools that are in the same circuit as mine. It intentionally targeted schools with grade 8 or higher as they are the only legitimate schools to have RCLs. The RCL comprises of a number of learners duly elected by fellow learners to represent them within the school. However, this study was only interested to only learners that represent learners in the SGB being elected from the RCL members. The purpose of selecting these learners was for convenience and focus on relevant learners which this study targeted. This is selection is to also ensure that I do not lose focus on my area of research which is to explore learner governors understanding of the role in school governance.

3.4.2. Sampling

Ngubane, (2012, p.25) cites Cohen et al. (2011) who argues that “the quality of research stands not only by the appropriateness of the instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy used”. In this study I used purposive sampling to select a population with relevant information that I sought to discover. In this study, a specific choice was made to include schools within the similar contexts both from a rural area. Two (three in some cases) learner governors who are eligible representatives of learners in all SGB meetings and proceedings in the current year 2015 were used as participants. The study targeted learner governors from two rural schools as respondents to the study. Even though such learners were part of the RCL; the study did not generalize on behalf of a larger RCL fraternity but only represented views of the two/three participants who sat in the SGB meetings in the sites explored.

I wrote letters to the relevant high schools that were within my vicinity and easily accessible as they are in the same Circuit as mine (see appendix E and F). SGB Chairpersons convened a meeting in their respective schools and informed them about my request to observe some of their meetings. A letter of permission to conduct research as well as observe an SGB meeting was sent to me. I then went to each school to meet the school principal, in each case they called the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) to meet me and later the learner governors were called in. I explained the project to them and dealt with all the ethical issues. We arranged to meet from July to August for the focus group interviews at each school and observe meetings as per invitations from the SGB.

3.4.2.1. Research sites-Context

KwaZulu Natal is one of the nine provinces in South Africa with varied context ranging from suburbs (urban), townships (semi-urban) and predominantly rural. Majority of people within KwaZulu-Natal speak isiZulu and are called AmaZulu. The study was conducted at two schools at UThukela district which is one of the districts in northern KwaZulu-Natal. These schools are situated at a deep rural area; learners who attend these schools walk great distances from remote areas. Parents are generally poor since both these school are classified under quintile two. Schools within this quintile are ones serving poor communities thereby providing food to the learners through National School Nutrition Program (NSNP). Furthermore, learners are exempted from paying school fees and the school is within section 21 where all powers are given to the school governing body to control all finances thereof. This research was aimed at discovering learner governors' understanding of their role within the four schools with similar contexts. I feel that focusing on rural school generated the kinds of data that this study envisaged hence many studies revealed that learners faced numerous challenges including cultural attitudes.

3.4.3. Data Generation Instruments

This study employed a focus group interview and unstructured observation as data collection methods in order to collect rich and reliable data. The subsections below will justify the relevance of these instruments in this study by also drawing from literature where possible.

3.4.3.1. Focus Group interviews

Mertens (1998) is of the view that interviews allow intimate, repeated and prolonged involvement of the researcher and the participant; this enabled me to get to the root of what I was investigated and allowed me to ask follow up questions. Furthermore, interviews were employed to give them the opportunity to give in-depth responses so they can express, share their feelings and thoughts about their role in SGB. The interviews gave participants a chance to reflect on the experience that they have acquired from being part the members of school governance. I conducted focus group interviews from the two schools respectively in a formal way where I asked questions to the learner governors who sat in SGB meetings (see appendix A). Interviews ensured that my focus was not narrowed and did not limit my participants to go beyond my scope. Furthermore "the interviewer is...able to judge the quality of the

responses of the subjects, to notice if a question has not been properly understood, and to reassure and encourage the respondent to be full in his/her answers” (Walliman, 2011, p.193). As much as focus group interviews brought all the learner governors together for their varied opinions; I tried to ensure that each learner governor is not overshadowed by another. Even though in some instances from both schools one learner governor seemed dominant, I could control this by probing questions to the quiet ones to encourage their participation. This afforded space for each learner governor to contribute to this study.

3.4.3.2. Observation

I requested permission from the SGB members from the two schools respectively and observed proceedings in their meetings. I wanted to observe learner governors role in SGB meetings in response to the critical questions this study poses. Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2000) adds that observation affords the researcher ‘first hand data’; hence the sessions will be observed rather than being told. I observed the level of participation of learner governors and the space created for such. My observation was indirect in that I did not participate in the deliberations of the meetings to be observed. Mncube, (2010) argues that this may be a disadvantage because there could be high ‘artificiality’ in the actions of those observed and that it consumes a lot of time. Indeed people behave in a certain way when they are being observed and I compared what they said in the interviews with the real actions in the SGB meeting. This helped me draw a conclusion on whether the observation had any impact in the manner in which the participants behaved. Mncube, (2010) also think it is important to observe in an unplanned manner while on field as this is a ‘fore-grounded’ method of data collection. General aspects to be observed have been crafted to give an idea to the SGB on what this observation seeks to achieve (see appendix B).

3.5. Data Generation Procedures

I obtained permission for learner governors to participate in this study through a request for each learner governor to participate voluntary in this study. I requested that they indicate their willingness or unwillingness to be photographed or recorded (see appendix D). In each case learners indicated their willingness to be audio-taped. I used an audio tape to record learners and a note-pad in which I recorded certain issues that I wanted further elaboration on. This was done to avoid disturbing them while they are talking. A note-pad further assisted me record issues which seemed pertinent.

It was most appropriate for me to conduct this study within the school premises as this in my view maintained the study as professional as possible. The principals in each school gave me access and permission to their offices for conducting the focus group interviews. It was better to deal with an office occupied by one than a staffroom which was occupied by many hence it was easy to control. A staffroom is used by many educators who have staff that belongs to them, when they lost items might suspect that me or any of my participants had something to do with it. The principal's office in most schools is the sacred space where not many people come in and out as they please; this was an advantage as there was less noise and fewer disturbances. The security guard in each case was involved in assessing the state of the office before and after the study is conducted so s/he can testify in each case that I left it in the original state.

The interviews were conducted after school hours and there were three issues that I had to address namely: learners who were using a common scholar transport that picked them up at a specific time; learners were hungry and tired after long hours of tuition. I also had to adjust the complexity of the language used in the interview to meet their levels of understanding. To address the issue of transport; I gave each learner money for taxi that will take them closer and ensure that they have reached their home safe. In cases where I could assist with my car, I took those that were closer to the route I took them closer to their home. I bought them something to eat so they have energy and eager to participate in the study. I ensured that the questions were simplified and asked in IsiZulu in case where they did not understand. Learners were more comfortable in responding in IsiZulu, I translated their responses to English for the purpose of the report. Each interview took at least half an hour.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of collected data. The data was analysed during and after collection was completed. The data in the current investigation consisted of transcripts and field notes taken during the interviews conducted for the purposes of the study. The collected data was then reduced by organising and sorting data into themes that emerged. Emerging themes were categorised to identify patterns amongst them. To achieve that, I used McMillan and Schumacher (1993) steps for developing an organising system. I started by the first step where I read the data set (field notes, and transcripts) to get a sense while noting ideas that were identified. Secondly, I

identified topics which emerged in the margin. Thirdly, I wrote down a list of topics that emerged from different sets of data to see any if there was any duplication so that similar topics were classified together in the same group. Lastly, I summarised themes into subtopics to guide and classify the findings in relation to main research questions.

Immediately after the first interviews and observations were conducted I followed the method outlined above to analyse data and avoided having chunks of data to confuse me. This made it easy when analysing data from the second, research sites because I fitted themes accordingly and listed other new emerging themes. All themes emerging were analyzed in comparison with literature.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

According to Terreblanche and Durrheim, (1999, p. 66) ethics can be described as a set of widely accepted moral principles about correct and behavioural expectation towards those being researched and towards other researchers. Permission to conduct the study was sought and was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee in consideration of all related ethical issued (see appendix G). Permission to conduct this study within the sampled schools was also requested from the Department of Education through its representative, the school principal. A letter to request permission from the principal was sent (see appendix E). In cases where participants were below eighteen years of age, a letter was sent to the parents requesting consent for their children to participate in this study. This letter was written in both IsiZulu and English to ensure that they understood (see appendix C1 and C2). All parties involved in the study responded formally by signing their consent and declaration form. I ensured confidentiality was guaranteed by using pseudonyms for the two schools that were sampled. Every interviewee's response was not shared with anyone else in the institution. Participants were given consent forms to request permission from their parents in cases where they were minors. The consent forms were written in both Isizulu and English to ensure that they understood everything and to ensure that participants comprehended.

I explained the intention of the research and how the data was going to be handled in ensuring that no harm was caused to the participants by the research since the findings will not be published anywhere; the findings will only be used for this study. Anonymity was observed, hence real names of the participants are not used in this research, and they were referred to as learner governors as a substitute for their names (Babie, 1998). I clarified that

participation is voluntary. Participants were given a platform to air their views about every aspect that they sought related to my research and I tried to ensure that they did not speak sarcastic and provocative language that would have made others feel useless and prejudice by reminding them about the essence of professionalism.

3.8. Trustworthiness (Validity and Reliability)

Research trustworthiness is used to check appropriateness of data. Neuman (1997, p.508) argues that the “foundation for interpretation rests on triangulated empirical materials that are trustworthy”. In order to guarantee the research trustworthiness, I adopted triangulation. In this strategy data is examined using multiple strategies. This was achieved by using the same question in more than one way thereby checking if the respondents have answered the questions in the same way or not ” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). I conducted focus group interviews as well as unstructured observation in order to infer and triangulate the data.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) validity can be defined as the extent of comparison between the explanations the participants offer about the phenomena, and their world’s realities. In view of this argument, I ensured validity of this study by quoting participants’ verbatim responses. These transcripts were sent back to the interviewees to check whether what have been captured were really their responses. Tape-recording the interviews ensured that the responses from participants were captured to circumvent misrepresenting them.

In explaining research reliability, Ngubane, (2012, p.30) lends from Cohen et al (2011) who define it as “a fit between what a researcher records as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched”. This was meant to ascertain consistency of data collection methods in use and that one supported the other. In this study, unstructured observations were meant to close any gaps between what was observed and what the participants responded to ensure that the study was reliable.

3.9. Summary of the chapter

This section of the report has explored research design and methodology that was used in the study. This section justified relevance of each research style employed in this study using literature to support justifications. The paradigm which this study deems significant as it houses the entire project was outlined in great detail. The study zoomed into the participants

of this study and explained how they were sampled. The study used observation and focus group interviews to ensure that the data collected is reliable and valid. Ethical issues were addressed in the study hence this is a very important aspect before any data can be collected.

CHAPTER 4: Data Presentation and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss data generated from two secondary school learner governors in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. A total of six learner school governors, three from each school participated in the study. Data presented here includes two recorded focus group interviews from each school and observation of one School Governing Body (SGB) meeting from each school. The themes that this chapter discusses are: election of learners into SGB, learner governors understanding of their roles as prescribed by SASA, support and benefits for learner governors, learner governors' experiences of their role in SGB, learner governors' recommendations to learner participation in school governance and emerging issues. The focus groups are coded using pseudonyms for both schools. The first school will be referred to as Ekukhuthaleni Secondary School and the second one as Enqabeni Secondary School.

4.2. Responses on election of learners into SGB

The procedure followed to elect learners into Representative Council of Learners (RCL) then SGB is clearly stipulated in the Guidelines from the Department of Education that each class from Grade six to twelve should elect at least two learner representatives. Among the two representatives, one should be a male and the other a female provided that the school has both. Regarding this matter the main question I asked each focus group was how they were elected into the SGB. Learner governors from both school A and B shared similar sentiments when they were asked how they were elected. In both schools the participants reported that their elections started with the elections of learners to represent learners in RCL. In this regard, one participant from Ekukhuthaleni echoed this sentiment:

In our class a teacher came in and asked learners to elect a learner that will represent us in the RCL, he first requested volunteers and then suggested that we nominate three names which he wrote on the board. Each learner took out a piece of paper and voted for one of the nominees to be in the RCL. A learner with most votes emerged as an RCL member from there we met as RCL members to elect SGB three representatives.

In the same light, learner governors from Enqabeni School reported on how they were elected and this is how one of them expressed it:

We first elected class captains in each class from which each class nominated two males and two females. Learners in each class voted for two learners one boy and one girl to be members of RCL. RCL members contested for positions such as President, Deputy President, Secretary and others, those contesting for position of President had to present their manifesto convincing learners why they should vote for them. Later a meeting of class captains was called and each class was supposed to be represented by one learner, just because a boy in my class was absent I then attended. A school principal from a neighbouring school suggested that we nominate learner governors amongst the class captains present. We then voted by show of hands and we emerged as the three learners that will be part of SGB.

There seems to be a general understanding on the procedure in election of learners into RCL and SGB as set out in the Guidelines for RCL even though the procedure varies from school to school. Both schools have elected three learner governors and this is in contradiction with the two that the Department of Education (1999) recommends. Many studies conducted in this area revealed that there were two learner governors in the SGB (Magadla, 2007; Mncube, 2009). However, this could be a good move to include more learner governors for moral support and a confidence booster on learners' side. Enqabeni School was more empowering to the learners in that they were given a platform to campaign which is preparing them for real life situation and enhances understanding of democracy for good citizenry. It teaches them tenets of democracy which is tolerance and freedom of choice. Phaswana (2010, p.105) corroborates with this notion and adds that learner participation in governance benefits them in that they gain "confidence, a sense of control and the promotion of democratic values".

However it is worth noting that both schools had two males and one female learner governors each probably as a result of power relations in favour of masculinity predominantly in most rural settings. This signalled that there was a need to support females at younger age in order to address gender equality earlier. Moreover, one learner governor mentioned that "she only attended the meeting because a boy was absent" this suggested that female learner governors either had a negative attitude towards leadership position or learners had negative attitude towards them. This was also observed that in meetings female learner governors were the quieter compared to their male counterparts.

Both schools had learner governors who were in Grade 12 and most schools RCL are led by such learners. These learners have competing priorities, one is the role they are expected to play in both RCL and SGB and secondly their studies that are more demanding at this level. When I asked them how they coped with this load, they shared same sentiments in both schools that they try to balance the load but it is not easy. A study conducted by Phaswana (2010) also revealed that learners struggle to strike a balance between their schoolwork and governance work and learners put pressure on them by constantly reminding them that they voted for them. On the contrary in both the SGB meetings I observed from the two schools learner governors who were in Grade 12 were the only ones who had something to say in meetings. They are better placed in terms of confidence and maturation when compared to fellow learner governors. Even in answering the interview questions, they seemed dominant over their colleagues. Despite many suggestions that learner governors who are in Grade 12 be left out, I feel their participation is fruitful to the SGB as in most cases they were more vocal compared to those in lower grades.

4.3. Responses on learner governors' understanding of their roles as prescribed by SASA

The SASA of 1996 has clear guidelines on the roles that SGBs play in school governance. Regarding this matter, I asked the participants about their role in school governance. The sentiment from Ekukhuthaleni School learner governors was that they had a common understanding. In this regard one of them had this to say:

We understand our role as that of representing learners in SGB raising all issues that affects us, for an example if the school property is not in good condition we raise such issues in the meeting. We also report cases of learners who have problems at home where they have no money to buy school uniform we find ways of assisting such learners. We feel the SGB should also take part in addressing issues of teaching and learning.

In response to the same question one learner governor from Enqabeni School responded in a way they all agreed upon stating that:

We are expected to be exemplary to fellow learners at all times. We follow all instructions given by SGB members, teachers and principal and ensure that they are

implemented. We must be respectful and abide by rules of confidentiality ensuring that we do not discuss what was discussed in the meeting amongst ourselves. We also need to convey all learners' concerns and demands on how they expect to be treated in the school to the SGB. They also feel that SGB should be involved in issues of teaching and learning.

The responses provided by both Ekukhuthaleni and Enqabeni Secondary Schools participants suggest that learners did not understand their roles that are clearly stipulated in SASA. These learners are only in the SGB to report on issues of fellow learners and have no interest on other governance issues that are discussed in the SGB meetings. Learners from both schools echoed similar sentiments that they reported or conveyed issues that affected learners. I confirmed this from the observation of the meetings in the two schools respectively. In these meetings, I observed that learners were silent when other issues such as school policies and fundraising strategies were discussed; they were only vocal in issues such as teachers' late coming and absenteeism that affected them directly in teaching and learning. However, findings of a study conducted by Magadla (2007, p. 25) revealed that "learners make no input, they agree with everything said by adults". Findings of this study suggest that learners were not completely silent in the meetings but only speak on issues they can relate with. In Ekukhuthaleni School learner governors had a specific item on the agenda written: Learner related issues, where they reported on all issues that affected them. This did not make them full members of the SGB but they were just an SGB arm that is looking after learner interests. At an SGB meeting of Enqabeni School learner governors reported issues that were related to teaching and learning, registering their unhappiness with how certain subjects were taught. They cited that they knew when a teacher is not doing enough to support them and complained about a lack of subject content from a certain teacher. Furthermore, learner governors from both schools were in agreement that SGBs should be involved in issues of teaching and learning and be at liberty to comment on curriculum issues. All these are an indication that they failed to differentiate management issues from issues of governance. This concurs with findings of a study conducted by Magadla (2007) which discovered that learner governors "confuse" issues talking about trips, matriculation farewell functions and learner and educator absenteeism which are management issues. This confusion suggests that there is a need to revise SASA to extend the functions of the SGB so that learners deliberate on issues that affect them without constraint.

A study by Davis (2002) discovered that certain members of SGB lacked skills to follow the correct procedures as set out in SASA no 84 of (1996). When I asked learners from both schools if they had seen or accessed the Act, they both reported that they knew nothing about SASA and have not heard about it. This makes their task even more difficult as their roles are clearly set out therein. Learner governors' low participation was possibly caused by a lack of knowledge and consequently lack of confidence as a result. It is worth noting that the study by Davis (2002) was conducted over a decade ago and the situation is still similar now. Most SGBs still lack skills on how they can participate meaningfully as guided by SASA in their own mother tongue. This suggested that the department needed to provide more ongoing workshops to enhance SGBs' understandings of their role.

Studies conducted by Karlsson, McPherson and Pampalis, (2001) around learner governors' understanding of SASA revealed that the language used in the policy is too complex for them to understand; as a result a vernacular version of the policy was released to schools to address this concern. It is unfortunate that even this simplified version of the policy was not available to learner governors to use. This confirms findings of Mncube and Naicker (2011); Mabovula (2009); Phaswana (2010); Jeruto and Kiprop (2011); Mncube (2008; 2012; 2013) that the inclusion of learners in governance is just a window dressing tactic aimed at appeasing departmental officials.

I was fortunate to observe a SGB meeting at Ekukhuthaleni School which was reporting on issues of finance in the school. A statement indicating income and expenditure was circulated in the meeting for the consumption of all SGB members. However, learner governors only passed the paper without even looking at the figures. They only sat there listening to the report on finances which they could not engage in any way. I asked learner governors after the meeting how they viewed their minimal participation in issues that dealt with school finances and they agreed with one of them who had this to say:

We really want to know about school finances because after all this is our money. We need to know where each cent is spent because when they accuse the SGB of misusing money we are part of the same SGB.

Section 32 (1) of SASA makes a provision that learners governors cannot decide on the school budget and expenditure nor vote on resolutions of SGB that impose liabilities on third parties or on the school. This provision is mainly interpreted as one that curtails learners from

participation or talking about financial issues of the school with the aim to protect them as they are regarded as minors. As a result of this misinterpretation, their participation in finances of the school is minimal. I feel they needed to participate in all issues that the SGB was involved in, so that they realize their inclusion is meaningful. This would have ensured that they all had an equal power in school governance and closed a gap that Naidoo (2004) argued of, where adult governors had more 'stake' than learners. The findings suggested that learners were aligned with the political theory in that they were expected to jostle for power so they could participate fully in governance issues.

4.4. Responses on support and benefits for learner governors

I asked if learner governors were supported in any way or received any benefits such as better treatment from teachers or fellow learners due to their participation in SGB. Focus groups of learner governors from both schools were in agreement their participation in SGB has taught them to value and respect other people's views. One learner governor from Ekukhuthaleni responded this way:

I now know how to approach issues in a respectful way that will take the school forward as I am a member of the SGB.

Based on my experience as a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO), learner governors need more support to enhance their participation than their fellow SGB counterparts. My observation has been consistent with a study conducted Guerra and Nelson (2009) that one of the means to improve participation is to reach out to the stakeholders and provide support they need. The Department of Education has committed to empower RCL members and learner governors through support workshops. The support workshops are aimed at capacitating learners on the role on student leadership so that they will be informed and participate confidently. Learner governors from both Ekukhuthaleni and Enqabeni School said that they never attended any workshop organised by the Department of Education. I further used my role as a union activist working closely with the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) to ask learners who were part of a conference. I asked COSAS members who are learner governors in their respective schools if they received any training from the Department of Education as this is our quest to enhance their performance of their role and all of them indicated that they never attended any workshop except a briefing from a TLO telling them what is expected of them.

Learner governors understanding of their role can be attributed to a TLOs commitment in supporting them execute their duties diligently. If TLOs are supportive and well informed about their role; learner governors participate effectively in the SGB. Learner governors rely mostly on TLOs for support hence the department rarely organise workshops to capacitate them. The only information that learner governors had regarding their participation was one they received from internal training conducted by TLOs. This suggests that training of learner governors should not only be a responsibility of TLOs but the department too.

I also wanted to find out how being part of SGB benefit learner governors in deliberation and critical reasoning as this sheds light on how well they have learnt since their involvement and this is what one learner governor from Ekukhuthaleni School had to say:

Being in SGB teaches us respect of opinions and how to approach issues that will develop the school; you change for the better because you want to be exemplary to other learners. We also learn that we do not only represent our classes but we represent concerns for all learners in the school

Therefore this suggests that there were benefits for learners who participated in SGB hence their behaviour was somewhat modified for the better. In some instances they were motivated to excel academically so that they were good examples to fellow learners. Governors from this school acquired representative democracy as a leadership skill. This is a very important skill of leadership which emphasized the role of leaders acting on behalf of their constituencies with best interest at heart. In responding to the same question learner governors from Enqabeni School shared similar sentiments which one of them said “serving SGB helps us understand how a leader conducts him/herself”. This is in agreement with a view from Ekukhuthaleni School; that their participation shapes their character and they learn how leaders conduct themselves so that they are good examples. In the meetings I observed from the two schools; learners were very quiet and had less to contribute to these meetings as such deliberation and critical reasoning was curtailed.

My findings are consistent with other studies conducted in this area that learner governors involvement benefits them in that they gain a strong sense of control; increased self-esteem which in turn improve relations among them and teachers; teachers have high expectations on such learners which enhances their academic commitment; they acquire communication skills; learn to accept views of perspectives of others; and receive preferential treatment from

teachers (Wilson, 2009; Quane & Rankin, 2006 cited in Phaswana, 2010). Therefore those who argue against learner involvement in governance issues should weight these advantages of their participation in relation to disadvantages thereof.

4.5. Responses on learner governors' experiences of their role

I asked learner governors to share their day-to-day experiences and impact thereof regarding their involvement in SGB and this was what one of learner governors Ekukhuthaleni School had to say:

Learners always criticize you no matter how hard you try to please them; they mock us if there is no teacher in the classroom by asking for permission to go to the toilet which they know is sought from teachers. When we try to raise issues that we think are pertinent among learners; fellow SGB members always ask us if these are really from learners or we made them up, this is very disturbing for us.

Learner governors from Enqabeni School responded this way regarding their experiences regarding their participation in SGB:

We request certain things from SGB on behalf of learners and they do not normally do it; if they do, they never recognise that it was our initiative and bring us on board. Most of the things they do for learners are organised without us and we fail to defend a decision we were not part of. For example; they just imposed a new school uniform for learners in the school without consulting us and learners are very angry at us thinking we sold them out when we were not even part of that decision.

The findings above reaffirms that learners cannot clearly distinguish the roles and responsibilities of RCL members and learner governors. The finding from school B confirms previous studies that learner governors' involvement in SGB is just for window dressing; if SGB takes such a huge decision without learner involvement. They should have been part of the decision about a school uniform as ones who will be wearing it.

SGB meetings are convened per SASA regulations except for cases where there are urgent issues to be discussed. Such meetings are called at anytime when a need arise. When a question about the time of meetings and experiences thereof was asked to learner governors from Ekukhuthaleni School had this to say:

We normally hold our SGB meetings on Saturday and this interferes with our house chores that we have to do. It is very difficult to seat with elders and people we are not comfortable around

On the same question, one learner governor from Enqabeni School responded this way:

We normally hold SGB meetings on Wednesday from 8h00 to 11h00 in the morning. Our teachers understand that we have to leave the class for such meetings

Mncube, (2008) argued that SGB in rural areas struggle to convene meetings because there are always barriers that impinge stakeholders for honouring such fully. In case if this finding; learner governors in school A have been accommodated by shifting meetings to weekends to avoid tempering with their tuition time. Learner governors cited the difficulty of seating with elders and people they are not familiar with. This confirms findings by Mncube and Naicker (2011); Chiwela,(2010) of a 'cultural attitude' where learners are afraid to speak in the presence of elders. In my observation of the meeting, parents commanded respect from learners and that denigrated them and they then reserved their contributions as a result of fear. Even though learner governors from both school A and B agreed that they are given a platform by the Chairperson who constantly encourages them to participate; their participation is controlled as when and how they are expected to participate.

The SASA no. 84 of 1996, clearly outlines the roles of SGB and limitations towards learner governors. It prohibits them from handling finances of the school and learners do not partake in selection and recruitment of educators and support staff. I asked how they feel about their exclusion in these matters this is what learners from school A had to share:

We feel our exclusion in deliberating on issues relating to finances of the school is a violation of our right because we are members of SGB. When people say the SGB has mismanaged funds we are part of that SGB. In one of the meetings we were given a detailed finance report, we were very scared to even look at it.

Learner governors in Enqabeni School responded this way on a question about financial matters;

Exclusion on financial matters is a violation of our right hence we differ with ways monies are spent because we know.

One of the viewpoints argued by Sithole (1998); allowed for a full participation of learner governors in education owing to their role during the liberation struggle. The finding in this study suggested that the SASA should be reviewed to allow for full participation of learner governors in governance issues especially finances of the school. A study conducted by Mabovula (2009), also revealed that learner governors feel that prohibition of their participation in financial matters of the school infringes and limits their participation. Moreover, learner governors feel they should also participate in processes of employing educators and managers within their schools. Learner governors in school B had this to say:

We need to take part in employment of educators in our school because we know the calibre of a teacher we want, one who will be exemplary in and out of the school

The governors have demonstrated an understanding of the kind of contribution they could have made in school governance if they were afforded a chance to participate fully. Magadla, (2007) adds that involvement of learners in decision making brings ‘harmony’ to the school and enhances the relationships among members of the school community.

4.6. Responses on challenges learner governors faced and possible solutions

Having explored the experiences of learner governors, I asked learner governors to highlight any challenges they are faced with if any. One learner governor from Ekukhuthaleni School had this to say:

Fellow learners are really troublesome. They say we think we are better than them. They always demand feedback after every SGB meeting we attend. We find this difficult to do because we are constantly reminded in SGB that matters discussed in the meetings should remain and under no circumstances should we divulge. We not sure of the role expected of us due to lack of training.

A Learner governor from Enqabeni School responded this way:

Learners are bunking classes and misbehave. As a result; we spend our time representing learner voice in the disciplinary hearing sacrificing our tuition time. If learners are found guilty and charged of misconduct; they go around telling fellow learners that we are sell-outs who side with School Management Team (SMT).

After exploring literature on learner governors, it was clear that learner governors are faced with numerous challenges in carrying out their mandated duty efficiently. One issue which seems pertinent and common was that of fellow learners failing to respect and trust their leadership which they elected. They further failed to provide support and guidance that could have enhanced performance of their duties. On one hand; learners have a right to hold them accountable as the only legitimate body that represents their interests. On the other hand; fellow governors constantly reminded them of confidentiality issues. Therefore, learners were fighting for space amongst themselves by not allowing those they elected to provide leadership. This was characterised by the political theory which suggested that learners and their governors are jostling for power. Each group was advocating for their interests at the expense of effective governance and tolerance.

When learner governors were asked how they deal with the aforementioned challenges they said:

We ignore them but at times report to the TLO then to the SMT if there was no intervention by the TLO. We take the matter to the RCL meetings in pursuit of guidance, support and lasting solution from them

Learners governors presented their challenges and were also afforded an opportunity to suggest what they thought will enhance performance of their roles in governance. Their responses from the two schools can be summarised respectively as follow:

We need departmental workshops that will help us know more about our roles and expectation so that we are prepared for what lies ahead. RCL members have to meet constantly to deal with concerns from fellow learners. RCL members must have a Code of Conduct that will ensure that they are exemplary to fellow learners. A space for us to participate in finance matters of the school should be created.

The recommendation of a Code of Conduct indicates that schools still impose it upon learners to adhere. Learner governors have recommended what has emanated from numerous studies suggesting the inclusion of learners in financial matters. This confirms Sithole (1998) advocacy for full participation in governance including financial matters. The issue of learner governors' involvement in financial matter is misunderstood. This is because in many cases they cited the SASA which in my view only protect learner where third party is involved.

4.7. Emerging issues

4.7.1. How do learner school governors understand and experience their role in school governance?

Learner governors from both schools provided responses which indicated that they only understood their role as RCL members and not learner governors in the SGB. They cited that they represent learner issues including issues of teaching and learning. It is worth noting that learner governors in this study have changed for the better since they were elected as RCL and SGB members hence they mentioned being exemplary to fellow learners. Even though they are enthusiastic about their role they have never been furnished SASA no 84 of 1996, which serves as a guide on the functions of SGBs.

On the elections of learners to RCL then SGB; there were inconsistencies between the two schools which can be linked to a lack of a clear guide on how such should be conducted. Learners are also not aware of a learners' organisation (COSAS) which fights for their rights, exposes them to the political world and capacitate them with leadership skills.

4.7.2. What factors affect learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance?

It emerged that learner governors were neither inducted nor supported through workshops since they assumed their roles as both RCL members and learner governors in SGB. This has grossly affected their effective functioning.

Learner governors are faced with many challenges inter alia: criticism from fellow learners; times for the meetings interfering with their academic and social life; partial inclusion in governance matters; limited participation on issues that affect learners in the school and difficulty of communicating freely among elders in SGB. In relation to the main questions of the study; it emerged that learner governors did not understand their role as stipulated by SASA. Instead they confuse the role of RCL with that of SGB as a result fails to deliberate on governance related issues.

4.7.3. How can learner governors' involvement in school governance be enhanced?

Learner governors understood that challenges are part of leadership and they did not withdraw from their positions due to challenges cited that they experienced from fellow

learners. They suggested that there should be close and good relations between learner governors and a TLO, so that they relay all challenges faced to the TLO seeking for advices where necessary. Respect and exemplary leadership was highly recommended by the learner governors from both schools.

The study used political theory against collegial theory as a lens through which it explores the learner governors' experience of their roles in school governance. The political theory seemed to be at play in that learners and fellow SGB members are jostling for power. This was evident when learners were only relaying issues that were related to their interest group in this case their constituency. Principals of both school A and B were chairing the SGB meetings I observed this is an indication that they do not want to let go of their power. This contravenes the rights and responsibilities of the SGB Chairperson as stipulated in the SASA.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores four areas in relation to the study. Firstly, it gives a summary of the study by highlighting pertinent issues raised in the chapters. Secondly, it uses findings of the study to draw conclusions. Thirdly, it suggests recommendations for further research and for action. Lastly, it reports on the limitations of the study.

5.2. Summary of the study

The study investigated learner governors' understanding and experiences of their role in school governance. A number of studies revealed that learner governors were confronted by many challenges in carrying out their mandated duties. This has caused tension amongst fellow SGB members who did not want to accept learners as legitimate members of the SGB. Many who argued against the inclusion of learners in school governance argued that they did not understand their role in governance. My experience as a Teacher Liaison Officer for many years has made me realize that learners also face many challenges carrying out their duties due to a lack of support from the department and limited space there are given to participate. This made me realize how important it was to find out from learners themselves how they view their level of understanding in governance issues.

In Chapter One, I gave background that necessitated and opened grounds for this study. The background to this study revisited the role of the apartheid education which excluded learners from participating in governance issues. It explored the period after 1994 and how the imbalances of the past were redressed to include learners in governance thereby introducing the SASA no. 84 of 1996. In this chapter I reported that the study aimed at exploring the views held by learner governors regarding their role in school governance. The study was guided by main questions which were explored. This suggested that learner governors' understanding and experiences be investigated since literature pointed out that it was under spotlight with some coming out vehemently against their inclusion in governance matters citing their inexperience.

In Chapter Two, I reviewed both local and international literature on learner governors' involvement in governance issues. Reviewed literature indicated that a number of studies

conducted in this area focused on either parent's, teachers' or principals' views on learner participation on governance issues. Literature showed that there were few studies investigated on learner governors' views on their role and how they understand it. It was apparent from the literature that involvement of learners in governance was met with contrasting viewpoints some arguing for and some against. This chapter further provided legislative framework on the mandated roles of SGB by exploring the SASA no. 84 of 1996 and studies relating to their interpretations of the Act were explored. The political and collegial theory underpinned this study; this theoretical framework was relevant in that it embraced the reality for some SGBS. The political theory was relevant in that it reflected that SGB members are jostling for power with each grouping jostling for power for their constituencies.

In Chapter three I explained the research design and methodology. I positioned the study within the interpretivist paradigm which helped me gain and explore the learner governor's understanding of their role in school governance. This paradigm enabled me to have an in-depth understanding of how they perceive and feel about it. I adopted a case study research design. This design was suitable in that it explored understandings of learner governors with the aim to hear from them how it was to be part of the SGB. I indicated who the participants were and how they were sampled. I observed SGB meetings and interviewed learner governors to generate data. In this case focus group interviews were employed to get in-depth responses and to allow asking of questions that emanate from the interviews. Three learner governors from two secondary schools were interviewed in groups respectively. This study also relied on my direct observation of the SGB meeting to complement responses provided in response to the critical questions this study sought to address. Moreover, the chapter addressed ethical considerations of the study and trustworthiness thereof as a major link between the researcher and the research.

In Chapter Four, I reported on the findings of the study by presenting findings and discussing them vigorously. From the data generated, the following themes emerge: election of learners into SGB, learner governors understanding of their roles as prescribed by SASA, support and benefits for learner governors, learner governors' experience of their role in SGB, learner governors' recommendations to learner participation in school governance. Election of learners in the schools was done differently indicating that the procedure was not thoroughly followed. I discovered that learner governors did not fully understand their role that the SASA stipulated for SGB members, they however knew what was expected of them as

members of RCL. Learner governors never received any support from the Department of Education in a form of a training or induction on their roles. Learner governors experienced numerous challenges since they participated in SGB. Fellow learners were disrespectful towards them and blamed for any decision taken against them in SGB meetings. Learner governors recommended that to overcome these challenges they fellow governors should work closely with a TLO. Verbatim responses, observation and literature were provided in discussing the findings under the guidance of the aforementioned themes.

5.3. Conclusions

This study aimed at exploring learner governors understanding and experiences of their role in school governance. In a quest to investigate on related issues three main research questions underpinned the study. The first research question was; how do learner school governors understand and experience their role in school governance? Second research question was; what factors affect learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance? The third research question; how can learner governors' involvement in school governance be enhanced? Finally, this chapter will make recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5.3.1. How do learner school governors understand and experience their role in school governance?

The findings suggest that learner governors did not understand their role in school governance. Learner governors from both schools provided responses which indicated that they only understood their role as RCL members and not learner governors in the SGB. They cited that they represented learner issues including issues of teaching and learning. These issues that the RCL raised were legitimate with SMT members hence they were accountable for teaching and learning. They deemed being exemplary to fellow learners as their leader as an imperative attribute.

Learner governors' experiences were that fellow learners are not supportive to them. They were constantly mocked and criticised by fellow learners. They found it hard to seat with elders as a result this limits their effective participation. They felt that SGB members did not fully recognise them in that they were not involved when major decisions were taken. They cited change of school uniform which they knew nothing about as members of the SGB.

Learner governors found it difficult to balance SGB obligations of attending meetings and other commitments either academic or house chores.

5.3.2. What factors affect learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance?

Learners in both schools had no copy of the SASA which was going to enhance their understanding of their role. They did not even understand the content of SASA as a policy to guide them as fellow SGB members. In the interviews they seemed more relaxed, compared to SGB meeting where they were shy and quiet. These pointed out that if they understood how to participate they would be confident and contribute meaningfully. Unfortunately, learner governors did not attend any workshop. A lack of capacity workshops hindered their effective participation and deliberations in governance. Culture continued to impinge on effective governance due to the gap it created between the elderly in the community and the young ones; as a result learner governors' maximum participation was hindered. Learner governors felt that they needed to be involved in issues that dealt with finances of the school as this is a governance issue which is dealt with in SGB meetings. Moreover, learner governors felt it was important to be involved in selections and recruitment of staff members. They strongly argued that they were recipients of the processes and as such this caused unnecessary tension between them and the newly appointed staff member.

5.3.3. How can learner governors' involvement in school governance be enhanced?

Learner governors understood that challenges are part of leadership and they did not withdraw from their positions due to challenges cited that they experienced from fellow learners. They suggested that there should be close and good relations between learner governors and a TLO, so that they relay all challenges faced to the TLO seeking for advices where necessary. They also suggested that ignoring all the bad things they say about them can be a remedy. Learners strongly recommended that the department should organise workshops to provide guidance and support to the learner governors.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study I suggest the following recommendations for both action and further study:

- A review and amendment of section 20 and 21 of the SASA no 84 of 1996 so that learner governors can participate fully in issues that relates to appointment of staff members and finances of the school. This will ascertain that decisions taken related to these issues are taken collaboratively and ownership thereof will be enhanced. Moreover, the term of office for learners should be three year like fellow SGB members and in case a learner governor vacates the position a bi-election should be conducted to fill in the vacancy.
- The department should monitor and ensure that people who are working under the wing of Governance and Management are accountable for support workshops to all SGBs inclusive of learners. Non governmental organisation and Chapter 9 institutions of the South African Constitution should put pressure and keep the government accountable.
- TLOs should be trained continuously so that they are abreast of the roles they have to play in mediating and liaising with the SMT. Term of office for TLOs should also be three years to ensure that there is consistency in all these structures.
- COSAS as a structure that organises learners and groom them politically should be afforded space in schools to ensure that learners have a forum where they voice out their concerns and find common solutions.
- Principals also need continuous programs to assist them regarding their role in SGB. They need to be capacitated of their role in SGB meeting so that they remain representatives of the department and not chairpersons of SGB meetings.
- Team building workshops should be organised immediately after all SGB members are elected. This will help break the cultural barrier between learners and parents in the SGB, this will help enhance the level of participation amongst learners.
- The attitude of all stakeholders towards learner governors should encourage them to participate fully in all deliberations. SGB should rally behind learners providing support and guidance to help mould them to be better leaders. Furthermore, learners need to be made aware of learner governors responsibilities so that they do not abuse them.
- I recommend that future studies on governance should explore the understanding and experience of the TLO in his role of liaising with both learners and SMT.

- An action research should be conducted to assist learner governors understand their role better supplementing existing programs from the department.

5.5. Limitations of the study

Initially I wanted to include four or more schools in this study, however due to time the schools provided for both interviews and meetings to be observed I could not work as planned. The delayed issuing of ethical clearance affected the time frame I had planned to follow. I feel the study would have provided more insight if more schools were sampled and participated. I planned to observe a number of SGB meetings in order to observe learner governors' level of participation and deliberation. I also feel interviewing learner governors from each school as a focus group somehow limited individual responses. This is because in many cases one learner seemed dominant and when others were probed to speak on the same matter they just attested to the early articulation.

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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Questions:

Questions asked for discussions:

1. Learner governors understanding of their role

1.1. What do you understand to be your role in school governance?

1.2. South African Schools Act no.84 of 1996 stipulates roles expected of you, have you accessed it? If yes please share?

1.3. Do you think you have a role regarding conditions of teaching and learning at the school? Why?

2. Election of Representative Council for Learners (RCL)

2.1. Please briefly explain how you were elected as a learner governor.

2.2. How many learners are in your current (RCL)?

2.3. How many learners from the RCL seat in the School Governing Body (SGB) meeting?

2.4. Are learners at your school affiliated to any political structure like COSAS or any?

2.5. In which grade are you?

3. Support of learner governors

3.1. Have you ever attended a workshop to enhance your understanding of your role?

3.2. How seldom are these workshop conducted in a year?

3.3. Does serving at the SGB enable you to engage in deliberation and critical reasoning? Why?

3.4. Has being a learner governor benefited you in any way? (i.e. treatment from fellow learners and staff members)

4. Learner governors experiences of their role

4.1. What are your experiences regarding your role as a learner governor in the SGB?

4.2. How seldom do you hold SGB meetings? What are your experiences of these meetings?

4.3. In your opinion, has any transformation taken place within the SGB in terms of creating a platform for you to participate maximally in meetings?

4.4. Do you expect to see any change in terms of your role in school governance? If so which changes do you expect to see? Why?

4.5. The South African School Act no 84 of 1996 prohibits you, from handling finances, how do you feel about this?

4.6. How do you balance your work and your responsibility as a learner governor?

5. Challenges faced by learner governors and possible solutions

5.1. Many leaders experience challenges, what are some of the challenges you have faced as a leader?

5.2. How do you deal/overcome such challenges?

5.3. What do you think should be done to enhance learner governors' role in school governance?

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Areas of focus	Actual events Observed
Are they of different gender or same gender (both males/females)?	
Differences in participation along gender lines?	
Role of learners in the meetings.	
Level of participation.	
Are they recognized in the meeting?	
Are they encouraged to speak on issues raised?	
Which language is dominating the meeting?	

APPENDIX C1: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT TO PARENTS (ENGLISH VERSION)

My name is V.I.P Msimanga, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing a Masters degree in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. For this degree, I am required to conduct research. For this reason I request that your child _____ doing grade _____ at _____ school to be part of the study. My study focus is on learner governors' understanding and experience of their role in school governance as School Governing Body (SGB) members. In this study, I will ask your child questions that are only related to the topic. The child's participation is voluntary and can withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable.

Your child's name will not be published in the write-up of the research report. I will guarantee anonymity and confidentiality by using false names (pseudonyms) in the write up of the report and matters discussed will not be shared with anyone at your school.

For any queries please feel free to contact my Supervisor from the university, Prof V. Chikoko at 033 260 2639. You can contact me at 083 922 3926. You can also contact the research ethics committee as follows: Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). Tel No: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

If you are willing to participate please fill in and sign the attached declaration form.

**APPENDIX C2: INCWADI YOKUCELA IGUNYA KUMZALI WENGANE EZOBA
INGXENYE YOCWANINGO (ISIZULU VERSION).**

NginguMnumzane V.I.P Msimanga onguthisha ophinde abe umfundi waseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natali owenza iziqu ze-Masters kwezemfundo emkhakheni wezokuphathwa nokwengamelwa kwezikole. Ngicela imvume ukuba ingane yakho u_____ ofunda esikoleni i_____ abe yingxenye yocwaningo engilwenzayo ezifundweni zami. Ucwanningo lwami lubhekelele ulwazi abafundi abasesigungwini esengamele ukuphathwa kwezikole (SGB) abanalo ngokwengamelwa kwezikole kanye nezinto ababhekana nazo ekwengameleni izikole. Kulolucwaningo ingane yakho ngizoyibuza imibuzo eqondene nalesisihloko kuphela. Nengane yakho ibhalelwe incwadi ecela kuyo ukuba ibe yingxenye yalolucwaningo. Kuchaziwe ukuthi ukuba yingxenye kwayo kulolucwaningo kusuka othandweni ayiphoqiwe, kanjalo ingashiya uma izizwa ingakhululekile.

Igama layo angeke lishicilelwe ekubhalweni kwalolu cwanningo ukwenzela ukuyivikela. Kuzosetshenziwa amagama okuzakhela ukuze amagama abo angazakali bavikeleke nokwenzala ukuthi ucwanningo lube imfihlo. Lolu cwanningo luzotholakala kuphela enyuvesi edalulwe ngenhla. Ngizoqinisekila ukuthi esikuxoxile kuba isifuba sami nayo kuphela.

Uma udinga ulwazi olubanzi ungaxhumala nomholi wami uSolwazi V. Chikoko kulenombolo: 033 260 2639. Noma uxhumane nami uqobo kulenombolo: 083 922 3926. Ungaphinde uxhumane nekomidi locwanningo lwasenyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natal elimelwe ngu Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). ucingo: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Ozithobayo

uMnumzane V.I.P Msimanga

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT TO LEARNER GOVERNORS

For Attention: _____

Date: _____

My name is V.I.P Msimanga, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing a Masters degree in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. For this degree, I am required to conduct research. My study focus is on learner governors’ understanding and experience of their role in school governance. To help me in my research, I request that you participate in a recorded interview as a focus group answering questions based on my topic.

I will ensure that your name or school name is not mentioned in the research and your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but will be reported only as a population member opinion. Pseudonyms will guarantee your anonymity (false names). Participation in this project is voluntary and has no financial benefits, involves no risks whatsoever and you are free to withdraw at any point. Data will be stored in a secured storage for a period of five years and destroyed thereafter.

Please indicate whether you are willing or not willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recording equipment		
Photographic equipment		

You can contact me at 083 922 3926 or 082 426 3709, email: msimangavip@gmail.com. For any queries please feel free to contact my Supervisor, Prof V. Chikoko from the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, at (tel) 033 260 2639, email: Chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

You can also contact the research ethics committee as follows: Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). Tel No: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

V.I.P Msimanga

APPENDIX E: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

The Principal

_____School

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Mr V.I.P Msimanga, presently studying towards a Masters degree at the University of KwaZulu Natal focusing on Educational, Leadership, Management and Policies. I hereby request your permission to conduct my research at _____ School during the period from April to June in 2015.

The research topic is: **What are the learner governors' understandings and experiences of their role in school governance?** The purpose of the study is to determine what their understandings are on governance and how they experience it. The study will involve focus group interviews with two learners who are part of the School Governing Body (SGB) and an observation of one SGB meeting. Consent forms will be issued to all participants involved in the study prior the processes unfold. Learners will be interviewed after school hours at their convenience for not more than a week. I hereby declare that: the learners' names or schools name will not be mentioned anywhere in the research findings. To ensure this, pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality thereof. A synopsis of findings and recommendations will be sent to the school electronically. Participation of these learners is voluntary and are free to withdraw if they so wish.

You can contact me at 083 922 3926 or 082 426 3709, email: msimangavip@gmail.com. For any queries please feel free to contact my Supervisor, Prof V. Chikoko from the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, at (tel) 033 260 2639, email: Chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

You can also contact the research ethics committee as follows: Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). Tel No: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

V.I.P Msimanga

APPENDIX F1: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT TO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY CHAIRPERSON (ENGLISH VERSION)

My name is V.I.P Msimanga, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal doing a Masters degree in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy. For this degree, I am required to conduct research. For this reason I request to observe one of your School Governing Body meetings. My study focus is on learner governors' understanding and experience of their role in school governance as School Governing Body (SGB) members. In this study, I will observe learner governance involvement and participation in these meetings so as to find out about the understanding of their role. The learner governor's consent to participate in the study has been requested from them and their parents. It is explained that the child's participation is voluntary and can withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable.

I will guarantee anonymity and confidentiality by using false names (pseudonyms) in the write up of the report and matters discussed will not be shared with anyone at your school. I promise not to divulge matters discussed in the meeting to anyone except in the report where anonymity will be guaranteed.

You can contact me at 083 922 3926 or 082 426 3709, email: msimangavip@gmail.com. For any queries please feel free to contact my Supervisor, Prof V. Chikoko from the School of Education, Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, at (tel) 033 260 2639, email: Chikokov@ukzn.ac.za

You can also contact the research ethics committee as follows: Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). Tel No: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

If you are willing to participate please fill in and sign the attached declaration form.

APPENDIX F2: INCWADI YOKUCELA IGUNYA LOKUBUKA OMUNYE WEMIMHLANGANO KWI SIGUNGU ESENGAMELE ISIKOLE (ISIZULU VERSION).

Iqondene no: Sihlalo wesigungu esengamele isikole(SGB Chairperson)

NginguMnumzane V.I.P Msimanga onguthisha ophinde abe umfundi waseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natali owenza iziqu ze-Masters kwezemfundo emkhakheni wezokuphathwa nokwengamelwa kwezikole. Kulomkhakha silindeleke ukuba senze ucwaningo mayelana nokwengamelwa kwezikole. Ngicela imvume ukuba ngibe ingxenye yemihlangano yesigungu esengamele isikole. Ucwaningo lwami lubhekelele ukwazi ngezinto, nolwazi abafundi abasesigungwini esengamele ukuphathwa kwezikole (SGB) ababhekana nazo ekwengameleni izikole.

Kulomhlangano ngizobe ngizobuka nje kuphela ukuthi ngabe yiziphi izinto abafundi abakulesigungu ababhekana nazo kanye nolwazi abanalo ngokwengamelwa kwezikole. Nezingane ezikulesigungu zibhalelwe incwadi ecela kuzo ukuba ibe yingxenye yalolucwaningo. Kuchaziwe ukuthi ukuba yingxenye kwayo kulolucwaningo kusuka othandweni ayiphoqiwe, kanjalo ingashiya uma izizwa ingakhululekile. Igama layo nesikole angeke kushicilelwe ekubhalweni kwalolu cwaningo ukwenzela ukuvikela. Lolu cwaningo luzotholakala kuphela enyuvesi edalulwe ngenhla. Ngiyathembisa ngizoqinisekila ukuthi okuxoxiwe kuba isifuba sami nomhlangano kuphela.

Uma udinga ulwazi olubanzi ungaxhumala nomholi wami uSolwazi V. Chikoko kulenombolo: 033 260 2639, noma uxhumane nami uqobo kulenombolo: 083 922 3926. Ungaphinde uxhumane nekomidi locwaningo lwasenyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natal elimelwe ngu Ms. P. Ximba, (HSSRES UKZN research office). ucingo: (031) 260 3587; email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Ozithobayo

uMnumzane V.I.P Msimanga

DECLARATION FORM

I _____ (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have read the above and agree with the terms. I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw at any time in the project should I so desire.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ISIBOPHEZELO

Mina _____ ngiyifundile imigomo ebekwe ngenhla futhi ngiyavuma ukuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi akunankokhelo futhi inegunya lokushiya uma izizwa ngaleyondlela. Ngiyaqonda konke okuqukethwe yilomqingo nendlela ehleleke ngayo futhi ngiyagungaya ukuba ingxenye yalo.

UKUSAYINA: _____

USUKU : _____



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL™
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

28 August 2015

Mr Vikani Innocent Phillip Msimanga 206505769
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Msimanga

Protocol reference number: HSS/0610/015M

Project title: Learner governors' understanding and experience of their role in school governance

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 29 May 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Prof V Chikoko
Cc Academic Leader Research: Prof P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms T Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

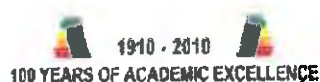
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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville