

**Cultivating Learner Leadership: Experiences of Teacher Liaison
Officers in Selected Secondary Schools, KwaZulu-Natal**

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education:

School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

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2025

SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval

Professor Chikoko _____

Date _____

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, -----hereby declare that this dissertation is my work and does not contain any materials which have been submitted before for any degree in any institution.

Use of any published material has been dully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my two beautiful kids, Luhlelo and Sinazo, who played an inspirational role in my life. I know you take pride in all my academic achievements. Thank you for your love, understanding, patience and support throughout this journey. To my late son, who has been my guardian angel, you are appreciated Ayabonga, I know you would have been very proud of me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God be the Glory. Achieving this milestone would never have been possible if it was not your unconditional love in my life. My sincere gratitude and appreciation go to the following people who made it possible for me to complete this study:

1. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Prof. Vitallis Chikoko for his guidance, expertise and unwavering support. Thank you for your invaluable feedback and mentorship throughout this journey.
2. To my loving family, thank you for your unconditional love and support.
3. To school principals, thank you so much for opening doors for me to conduct this research. To all my participants, without your valuable insights and contributions, this would have been impossible.
4. To my advisor, mentor, and colleague, Mrs. Nonhlanhla Mbele, thank you for believing in me. Your encouraging words have been my strength throughout this journey.
5. Special thanks and appreciation to my friends who made it possible for me to complete my studies: Sphesihle Ngcobo, Samkelisiwe Sithebe and Nomonde Nzuza, your immeasurable love, emotional support and motivation have been my pillar and without you, this research would never have been a success.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the role of Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in ensuring meaningful representation of learners in the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in schools. The study explored the perspectives of four Teacher Liaison Officers at four secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal province. The study was located appropriately within the interpretive paradigm whose philosophy is that knowledge is socially constructed. The study adopted a case study research design and generated data through semi-structured interviews, which data was thematically analyzed. The transformational leadership theory was used as the theoretical framework of the study. The study found that, TLOs understanding of their role in LRC included (a) ensuring that the LRC was well constituted and that they held quarterly meetings with the members; (b) Supporting school electoral officers with class representatives and LRC elections (c) bridging the gap between the SMT, staff, and LRC. The study also found that, TLOs cultivated LRC learners' leadership skills by (a) attending regular training workshops (b) giving LRCs three full terms in leadership, and (c) training them on the code of conduct. The study therefore recommends that the Department of Basic Education has an important role to play in ensuring that all the schools fully constitute LRC through the TLOs who are responsible for cultivating learner leadership. The Department of Basic Education may consider sending their officials quarterly to schools to monitor the activities of the LRC and ensure that they are actively participating in the management body of the school.

Key words: Teacher Liaison Officer, Representative Council, leadership, and management

ABBREVIATIONS

LRC	Learner Representative Council
DBE	Department of Basic Education
SMT	Senior Management Team
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
JSTC	Junior Secondary Teacher's Certificate
HED	Higher Education Diploma
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PSS	Pika Secondary School
CSS	Curo Secondary School
MSS	Mark Secondary School
TLO	Teacher Liaison Officer

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MISSING LINK

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Our learners are growing up in an atmosphere of general political apathy. There needs to be a process whereby the learners become exposed to civic issues. During the days of apartheid, politicization was very much at the forefront of learners' consciousness. Today's learners have forgotten the roots of the RCL, and are unaware of the power of the RCL to effect change (Dickson et al, 2012, p. 194)

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of Teacher Liaison Officers in growing students who will actively participate in the learner representative council at selected secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. According to the South African Schools Act 1996, Act 84 section 11(I) which provides guidelines for the Representative council of learners, *a representative council of learners at the school must be established at every public-school enrolling learner in the eighth grade and higher.* The same section proceeds to stipulate that, *a member of the Executive Council may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, determine guidelines for the establishment, election, and functions of a representative council of learners.* The South African Schools Act 1996 therefore makes provision for learners to be included in and to participate in school governance, particularly in public schools (Heifetz, 2009). To actualize this Act, Teacher Liaison Officers are empowered according to the National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development (2006) to:

- To coordinate the establishment of a Representative Council of Learners and its annual election
- To serve as the Election Officer for the elections of the Representative Council of Learners and its Executive
- To ensure that there is a formal, well-organized transfer of all documentation and financial records by the outgoing Executive to the newly elected Executive
- To provide capacity-building for the newly elected Executive so that the members can undertake their functions in the New Year.

However, my experience as a teacher and Teacher liaison officer shows that Teacher liaison officers are not doing enough to grow learners for leadership responsibilities which goes against the stated legislation. Although studies such as Heifetz (2009), Cosenza (2015), Aktar (2016), Chikoko et al (2015) have conducted extensive research that has addressed the cultivation of learner leadership at the international and local context, they have not addressed the specific role of the teacher liaison officer in growing learner leadership. My study's findings will add to the growing literature and data on learner leadership, especially at a secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The process of developing leadership is a challenging requirement for educational institutions, particularly secondary schools in South Africa. Some countries, such as the United States, have been eager to build frameworks and assessment programs to aid in identifying children's special leadership skills. (Children and Families Commission, 2017). Efforts are then made to improve these competencies, so talented children become efficient and reliable leaders in the future (Anderson, 2017). In most situations, however, such approaches necessitate substantial teacher preparation (particularly for Teacher Liaison Officers), as well as the creation of an enabling atmosphere and a broad curriculum that includes leadership skills. The inability to meet all of these objectives adequately has impeded the process of developing future leaders in public schools in South Africa which acts against the stipulated Act 84 legislated in 1996 (Anderson, 2017). Private schools around the world, particularly in the United States, have achieved considerable strides in school preparation; nevertheless, it has been more challenging in government schools (Rhoades, 2011). According to Bryman (2016), school children are at the developmental stages where essential skills can be easily nurtured and developed to influence cognitive, behavioral and leadership excellence. The study will address the following research questions

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do Teacher Liaison Officers experience their role among the Learner Representative Council in Schools?

2. How can the cultivation of good leadership skills be ensured for the productivity of Learner representative councils?

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows

1. To explore the role of Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in ensuring meaningful representation of learners in the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in schools.
2. To understand how good leadership skills can be ensured for the productivity of Learner representative councils.

1.5. RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

School governance has long been a source of contention in South Africa. Although legislation sets the structure of school governance and the function of student representation, there are still widely divergent perspectives and practices on the type and amount of children's participation in school governance. (Mabovula, 2009). My interest in this study is informed from a professional standpoint, as I was previously elected as a teacher liaison officer at my school. I went to a training to learn about my teaching responsibilities. The session revealed a lack of recognition and value of Teacher Liaison Officers' roles in growing learner leadership, as well as why it is critical that learners be allowed time to actively participate and be represented in the Representative council of learners. Because of my desire that learners be meaningfully represented as a council in the school and its leadership, I experienced many difficulties with the school and other teachers along the process. They indicated that students should not be in the same room as adults discussing critical topics such as school governance. This becomes a very problematic issue for many Teacher Liaison Officers in many schools, making it difficult for them to function properly.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will endeavor to contribute towards the body of knowledge, that is, understand the experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers in cultivating learner leadership in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal province. The study has a potential to give recommendations in terms of how

learner leadership is cultivated in schools so as to prepare them for leadership positions now and in the future. Added to this, the study will assist Department of Basic Education to understand that cultivating learner leadership is part of the mandate provided for by the South African educational policy for all schools. Leadership is very important and grooming leaders should be part of what schools should pursue for the betterment of the present and future South Africa younger population.

This study is also significant because it will contribute to the body of knowledge on school leadership in the South African educational system especially at the foundational stages of intellectual development.

1.7. LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The issue that this study aims to address has been identified in the uThukela district, a secondary school in the township of Ezakheni in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The school is bordered by RDP houses, which are commonly referred to as "two rooms" due to their structure and where many students live. Because of the HIV epidemic and other sexually transmitted diseases, most of the students are orphans, and many of the households are run by children.

1.8. DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.8.1. Leadership

According to Check and Schutt (2012), leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve the purpose. The definition as provided by Check and Schutt (2012), means that without purpose, there will not be effective leadership. Leadership is that process in which one person sets the purpose or direction for one or more other persons and gets them to move along together with him or her and with each other in that direction with competence and full commitment.

Anderson, (2017) describes leadership as an influence of relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend significant changes that reflect their mutual purposes. Bryman, (2016) believe that leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations. In

this study the concept of leadership will be leadership will be used to understand how teacher liaison officers perform their role as leaders in growing learners for leadership in the LRC. Common themes of influence, change and leader-follower collaboration emerge from these and other definitions. Aktar, (2016), for example, describes leadership as the capacity of a human community to share its future, and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required to do so. Since the focus of this study is not to define what leadership is, the definitions provided here will assist in helping in the understanding of leadership and how it functions in cultivating learner leadership at the school under investigation.

1.8.2. Management

According to Coburn and Spillane, (2016), management refers to the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the work of the organization's members and utilizing all available resources to reach the desired goals of the organization. The major elements in the definition of management are objectives, resources, people and processes. Management can be regarded as a process through which organizations objectives are achieved, by utilizing resources in a coordinated manner. Central to the process of management is human resource development within the organization (Cosenza, 2015).

Management is also defined as the type of work, which encompasses a variety of manageable educational tasks that are implemented by an individual who is in authority, so as to promote educational training, (Coburn and Spillane, 2016). Lack of proper management means poor output, institutional failure and lack of accountability. According to Aktar, (2016) management is a process that is used to achieve and accomplish organizational goals. Since every organization has a target, the management approach adopted goes a long way in achieving the set goals of the organization. I use this concept in my study because the Teacher Liaison Officers are expected to participate in general management of learners at the school, their supervisory role is very closely linked to ensuring learner participation in leadership at the school.

1.8.4. Teacher Liaison Officer

Teacher Liaison Officers perform a variety of functions. In schools, TLOs serve as go-between among teachers, students, staff and assessors by providing useful information about the school's activities. Dickson, et al (2012, p. 194) presented the roles of the Teacher Liaison Officer as follows:

- To co-ordinate the establishment of a Representative Council of Learners and its annual election
- To serve as the Election Officer for the elections of the Representative Council of Learners and its Executive
- To ensure that there is a formal, well-organized transfer of all documentation and financial records by the outgoing Executive to the newly elected Executive
- To provide capacity-building for the newly elected Executive so that the members can undertake their functions in the new year
- To ensure that the Representative Council of Learners is supported by School Management and the Governing Body
- To ensure that the Representative Council of Learners supports the vision and mission of the school
- To ensure that the Representative Council of Learners remains functional and fulfils all the requirements of this Notice and its constitution
- To ensure that opportunities are taken to include learners in the school's decision-making processes.
- To ensure that members of the Representative Council of Learners are recognized and accredited for their tasks
- To ensure that the school's extra-mural programme enables the Representative Council of Learners to hold regular meetings
- To ensure that the school community accepts the activities of the Representative Council of Learners

1.8.5. Learner leadership

Learner leadership needs someone who can offer a positive example for other learners to copy and follow in their footsteps. LRC members are expected to be role models for other students in the school community and beyond. A learner leader is someone who can perform "the most important role of becoming an outstanding learner" for others. (LQ1, LQ2, LQ6 & LQ10). Learner leadership entails providing a good example for other students and modelling appropriate behavior. LRC members are required to conduct well and create a positive example for other students to follow. The ability to be a role model to others backs up literature evidence that a leader must lead by example, whether by working more or being at the forefront of events. (Cosenza, 2015). To illustrate leading by example, one could for instance use the person of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a civil rights activist who is well known for the speech 'I have a dream' and for being at the forefront of civil rights marches in the USA (ibid.). The civil rights activist was known to lead other people by being at the forefront of protests. In a school situation, the LRC members are expected to be leading the school activities, events, and functions ahead of other learners. Other learners would then follow what the LRC members do.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One

This chapter provides the background, problem statement, and significance of the study. It also outlines four research questions that guided the study. The key concepts and organization of the research report are also provided.

Chapter Two

The chapter focuses on the understanding of learner leadership in the school context as well as the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The chapter also discusses the development leadership theory as a relevant theory for the study.

Chapter Three

The chapter provides a detailed account of the research design, methods and procedures that are followed in conducting the study. It also outlines research instruments that were used to elicit data for the study.

Chapter Four

This chapter presents and discusses data that was generated through individual semi-structured interviews. It deals with the analysis and interpretation of data generated.

Chapter Five

This chapter contains the summary of the whole study, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER

So far, this chapter discussed the introduction and background to the study including the problem statement as well as key research questions. The chapter also discussed the significance of the study and the researcher's rationale. Key concepts of the study were also discussed as well as organization of the study. In the next chapter, the literature review will be discussed as follows.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the study and its setting. This current chapter reviews literature and discusses the theoretical framework of the study. In this chapter, the concept of leadership is explored from a global perspective as an important aspect in this study. The concept of leadership is conceived in this study to include managing the affairs of an institution both in the administrative and physical responsibility of a school or educational institution. In this study the concept of leadership is used to understand how teacher liaison officers perform their roles as leaders in growing learners for leadership in the LRC. The chapter also discussed the understanding of the concept of ‘leadership development’ and how leadership occurs in the school context. The chapter also discussed who the Teacher Liaison Officer is and the roles and responsibilities of the TLO. The literature proceeded to discuss the TLOs and the election and training of learners into LRC and SGB. International literature of TLO and LRC is also discussed while the theoretical framework with particular focus on the transformational leadership theory is discussed last.

2.1 EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The concept or phenomenon of leadership is as old as humankind and has been given several names throughout civilizations and disciplines. Leaders have emerged because of circumstances in some cases, and individuals have been destined to lead in others. King, queen, ruler, magistrate, emperor, captain, chief, and lord are just a few of the various titles connected with leadership throughout the ages, cultures, and disciplines. Although one can be a leader without occupying any leadership position, the context of my research situates leadership from the angle of an individual saddled with a leadership position and tasked to be responsible for superior decision making. Thus, today the terms of a leader occupying leadership position include president, governor, prime minister, mayor, *principal*, boss, supervisor, coordinator, superintendent, director, dean, *teacher*, coach, CEO, and in the context of this study, Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) just to name a few. While the concepts underlying the notion of leader and leadership are arguably

timeless, the actual words we use to describe leadership in modern English are of much younger origin than the concepts that are being described (Bolden, 2019).

Leadership is often seen as one of the most important and effective responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by the global context thus making the definitions of leadership vast and varied. April (2010, p.102) for example describes leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend to make significant changes that reflect their mutual purposes”, while Bass (2021, p.30) believe it is “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations”. Common themes of influence, change and leader-follower collaboration emerge from these and other definitions. Blunt and Jones (2017, p.16), for example, describes leadership as “the capacity of a human community to share its future, and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required to do so”.

One of the ways in which people have attempted to make sense of leadership in recent years is to contrast it to management. Bolden and Kirk (2008) arguably began the trend with their article *Leaders and managers: are they different*, in which they presented the image of the ‘leader’ as an artist, who uses creativity and intuition to navigate his/her way through chaos, whilst the ‘manager’ was presented as a problem solver dependent on rationality and control. Since then, the leadership literature has been littered with bold statements contrasting the two. Booysen (2007, p. 21), for example, some of statements suggest that managers “do things right” whilst leaders “do the right thing” and Cotter (2015, p. 268) propose that “management works in the system; leadership works on the system.” Fritzsche and Just (2018) imply that leaders are responsible for maintaining the principles of an organization or institution and ensuring that such principles are adhered to while taking strategic decisions for the growth development and success of the institution. In distinguishing the central role of leadership in bringing about change, Anderson, (2017) identified eight activities wherein a leader must engage, including: 1) creating a sense of urgency; 2) forming a guiding coalition for change; 3) articulating a clear vision; 4) communicating the vision; 5) removing obstacles; 6) planning short-term wins; 7) producing continuous change; and 8) institutionalizing new approaches.

In the field of educational leadership and management (EDLM), leadership has received increasing attention since early 1990s, and scholars proposed varied constructions of this human endeavor in the educational literature (Lewis, 2015). Thus, various models of leadership (e.g., ‘political’,

‘cultural’, ‘transformational’, ‘moral’ and ‘instructional’) have been conceptualized to propose the ‘right’ leadership style and the desirable leader–follower relations in educational organizations (Geldenhuys and Veldsman, 2011; Furman, 2012).

From the foregoing discussion on leadership in this section from scholars such as Bass (2021), April (2010), Lewis (2015), Day (2001), Bryman (2016) and Check and Schutt (2012) leadership connotes the creative and managerial ability of an individual occupying leadership position to be able to solve problems and take decisions for the benefit of the organization. Relating this to the educational institution, which is the specific context of this study, leadership includes managing the affairs of an institution both in the administrative and physical responsibility of a school or targeted educational institution. In this study the concept of leadership was used to understand how teacher liaison officers perform their roles as leaders in growing learners for leadership in the LRC. The definitions and conceptual clarifications provided here assist in helping in the understanding of leadership and how it functions in cultivating learner leadership at a school in South Africa.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF ‘LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT’

As already noted in the previous section, the concepts of leadership and management overlap and serve as a collective function in an organization. Thus, exploring leadership development is to also take cognizance of the difference between leader development and leadership development. Moreover, the focus of this study is on cultivating learner leadership through exploring the experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs technically manage learners for school leadership).

In one of the notable literatures on leadership development Lewis, (2015) demonstrate how leadership experts, trainers and professionals have deployed perspectives such as capacity, passion and mentoring as processes that encompass leadership. Scholars such as Crowther and Hann (2009); Deal and Peterson (2016); Driescher (2016); De Villiers and Pretorius 2012); Meyer (2001)) conceptualize leadership development to mean expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes.

However, for the context of this study, leadership development encompasses the process that leads to the formation of structures and guidelines that could enhance the execution and expression of leadership responsibility. Although management is a concept that functions in understanding

leadership, it does not form the central core in the understanding of this study. Literature between the two areas is parallel and do overlap, but there are several key differences. Just as leadership and management are different (but interrelated) concepts (Grant, 2006), their respective development has unique emphases. Management development primarily includes managerial education and training (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2017) with an emphasis on acquiring specific types of knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance task performance in management roles (Lewis, 2015). Another characteristic feature of management development is the application of proven solutions to known problems, which gives it mainly a training orientation. What this implies in the context of this study is the need for Teacher Liaison Officers to assert their roles and responsibilities as leadership mentors of the learners. This study's focus is on exploring the experiences of TLOs in cultivating learner leadership.

Leadership development involves building the capacity for groups of people to learn their way out of problems that could not have been predicted (Lewis, 2015), or that arise from the disintegration of traditional organizational structures and the associated loss of sense-making (Meyer, 2001). In this sense capacity is thought to be like the notion of cognitive and behavioral complexity in that expanded capacity provides for better individual and collective adaptability across a wide range of situations (Naoum, 2012). A leadership development approach is oriented toward building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges.

Since the introduction of the ACE: School Leadership programme there has been growing awareness that the functions of leadership should be exercised by a wider range of people within schools. In their review of the programme, Bush et al (2011, p.39) concluded that, "the flexibility and initiative required to lead and manage schools in periods of rapid change suggest that preparation should go beyond training principals to implement the requirements of the hierarchy to developing rounded and confident leaders who are able to engage all school stakeholders in the process of school improvement for the benefit of learners and their communities".

Leadership development is fundamental to change but Cosenza (2015) is critical of the leadership style of authoritarian principals, as a limiting factor in leadership development, and notes the overwhelming need for enhanced professionalism for principals. Botha (2012, p.406) suggests that one approach might be to create professional learning communities which consider change through talking, asking relevant questions, and making decisions together. Mentoring for leadership

development has been investigated by Lewis (2015, p.51) who, following in depth observation of 12 mentors and their mentees, notes that:

The mentors and their mentees had a huge role to play in the process; the personalities of the individuals involved were very crucial in their relationship . . . Change agents for both mentors and mentees learn easily and are open to ideas different from their own". In a mentoring relationship, this proves very important because one listens and understands because they have embraced change.

Lewis (2015) also points to the need for mentors to be effective in all aspects of their leadership practice and that the development of this approach is dependent upon the availability of trained and respected mentors. In this study, it is safe to say that, for TLOs to successfully develop leadership in learners, they themselves need training. 'Leadership development refers to the building in people (in the case of this study, in learners) the capacity or knowledge and skills to lead. TLOs are therefore leadership mentors for learners in the school context.

This section demonstrates that leadership development plays a symbiotic relationship with management, and they have an interconnected development in education. The educational development of leadership and management places a burden on educational leaders to be proactive in how they lead and manage schools and other educational institutions. This means that leaders should cultivate the skills to teach or mentor learners who are 'leaders of tomorrow', however, for the context of this study, TLOs are responsible for helping learners begin their leadership experience today. Moreover, since this study is on cultivating learner leadership, Teacher Liaison Officers are responsible in assisting learners cultivate leadership for school effectiveness.

2.3 HOW LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OCCURS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

School leadership practices in South Africa, in many instances, still follow a top-down managerial leadership approach, which has long been a favored leadership model in the South African education system (Bush, 2007). Since managerial leadership emphasizes the execution of orders prescribed by external imperatives, it is the most fitting style for leaders working in centralized school systems (Bush, 2007). Despite this model not being suitable for diverse organizational

contexts, managerial leadership was considered relevant in South Africa to realize functional schools with a vital requirement for maintaining the calm and orderliness that allow learning to take place.

Bush (2007), however, contends that principals and teachers working under such bureaucratic systems will lack innovation and are destined to fail and to be inconclusive leaders when it comes to managing diversity and complexity. The responsibility of leadership should expand beyond the leadership of the school principal to that of a collective leadership within the school including Teacher Liaison Officers. This collective leadership is built on distributed leadership theory and more contextually to include teachers in leadership and decision-making. However, the introduction of more distributed and transformational leadership in the form of TLOs is inhibited by managerial leadership in the South African context (Bush & Glover, 2016).

Shortly after the establishment of democracy in 1994, the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development indicated resistance to change in the education system, which was characterized by inequity in the provision, fragmentation and deterioration of a culture of learning and teaching (Department of Education (DOE), 1996). The government, however, showed a commitment to change, which was evident in the emergence of education policies after 1994. The South African Schools Act (1996), for instance, advanced the move from centralized decision making to a school-based system of management and leadership, which involves all stakeholders, including principals, educators, parents and learners. The Department of Basic Education recognizes that successful learning is the norm that should be used in the measurement of quality management and leadership. Based on the National Development Plan (Presidency Republic of South Africa, 2012), the need to improve the quality of basic education is emphasized in the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2020). After the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, the Department of Basic Education (DOE, 1996) acknowledged that management and leadership should engage all members of educational organizations and not be the task of only a few. The range of policies and official documents developed after 1994 created the opportunity for Teacher Leaders including Teacher Liaison Officers to develop in schools, but it is not described clearly. One example is found in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2000), which require the teacher to take on seven roles, of which one is the role of leader, manager and administrator.

Despite empowering policies such as these, as well as other documents stating the importance of leadership, there seems to be a lack in adjustments to current leadership practices that would lead to improved academic performance. Although school leadership, including TLOs, is indicated as an essential element for successful and effective schools (Cosenza, 2015), school leadership is still based on a bureaucracy and a chain of command. Unfortunately, the influential position of classroom educators as teacher liaison officers is not completely acknowledged in the South African education setting, as TLO is, at most, limited to the classroom (Cosenza, 2015). The development of teachers as leaders and leadership mentors for students' leads to the empowerment of staff and, to some extent, erodes the bureaucratic top-down approach that has characterized education for many years. TLO seems to be an under-researched concept in the South African context (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2017). The lack of clarity about what TLO is, limits the effectiveness thereof and, furthermore, provides a strong rationale for exploring TLOs in South African schools (Webber, 2018).

So far, this section discussed the top-to-bottom leadership approach and how it defines the managerial leadership in South African schools. The context of this study resonates in this section because Teacher leaders including the Teacher Liaison Officers form the collective leadership approach of schools. Teacher Liaison Officers also constitute school leaders whose responsibility is to lead and nurture learners as future leaders in schools and the larger South African Society. In the next section, I will discuss on the Teacher Liaison Officer and the responsibilities attached to the role.

2.4 TEACHER LIAISON OFFICER AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

A liaison officer is an employee who builds and maintains mutually beneficial relationships, facilitates communications and coordinates activities among two or more people, organizations and institutions. Teacher Liaison Officers perform a variety of functions. In schools, TLOs serve as go-between among teachers, students, staff and assessors by providing useful information about the school's activities. Lewis (2015, p. 194) provided some of the roles of the teacher liaison officer as explained below;

To co-ordinate the establishment of a Representative Council of Learners and its annual election

This role by the Teacher Liaison Officer is targeted towards fulfilling what the South African Schools Act stipulate about the Representative Council of Learners. According to the South African Schools Act 1996, Act 84 section 11(I) which provides guidelines for the Representative council of learners, *a representative council of learners at the school must be established at every public-school enrolling learner in the eighth grade and higher.* The same section proceeds to stipulate that, *a member of the Executive council may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, determine guidelines for the establishment, election and functions of representative council of learners.* The South African Schools Act 1996 therefore makes provision for learners to be included in and to participate in school governance particularly in public schools (Oplatka, 2018). The TLO therefore performs the fundamental role of co-ordinating all the activities that leads up to the establishment and election of LRC. This is done through making sure that the RCL are first recognized in the school as part of its leadership structure. In addition, the TLOs draft procedures and processes that asserts the structures of the Representative Council of Learners. Since I have established earlier the symbiotic relationship between leadership and management in this study, the management function ‘to co-ordinate also resonates in this context. Coordination is the function of management which ensures that different departments and groups work in sync. Therefore, there is unity of action among the employees, groups and departments. It also brings harmony in carrying out different tasks and activities to achieve the organization’s objectives efficiently. The importance of co-ordination is that it provides a creative force that ensures and assures group efforts to create a result greater than the sum of the individual. Co-ordination in management also ensures unity of direction by way of securing spontaneous collaboration on the part of different departments. What the TLOs can draw from this management function ‘to co- ordinate’ as noted above is that apart from them serving as go-between, they are also expected to maintain institutional harmony in the way they lead and manage the school. Thus, in developing leadership in learners, the TLOs must ensure that there is a harmonious working relationship between the leadership of the school (including its Senior Management Team) and that of the LRC to ensure unity and the creative force for leadership in the school.

To serve as the Election Officer for the elections of the Representative Council of Learners and its Executive

Since the TLOs represent major actors in the establishment process of the RCL in schools, they are also at the frontline of conducting elections that can bring together student-officers who will oversee coordinating the affairs of the representative council of learners. It is not out of place to affirm that; learners are growing up in an atmosphere of general political apathy. There needs to be a process whereby the learners become exposed to civic issues. During the days of apartheid, politicization was very much at the forefront of learners' consciousness. Today's learners have forgotten the roots of the LRC and seem unaware of the power of the RCL to effect change (Lewis, 2015, p. 194). Thus, the election of students into the LRC will go a long way in changing the status quo that had hitherto denied learners a chance into the school leadership structures. The TLOs therefore serve as election officers responsible for not only conducting elections that usher in learners into the RLC but also foreground their usefulness in the school governing body. This connotes the notion of participatory decision-making, which is a process whereby planning, problem-solving, and related, activities are carried out jointly with managers and employees (Robinson, 2014) in form of organizational democratic values designed to promote equity, and shared responsibility in decision-making. In developing leadership for learners, TLOs must endure the practice of participatory decision-making in its central teachings to learners aspiring for leadership responsibility. Participatory decision-making also underscores harmonious knowledge exchange and unity of purpose in leadership.

To provide capacity-building for the newly elected Executive so that the members can undertake their functions in the New Year

Capacity-building entails the improvement in an individual's or organization's facility "to produce, perform or deploy." It also involves the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in a fast-changing world (Mabovula, 2019, p.24). In this study, the TLOs perform the role of capacity-building for newly elected executives of the RCL. The TLOs capacity build learners through engaging them in seminar and workshop trainings that offer robust engagements between the learners and the school governing body. This ensures that, learners are

aware of their rights, privileges and responsibilities as enshrined in the school policy as well as the South African Schools Act. Capacitating the learners also ensures that there is a clear understanding of each other's expectations in the process of school governance.

It is therefore imperative that a space for learners be created to enhance their participation. Supporting and empowering through ongoing workshops could close the gaps identified. In doing this, the TLOs must empower learners at all levels for effective participation. Empowerment entails the process of becoming stronger and more confident especially in controlling and claiming one's rights. In this case, the TLOs need to ensure that the rights of the students are well protected and that they also understand their rights and limitations for effective participation in the school leadership structures. Robinson (2014) 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 school leadership 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 (Mabovula,2009; Naicker,2011; Robinson,2014; Lewis,2015).

Capacity building therefore remains pivotal in the TLOs working mandate to cultivating learner leadership. Capacity building is required for not just individual effectiveness but also that of school effectiveness. Why available literature like those of Murray and Nash (2017), and Oplatka (2018) have indicated contested ideology on what capacity building is and how this can be achieved, the concern of capacity building in this study is clear. This study maintains that capacity building entails "the process by which individuals or groups increase their abilities to (1) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; (2) understand and deal with development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner" (United Nations Development Programme, Management Development and Governance Division, 1998). In the context of this study, for the TLO to effectively cultivate learners for any leadership position, they need to capacity build learners to enable them perform core leadership responsibilities as required of them in the school leadership structure and the larger society. Additionally, when the TLO capacity build learners, s/he indirectly teaches learners how to understand and deal with issues of conflict and development in the school.

What can be gleaned in the arguments above is the centrality of learners in school governance and the role of the Teacher Liaison Officers in ensuring that learners achieve this fundamental aim central of which is capacity building. Although some scholars are of the view that the participation of learners in the governance of the school would affect their studies, others affirm that learner participation will help them understand what leadership is and empower them to be potential leaders in the larger society. However, the literature established that capacity building is core to cultivating learner leadership. Whatever that the learners do in the school governing body, it is the responsibility of the TLO to build in learners the capacity that enables them to do what is required of them.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the transformational leadership theory will be discussed as important theories for this study.

2.5.1 Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. The context of this study makes transformational leadership as an important theory because of its underlying change agenda. In this study, TLOs are change agents who are meant to motivate learners and guide them towards becoming leaders now and in the future.

James MacGregor first introduced the concept of transforming leadership in his descriptive research on political leaders, but this term is now used in organizational psychology as well. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". Burns (1978) related to the

difficulty in differentiation between management and leadership and claimed that the differences are in characteristics and behaviors. He established two concepts: "transforming leadership" and "transactional leadership". According to Burns (1978), the transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations. It redesigns perceptions and values, and changes expectations and aspirations of employees. Unlike in the transactional approach, it is not based on a "give and take" relationship, but on the leader's personality, traits and ability to make a change through example, articulation of an energizing vision and challenging goals. Transforming leaders are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization and/or community. Burns (1978) theorized that transforming and transactional leadership were mutually exclusive styles.

The extent to which a leader is transformational, is measured first, in terms of his/her influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and because of the qualities of the transformational leader are willing to work harder than originally expected. These outcomes occur because the transformational leader offers followers something more than just working for self-gain; they provide followers with an inspiring mission and vision and give them an identity. The leader transforms and motivates followers through his or her idealized influence (earlier referred to as charisma), intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. In addition, this leader encourages followers to come up with new and unique ways to challenge the status quo and to alter the environment to support being successful.

This theory is relevant to this study because it encourages learners as important in leadership. It brings about significant and constructive change in the followers (learners) with the ultimate objective of transforming followers into leaders.

2.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the literature review on the concept of leadership and 'leadership development' was discussed. The chapter defined a leader as one who is responsible for overseeing the activities of an institution and providing informed decisions and actions for its effectiveness and success. In the context of the study, the Teacher Liaison Officer was conceived as constituting the leadership hierarchy tasked with the responsibility of interfacing learners and serving as a bridge between learners and the school governing body. The TLO also mentors' learners for leadership and ensures

that they are fairly represented in the SGB. The literature went ahead to discuss who the Teacher Liaison Officer is, and the roles and responsibilities attached to the role. The contesting views of learner representation in the LRC are also discussed as well as international literature on learner representative council. The chapter then presented and discussed the theoretical framework for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, literature for this study was reviewed on the experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in building learner leadership in selected secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The theoretical framework for this study was also discussed and how it applies to the study. In this chapter, the research design, methodology and the ethical considerations that inform the research process of this study is discussed. The chapter first begin by discussing the research paradigm, and then proceed with the research design, research method, sampling, data analysis and the ethical considerations as well as the trustworthiness of the study.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Before embarking on the study, the researcher needs to choose the research paradigm within which the study should be located. A paradigm, according to Bryman (2016), is the basic model or frame of reference that is utilized to organize observation and reasoning. As a result, it will not provide solutions to critical questions, but it may aid in the search for them. According to Oplatka (2018), paradigms are human constructs that identify where the researcher is coming from to generate meaning from data. There are numerous paradigms, but there are four main ones: positivist, post-positivist, interpretative paradigm, and critical paradigms. In this study, I adopted the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. Interpretive paradigms use meaning-oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. This paradigm like others, ensures that the views and responses from participants are prioritized. Because this study is projected from a social science perspective, it is essential to understand the experiences of TLOs in cultivating learner leadership. It is vital to note that Cobrun and Spillane (2018) state that an interpretive paradigm is designed to understand the subjective world of human experience. Therefore, gaining knowledge of the experiences of the TLOs is essential to attaching meaning to the world they function. Since people's focus on interpretation depends on their subjective experiences and how they construct

their social world (Coburn et al, 2016), it is essential to understand the experiences of TLOs in cultivating learner leadership.

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

This study employed a qualitative research approach. The specific aim of this qualitative study is to explore and understand the role of Teacher Liaison Officers in cultivating learner leadership in the secondary schools selected for this study. According to Mabovula (2009), qualitative research tries to explore human behavior, experience, and motivation. The ability to portray the thoughts and perspectives of participants, as well as the emphasis on hearing their voices, distinguishes a qualitative method (Meyer, 2001). The qualitative research method is appropriate for this study because I wanted to learn about the experiences that TLOs encounter in the process of cultivating leadership potential. Qualitative research, like other research methods, has advantages and limitations. According to Check and Schutt (2012), one benefit of employing a qualitative research approach is that it can answer issues about leadership roles between people and entities.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation and meaning for those involved. A “case” may refer to an individual, an event, a social activity, a group, organization, or an institution (Coburn and Spillane, 2016). It could be a descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory form of research inquiry. Furthermore, direct conversation with selected participants in their environment provides a hands-on first-hand experience. However, Fritzsche and Just (2018) argue that it was inappropriate to conceptualize a case study as a method, methodology, or research design. Marczyk and Festinger (2017), believe that because results are intrinsically bound, research cannot be conducted successfully using a case study.

3.5. SAMPLING

According to Murray and Nash (2017), sampling is the process of selecting a subsection to be included in a study. In qualitative research, sampling is frequently done with a specific goal in mind. According to Naoum (2012), qualitative sampling is used to gain a deeper understanding of

people's experiences. Qualitative research employs a variety of sample techniques, including convenient, purposive, and snowballing sampling. Purposive sampling differs from random sampling in that it is utilized when the researcher has certain criteria in mind when selecting participants; it is non-random, and the researcher sets the criteria for defining participation (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2017).

Purposive sampling, according to Mabovula (2009), is a method used by researchers to pick participants who can answer the research questions; it is critical to choose persons who can supply information that answers the research questions. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants for the study. Of these, three secondary schools within the KwaZulu Natal area were selected and teachers agreed to cooperate. Some of the intended participants could not cooperate owing to their busy schedules. Purposive sampling is used to include TLOs that I am familiar with in terms of working in the same circuit. Purposive sampling is effective mostly in small-scale research. One participant is sampled from each school, making up the total number of three participants in three schools. The data therefore reflects the experiences of the three participants who availed themselves and shared with the researcher their lived experiences as TLOs.

3.6. DATA GENERATION METHOD

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative data from research participants.

3.6.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are one of the most popular methods of generating data in qualitative inquiry (Saunders et al., 2019) According to Bryman (2016), qualitative interviews are used to gain access to participants' viewpoints and experiences, as well as acquire rich data that clarifies their thoughts on the issue under investigation. Qualitative research interviews focus on specific topics and explore participants' experiences (Swanson and Holton, 2005). Consequently, this approach of data collection is deemed appropriate since I wanted to extract the TLO's perspectives and experiences. Through semi-structured interviews, research participants can freely express their views, and the researchers can do follow-ups for purposes of seeking clarity on issues being

discussed (Van Zyl, 2014). The main objective of semi-structured interviews, specifically in this study, is to understand the experiences of TLOs in cultivating learner leadership in schools.

The advantage of employing semi-structured interviews, according to Shannon-Baker (2016), is that they allow researchers to gather rich data when they are unable to observe participants directly in context. According to Thomson and Pamacek (2006), the researcher oversees steering the interview dialogue towards the topic and research questions. Each participant was given 30-40 minutes per interview session. These interviews were conducted face-to-face to give the researcher the opportunity to probe where necessary. The data provided by the participants were tape-recorded using a tape-recorder. After the interviews were recorded, the researcher listened to them over and over to transcribe the data for the purpose of analysis.

3.7. PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis can be described as an endeavor to arrange, account for, and provide an explanation of data so that sense may be made of it in terms of participants' definitions of situations, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regulations (Saunders et al., 2019). The process of analyzing data gives sense to the data generated.

To analyze data, the thematic method of data analysis was employed in this study. Thematic analysis is a process of identifying, scrutinizing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. Braun and Clarke propose six stages: data familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, and defining and naming themes (Coburn and Spillane, 2016).

The audio-recorded information was transferred to the computer system to convert the recorded material into text (Meyer, 2001). I then transcribed all voice recordings at once to save time. The transcript was repeatedly read over to familiarize me with the data. I gave each transcript three hours of reading. I read the transcripts continually, intending to understand the data. In my first reading, I wanted to discover what will happen the text. In the second reading, I read the text to get the message carried by the transcript. In my third reading, I then highlighted the critical issues to be used in the process of data analysis. This means the researcher was immersed in the data and actively searching for meaning and patterns in the data (Oplatka, 2018).

After familiarizing myself with the transcript, I then started coding, which is the second data analysis phase. In this stage, the interesting coding features of the data will be categorized

according to subthemes. Each recorded data of the participant was transcribed independently for the sake clarity. I did the same thing in all transcripts. This time, I focused on finding the critical data, highlighting them, and giving them names.

After completing coding, I moved on to grouping and organizing all the codes, which is the process of categorizing. I opened three columns in my work exercise book to organize the codes according to their similarities. Possible themes and sub-themes were then identified, and the data would be classified accordingly. A theme can be understood as a pattern of response or meaning within the data that captures something important related to the research (Meyer, 2001).

At that time, I tried to understand what the data meant. In the final step, I integrated and summarized the data generated. I then tried to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and continually refine the interpretation throughout the analysis.

3.8. ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness, according to Marczyk and Festinger (2017), is the soundness of research in terms of its appropriateness and the integrity of its results. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is utilized to bolster the notion that the findings are important. According to Van Zyl (2014), the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of data in a qualitative study are all factors to consider. The above four issues are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

3.8.1. Credibility

Credibility comprises the truthfulness of the data generated in the study. According to Marczyk and Festinger (2017), credibility refers to the accurateness of the documentation, the reliability of the producer of the document, and the freedom of errors. Similarly, Shannon-Baker (2016) states that credibility is about ensuring that the instruments used to measure results are trustworthy and credible. To ensure that the findings are credible, I must ensure that I do not coerce the participants and that they know what the study is all about and that they know everything about their rights through an informed consent form that was given to them prior to the interview.

3.8.2. Transferability

Transferability is used by the readers of the research study (Van Zyl, 2014). It is a level at which the readers can apply the current research to their contexts. According to Singh and Masuku (2014), transferability is the point to which results of the search can be generalized to a wide-ranging population. Data presented in this study is will not be stagnant and it may change as the context changes. Findings of qualitative research such as this one, are not generalizable to the whole population. Nevertheless, it is important that other research can apply the procedures to other contexts that are similar. That is where the importance of transferability comes in. To ensure that the findings are transferable, I gave a detailed or thick description of the methods and all other steps that I took during the study.

3.8.3. Dependability

Lewis (2015) defines dependability as “the stability of findings over time”. It is concerned with the consistency of the research findings. According to Shannon-Baker (2016), dependability is the extent to which a piece of work can obtain similar results if the work was repeated in the same context with same methods. Swanson and Holton (2005) suggest that the researcher should use an “overlapping method” to ensure dependability. To ensure dependability in this study I ensured that I described all the stages of the research that gave these results of this study for the next researchers to follow if they want to replicate it. I used similar interview schedule for all the participants in the study. The interviews done in the three secondary schools have the same questions to ensure consistency of the findings and dependability, which suggest that the findings are reliable.

3.8.4. Confirmability

According to Check and Schutt (2012), confirmability is the concern of the researcher in a qualitative study about the objectivity of the study. Regarding confirmability, Shannon-Baker (2016) argues that the results of the study must be based on experiences and ideas of the participants, instead of the predilection of the researcher. I minimized any act of bias in the study, I went through the generated data, reflecting several times just to ensure that I am not biased in any form. In addition, when the transcripts were done, I gave each participant a copy so they could confirm if what I have written down is a true reflection of what transpired during our discussions.

Member-checking is another technique that I used during the research process. Member-checking enables researchers to check that their interpretations are consistent with those of the participants and reflecting the realities of the participants and not those of the researchers (Lewis, 2015).

3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is consensus among scholars that all research conducted must adhere to ethical principles and standards. Ethics is concerned with moral issues (Anderson, 2017). I made sure that I adhere to the highest ethical standards of conducting qualitative research. Daniel (2012) avers that there are different ethics for different professions. Mabovula (2009, p.25) mentions that research ethics refers to “the moral dimensions of researching; our decisions about what is right and wrong while engaged in research”. Qualitative research involves sharing information of the participants with the researcher. The researcher needs to gain trust from the participants throughout the stages involved in the research. Akhtar (2016) maintains that ethical issues involve respect of the participants, informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, protection of the participants against any harm and caring. For purposes of this study, I obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It is during such ethical clearance application that I explained how all the principles and processes governing the conduct of research would be upheld. For example, getting permission from gatekeepers to conduct research is one of the processes researchers must undertake. For this study, I applied to the provincial Department of Education seeking permission to conduct the study in the selected schools. I then visited the schools to discuss with the participants the procedures of the research. Participants were informed about their autonomy and rights. For instance, they were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage during the research process, without any negative consequences. After they agreed to participate, I gave each one of them a declaration of informed consent forms to sign. In addition, I assured them that whatever they told me would remain between us and that nobody would know who gave me the information that I would use to write the research report. In other words, their anonymity was guaranteed, and so was their safety. Anonymity is used to protect the identities of the participants so that they cannot be harmed should it happen that the information they provided is too sensitive and might incriminate others who may not necessarily be participants in the study.

3.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research design and methodology used in the study were presented in this chapter. The chapter also discussed the research paradigm and research approach. A case study was also mentioned as a favored methodology for this study in the chapter. All the study procedures were discussed in detail, including sampling methodologies, data generation methods, data processing, guaranteeing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The next chapter focuses on the data presentation and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter three provided a discussion on research design and methodology that informed the research process of this study. This chapter presents and discusses data that was elicited from four TLOs at four secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The study aimed to explore the role of Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in ensuring meaningful representation of learners in the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in schools and secondly to understand how good leadership skills can be ensured for the productivity of learner representative councils. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Teacher Liaison Officers experience the role they play among the learner Representative Council in Schools?
2. How can the cultivation of good leadership skills be ensured for the productivity of Learner representative councils?

During the interviews, participants were allowed the freedom to express themselves as is normally the case with qualitative enquiry. Probes were made to engage participants to clarify some issues and redirect the discussion to the focus of the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of both the schools and the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs), and these are Mr. Vusi, Pika Secondary School (PSS), Miss Zee, Curo Secondary School (CSS), Mr. Smart, Mark Secondary School (MSS), and Miss Samantha, Gemini Secondary School (GSS). In presenting the data, verbatim quotes are used to enhance the trustworthiness of the evidence.

Literature and the study's theoretical framework (transformational leadership theory) discussed in chapter two will be applied in the process of discussing the data. The present chapter begins with a description of the participants' profiles. This is followed by a discussion of two broad themes with sub-themes. The first theme is about how Teacher Liaison officers experienced and played their role in working with the Learner Representative Council in Schools. The second theme is TLO's experiences of cultivating leadership skills among the Learner representative councils. Thus, the two research questions for this study are used as broad themes with each having sub-themes that emerged from data analysis.

4.2. PROFILING THE PARTICIPANTS

As already highlighted above, the study generated data from four participants at four secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. These participants shared their perspectives as Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in cultivating learner leadership in schools.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Name of participant (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Qualifications	Years of teaching experience at the school	Years as a TLO at the school
Mr Vusi (PSS)	Male	Bachelor of Science, PGCE	15	9
Miss Zee (CSS)	Female	STD, ACE, Hons and master's in education	14	7
Mr Smart (MSS)	Male	STC, HED, SED, ACE, Hons in Education	14	6
Miss Samantha	Female	Bachelor of Science, PGCE	14	5

KEY:

ACE: Advanced Certificate in Education

STC: Secondary Teacher's Certificate

STD: Secondary Teacher's Diploma

HED: Higher Education Diploma

PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education

4.2.1 NARRATIVE PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Vusi (TLO 1) was a 39-year-old male at Pika Secondary School (PSS) and had been teaching for 15 years. He held a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Mathematics and Physical Science. During his fourteen years (14 years) of teaching, he taught mathematics for 10 years of his teaching career. He was a Teacher Liaison Officer and still taught Mathematics to Grade 10 and 12 learners. He has 9 years of experience as a TLO responsible for cultivating learner leadership.

Miss Zee, the second participant interviewed as a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO 2) was a 49-year-old female at Curo Secondary School (CSS) with a teaching experience of 14 years. Her professional qualification included a Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD). She had been a TLO for 7 years.

Mr. Smart the third participant (TLO 3) was a 36-year-old female at Gemini Secondary School (GSS) who had been teaching for 14 years. She has a Secondary Teacher's Certificate (STC) qualification majoring in Geography and English. She had been teaching English for the last 14 years. She has been a TLO for 6 years.

Miss Samantha, the fourth participant interviewed as a Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO 4) was a 45-year-old female at Gemini Secondary School (GSS) with a teaching experience of 14 years. She has been a TLO for 7 years.

4.3. TEACHER LIAISON OFFICERS' EXPERIENCES OF THE ROLE THEY PLAYED IN THE LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL FOR THE CULTIVATION OF LEARNER LEADERSHIP

This theme is the main theme of this study. Judging from the TLOs' profiles presented above, I can safely say all of them were experienced enough to guide the LRCs appropriately in handling their duties. The participants expressed the roles they played in the learner representative council and how learner leadership was cultivated in the process as (a) ensuring that the LRC is well constituted and that they hold quarterly meetings; (b) Supporting school electoral officers with

class representatives and LRC elections (c) bridging the gap between the SMT, staff, and LRC. These roles are discussed below:

4.3.1 Ensuring that LRC is well constituted, and quarterly meetings are held

The participants reported that they played the role of ensuring that the Learner Representative Council was well constituted and that they held quarterly meetings. This was very important as it made them understand their leadership roles and partake in meetings that further cultivated leadership skills in them such as constituting the meetings, understanding meeting procedures, and chairing such meetings successfully. Since the presence of the LRC in schools can only gain traction through the TLOs, they reported that they assisted in constituting the formal operation of the LRC. The following participant responses provide clarity on this. Mr. Vusi of PSS reported that:

Although the LRC is a constituted body as enshrined in the constitution, it only becomes active when it engages in formal processes like holding regular meetings to discuss affairs that concern them. Thus, as a TLO, I ensured that the LRC abides by and fulfills the legitimate mandate expected of them in the school.

Miss Zee (CSS) reported that she aimed at creating an enabling environment for the LRC:

Even though the presence of the LRC in schools is mandated, my role as a TLO in this school is to ensure that the LRC functions optimally by creating an enabling environment for them to conduct their meetings and discuss aspects that concern them. As learners who are still passing through the phases of maturity and learning, they need an adult with more experience to guide them through such institutional processes. By doing that, they are also able to learn the ropes and grow to become better leaders. I had to teach them to write a formal letter to the school principal tabling their scheduled meetings and how this would take place so that it wouldn't disturb their academic contact time.

Mr. Smart (GPS) reported that he aimed to prepare the LRC to function well in meetings:

As a TLO in this school, part of my responsibility is to look at the interests of the learners and ensure that their rights are well protected and that they are well represented in the LRC. Part of what I insist on is for meetings to sit so that they can discuss and share ideas. Such meetings and discussions reveal the potential of the learners and their various abilities and how issues are politely discussed.

Engaging the participants further on this subject, I sought to understand from Mr. Smart how ensuring regular meetings also fostered the cultivation of leadership skills for the learners. He reported that:

When the LRC holds regular meetings, they can interact and understand each other. No learner is the same as another in terms of ability, and their various abilities can only be known if they regularly meet and share ideas. In doing that it promotes a sense of trust and confidence, part of which amounts to leadership cultivation among them, and they can learn the strong and weak parts of each other, where and how to intervene to assist them.

Miss Samantha (GSS) reported that she made sure that the LRC was well constituted. According to her:

As a TLO in this school, I make sure that the LRC is well constituted to function in the way it is supposed to function. Meetings are called so that all LRC members will socialize and share ideas.

From the participants' responses to this theme, the constituted mandate of the LRC as stipulated in the constitution only finds expression when TLOs coordinate to make their mandate active. Literature in this study also supports the role played by the TLOs in the LRC as contained in chapter two (section 2.4) of the study. Although some scholars are of the view that the participation of learners in the governance of the school would negatively affect their studies, others affirm that learner participation will help them understand what leadership is and empower them to be potential leaders in the larger society. However, the literature established that capacity building is core to cultivating learner leadership. Whatever the learners do in the school governing body, it is the responsibility of TLOs to build in them the capacity that enables them to do what is required of them. It is worth noting that, though the TLOs identified the role of ensuring a well-constituted body, they did this intending to cultivate learner leadership. They argued that what they did was

to fulfill their mandate with the understanding that learners would find their contribution a learning process for them. According to the transformational leadership theoretical framework, the TLOs should create valuable and positive changes in the followers (LRC) with the end goal of developing followers into leaders (Burns, 1978). Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership calls for the enhancement of motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership of their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so that the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. The context of this theme makes transformational leadership an important theory because of its underlying change agenda. In this theme, TLOs are expected to be change agents who are meant to motivate learners and guide them toward becoming leaders now and in the future.

4.3.2 *Supporting school electoral officers with LRC elections*

In this sub-theme, the participants shared their experiences on the role they played in supporting school electoral officers. They reported that TLOs were responsible for supporting the electoral officers in conducting elections for the learner representative councils in schools. The following voices show the participants' sentiments on this matter. Mr. Vusi (PSS) reported:

As a TLO in this school, I ensure that an enabling environment is created and pass necessary information that helps class managers, and their representatives understand the need for electing officials to represent them in the LRC. Thus, working together with electoral officers in the school who provide guidelines for elections to the learners willing to contest and be elected to the LRC. In doing this the leadership skill of selecting leaders through the eye of the needle is cultivated. Not everyone is selected but only those who are strong and will actively participate in ensuring the core functions of the LRC.

Miss Zee reported on the importance of her presence:

Without my presence in this school as a TLO, it would be difficult to constitute an effective body for the LRC. This is because the LRC needs someone who is part of the school management and who will be able to provide proper guidance for the learners during and after the elections of the LRC. Thus, as a TLO I assisted in liaising with the class managers and their representatives as well as the electoral officers to be able to conduct free and fair elections for the LRC.

The conversation was further pushed with Miss. Zee on the same matter, and was asked to explain how the role played ensured that learner leadership was cultivated in the school, in response, she reported:

Cultivating learner leadership begins at the level of transparency in the electoral process where the young learners are socialized into the leadership and political setup of the school. As a TLO, the role I play includes mentoring the learners and making sure that I am part of the process that gives them that foundation they need and fostering a culture that gives room for clear electoral conduct and processes in the school.

Mr. Smart of GPS reported that his role was to ensure the well-being of the LRC:

Being a Teacher Liaison Officer in this school means that my liaison duties cater to learners' well-being, especially when it concerns their role and presence in the affairs of the school. To effectively pursue this, I support class managers and class representatives in activities that concern them and how they want to address such concerns. One of such is that of elections which an electoral body is constituted to conduct for LRC officials.

Miss Samantha (GSS) reported that she also served as one of the electoral officers:

As a TLO in the school, I also serve as one of the election officers responsible for ensuring that elections are free and fair. This responsibility also encourages me to be a mentor to the learners and provides a roadmap for them to develop their leadership potential and set them on their path as learner-leaders in the school.

According to the participants, constituting a legitimate body for officials who will function in the LRC started with conducting elections. Elections ushered in key officials of the LRC who would

be responsible for overseeing the interests of the learners and working together with the school management for effective operation. Thus, the TLO's duty was to make sure that the LRC was well represented in the school governing body working with the entire school management. From the participants' responses, it emerged that the TLOs played an important role in coordinating learners and offering them a safe space for conducting elections thereby deploying strong learners in the governing body. Apart from the TLOs serving as electoral officers for the LRC, they also mentored the learners in terms of leadership and how they could appoint those who served them. Teacher Liaison Officers were appropriately positioned towards fulfilling what the South African Schools Act stipulates, namely, to provide guidelines for the learner representative council, *a learner representative council the school must be established at every public-school enrolling learner in the eighth grade and higher*. The same section proceeds to stipulate that, *a member of the Executive Council may, by notice in the Provincial Gazette, determine guidelines for the establishment, election, and functions of a learner representative council in the South African Schools Act, 1986, section 11(I)*. The South African Schools Act therefore makes provision for learners to be included in and to participate in school governance, particularly in public schools (Heystek, 2001). TLOs are therefore expected to perform the fundamental role of coordinating all the activities that lead up to the establishment and election of LRC. This is done by making sure that the LRC is first recognized in the school as part of its leadership structure. In addition, the TLOs draft procedures and processes that assert the structures of the LRC. However, it is possible that some TLOs may not function as required and the leadership cultivation cannot take place due to the school management teams feeling threatened that the LRCs will ask school governance questions which they would fail to answer. Responses from TLOs in this study suggest that it is sometimes not adequately evident how their roles intentionally guided learners toward leadership. What I can, however, argue is that, whether the TLOs were focused on cultivating leadership skills in the learners, the roles they played were always indirect learning processes for those learners who could then replicate what they observed in their future endeavors.

4.3.3 Bridging the gap between the SMT, staff and LRC

The focus of this sub-theme is on the role TLOs played in bridging the gap between different school structures. All four participants interviewed identified this as one of their important roles. In this regard, Mr. Vusi (PSS) reported that:

As a TLO at this school, I have played different roles working with the Learner Representative Council. One such is to serve as a mediator with the senior management team as well as the entire staff to fulfill the constitutional mandate of the LRC. By rallying around the school management, I understood the expectations of the school management and the role that the LRC is expected to perform to complement the activities of the school in terms of its leadership and management.

In further conversation with Mr. Vusi, he reported that such a role ensured that learner leadership was cultivated in the school:

Learner leadership can only be cultivated when they are allowed to work together with the management team and staff. Even though the LRC has its mandate as provided constitutionally, I played the role of providing the engagement process that is supposed to co-exist between the management and LRC. I don't think that learner leadership can be cultivated if they are not allowed to function together with the SMT, get to learn from them, and situate their relevance in the process. To ensure this as a TLO I created an enabling environment that allows for that professional experience to be expressed and sustained.

Miss Zee reported that the role of bridging the gap between the SMT staff and LRC was a key part of the work she did as a TLO.

Without the TLO in this school, the presence and role of the Learner Representative Council will be absent. Serving as a TLO in this school made me understand that the LRC is validated by our contribution. If there is no active TLO in the school, the Learner Representative Council will be inefficient because management does not pay attention or consider their role in the school's governing structure. I reasserted the role of the LRC by insisting that their constitutional mandate

should be protected and that they are put to speed on what is happening. Thus, bridging the gap that often exists between the LRC and the SMT was one of the major roles that I played so that both the school management and the Learner representative council coalesce and function together. By doing this, the school management understands learners' problems as the LRC presents their concerns before the school management for effective affirmative action.

Mr. Smart (GPS) reported that the SMT in their school did not think the LRC was a necessary structure:

Since occupying the position of a TLO in this school, I realized that there exists a gap between the staff, management, and the LRC. The management does not think that the presence of the LRC in the school is necessary hence they have been sidelined in the school activities. However, this has always posed challenges for the management thus enabling me as a TLO to make sure that the gap is closed. In doing this, I insisted that the LRC is invited to be part of some relevant management meetings so that learners too offer their insights and concerns and that all decisions reached also put the LRC into consideration.

Miss Samantha (GSS) reported that bridging the gap was an important role she played:

Bridging the division that exists between the LRC and the SMT is one of the major roles that I played so that both the school management and the Learner representative council coalesce and function together. It is not an easy duty though that is the reason other TLOs fail dismally to cooperate in such working environments.

What can be gleaned from the responses above is that the TLO role is crucial and imperative in providing a clear and synergetic roadmap for the LRC in engaging with the school management body. This role is part of the gap the researcher observed as a motivating factor in conducting the study. In chapter one of this study (Section 1.5) I articulated in the rationale that, the presence of the Learner Representative Council was not accorded due attention in schools even though the constitution recognized and mandated their functionality in the South African schooling system. Thus, it is not surprising that the participants highlighted that their role in bridging the gap between the school management team (SMT), the staff, and the LRC, was imperative and ensured that learners were heard and appreciated in the school management and governance structures. This

would allow for a more transient and holistic functionality for the successful operation of a school. According to the literature presented in chapter two (Section 2.4), the expected symbiotic relationship between the management and learners should capacitate the LRC in schools (Carr, 2005). According to the transformational leadership theory, the leadership role of the TLOs should be geared towards a transformative agenda that empowers the LRC to understand their role in the management structure of the school as this understanding also transforms them as change agents in the process. The context of this study makes transformational leadership an important theory because of its underlying change agenda. In this study, TLOs are expected to be change agents who are meant to motivate learners and guide them to become leaders now and in the future.

4.4 HOW LRC LEADERSHIP SKILLS CAN BE CULTIVATED

In addition to the evidence already presented and discussed above, the participating TLOs specifically shared their views on how leadership skills among LRC could be cultivated. Although the other themes generated how the TLOs played their roles, I pushed and engaged further on how the TLOs cultivated the learner's leadership skills. In this regard, the TLOs identified the following: (a) attending regular training workshops (b) giving LRCs three full terms in leadership and (c) training them on the code of conduct. These roles are discussed below:

4.4.1 Attendance of regular training workshops offered for the LRC

The participants reported that if they provided regular training workshops for LRC, it would enhance their leadership skills. Regular training workshops would offer safe spaces for members to receive informed training. In this regard, Mr. Vusi of PSS reported that:

As TLO in the school, I encouraged the regular provision of workshops that are offered for the LRC. Attending regular workshops assists the LRC in building the knowledge base and provides the opportunity for stakeholder engagement geared to hone their leadership potential. Thus, my role is to make sure that they don't lose out on the opportunity to learn and grow not just for institutional benefit but also for personal growth for future impact.

Miss Zee reported that she emphasized that attending training workshops was important for the LRC because it provided them to exchange ideas with different professionals and leaders that cut across education and politics.

Workshops are important forums where ideas are exchanged by those who participate in the discussions. Thus, as a TLO I am obliged to attend regular workshops that enable me to receive up-to-date training that is beneficial to me and the school I represent. I receive mentorship from industrial professionals, directors, and politicians. The knowledge that I gain in attending workshops goes on to resonate with the training that I provide in the school, especially with the LRC.

Mr. Smart (GPS) reported that attending regular workshops with the LRC members was part of the cultivation of leadership in them.

Over the years, the provision of workshops by the school and department was not a regular thing. However, recent efforts by TLOs, including myself, emphasized the necessity of regular workshops, especially for the LRC. This is imperative because workshops provide a breeding ground for learners to exchange knowledge and experiences and learn from their seniors. The workshops help to groom learners and provide leadership skills for them to be effective in the LRC and discover their potential as leaders.

Similarly, Miss Samantha (GSS) reported that the provision of workshops for the LRC was important because it built their confidence and encouraged them to participate more committedly in the various activities.

Providing regular workshops for TLOs and LRC is an important aspect that I encouraged in this school. In the past, members of the LRC were not allowed to attend workshops or seminars, however, which negatively affected the way they understood leadership and their active representation therein. Thus, as a TLO in the school, I encouraged full representation of the LRC in development activities organized by the school. These workshops were very educational and when members of the LRC were allowed to attend, they learned a lot and boosted their confidence

in different ways. It also cultivated their leadership potential that also ensured their productivity in the LRC and confidence in discussions.

The data presented above suggests that learner leadership in schools can be cultivated through regular attendance of workshops. According to the TLOs, regular attendance of the LRC in workshops helped cultivate leadership skills in them for their productivity in the LRC and future endeavors. They were cultivated to lead confidently and voice their concerns, ideas, and positive contributions to the school. The workshops according to the TLOs were usually comprised of participation by different stakeholders that cut across departmental officials and politicians. In these workshops, LRCs were trained in public speaking as an important skill in leadership, emotional intelligence, and other skills for them to successfully lead in schools. Departmental officials gave them monitoring schedules they would use to visit them for their full functionality in their schools, this has cultivated LRCs in ensuring that their presence was felt in schools by ways of assisting the management. TLOs are part of school leadership and are also responsible for carrying the LRC along in terms of the activities of the school and all workshops designed to enhance effective learning experience for members in the LRC thus handling these duties.

4.4.2 Give them positions to lead in schools

The participants reported that members of the LRC needed to be given additional positions of leadership in schools apart from their role as LRC in the form of class captains, sports captains, or others. This would help them to be always active. In this regard, Mr. Vusi (PSS) reported that: *As a TLO in the school, I understood that if learners who make up the LRC are not given leadership roles in the school such as class captains, sport captains, and so on, they will not be able to discover themselves as potential leaders or even garner the preliminary understanding of what it means to lead. Thus, I encouraged them to take up such responsibilities as it will cultivate their productivity in the LRC and build their leadership.*

Miss Zee on another matter reported that leadership was the ability to influence and guide people to achieve a common goal.

As a TLO in the school, I understood that leadership is a process, one which is either developed or innate in a person. To develop learners for leadership in this school, I worked with management to encourage the members of LRC to be given leadership positions where they can lead at the class level as class captains or even timekeepers and sport captains. Assigning these leadership positions began to elevate their minds to a greater level of responsibility and proactiveness.

Mr. Smart of GPS reported that his role as a TLO was to involve learners in leadership positions to discover their different strengths.

You see, some leaders are born, and some are made. We must help them discover their leadership strengths and employ them where needed the most. As a TLO I am inclined to always pursue a process that gives these learners room to express their leadership abilities. I did that from the individual base where I assigned them some roles like collecting assessment materials and distributing teaching aids at a given circumstance. Furthermore, I also allowed and monitored them to conduct class elections where they elect their class captains and lead classes in developing class rules. This process teaches them the roles of constituting formal associations and electing those to preside over them.

Probing further on this, I sought to know from Mr. Smart how productive these activities were for members of the LRC and their educational commitment. He further reported that:

Leadership is a responsibility, and anyone who is put in the position of leading must be alert enough to multi-task and take enormous responsibility. Putting them in leadership positions at that level helped to build the process of multi-tasking and responsibility. If one cannot live up to the commitment of leadership for whatever reason, he is not fit to be a leader. This is therefore a process for them to know, understand, and prepare themselves for greater responsibilities in the LRC and in the future.

Miss Samantha (GSS) reported that everyone was a product of a particular foundation and endeavored to make a positive contribution where stationed.

As a TLO I believe that everyone is a product of a particular foundation. Be it in physical growth, education, or leadership. Recognizing this developmental agency assisted me to also placing myself as someone responsible for guiding those under me. Therefore, the LRC is part of my responsibility, to nurture, grow, and be inspired by the future and its responsibilities. I, therefore, assigned them responsibilities and influenced them to be block controllers assisting educators who are on ground duties and fetching their fellow learners to honor their classes, and other responsibilities that will provide them with the experience needed.

From the responses above, the four participants and the schools are in tandem with the fact that giving LRCs leadership positions at the fundamental level in the school helps to nurture their leadership skills and provide an enabling environment for discovering those born as leaders and harnessing the potential of those striving to become leaders. According to the TLOs, assigning such responsibilities as class captains, sports captains, timekeepers, and other positions assisted members of the LRC in acquiring the necessary foundational experience of becoming leaders. Thus, this theme emphasizes that, for one to be a leader he/she must be actively involved in the affairs that prepare them for becoming leaders now and in the future. Responding to this is the argument from TLOs that LRCs are to be more than one term to lead simply because when they are used to their leadership roles and have mastered them, the year has elapsed and they are to end their term of office, and of course with other programs left undone due to time constraints and limited contact time with their constituencies.

4.4.3 Training of LRC on code of conduct

TLOs reported that it was very important for the LRC to be thoroughly trained in the school code of conduct as their role forced them to be fully functional as per the school code of conduct. The code of conduct is a set of rules, guidelines, and principles that outline the expected behavior of learners in schools. The code of conduct is essential in cultivating learner leadership in schools and serves as a policy to be understood and followed enabling LRC members to capacitate other learners and take a lead in the positive functioning of the school. Mr. Vusi of PSS reported that:

There is no way you can train or cultivate a leader without teaching them about the code of conduct and it is very important, especially for members of the LRC because they are still at the teething stage of leadership. Therefore, providing them with explicit training on this both as a way of life and association is very fundamental.

Miss Zee reported that training LRC on the code of conduct was part of the cultivation of leadership for them. She put this up succinctly when she said:

Without a code of conduct, it is impossible to train or develop a leader. Since LRC members are still in the early stages of their leadership development, code, and behavior are quite crucial. In any leadership position, policies are the driving force of any organization and ensure successful leadership.

Mr. Smart reported that as TLO, he requested the code of conduct from the management and created a program of translating, analyzing, and discussing it, allowing all members of the LRC to ask questions and share their views on issues that needed to be attended to. He said that he always took his time to make sure that members of the LRC understood the code of conduct that regulated their activities. He said:

As a TLO in this school, I have taken some time to cultivate LRC members on the code of conduct as I have realized that most of the members of the LRC are not familiar with it. The reason for this is because the LRC has not been given due attention and their members denied some of those basic rights. To ensure this, I must pass them through the code of conduct which guides the LRC and how the TLOs complement it.

Miss Samantha also reported that the majority of the LRC members seemed to be unfamiliar and unsatisfied with the code of conduct of the school. However, understanding the code of conduct was important for both the TLOs and LRC. As a TLO, I made sure that time was taken to go through the code of conduct sections, especially sections A and B which spoke to school times and uniforms as important parts that needed to be emphasized to the members of the LRC.

The responses above clearly indicate the imperativeness of cultivating the LRC through the code of conduct that mandates their operation and how the school is to function. The code of conduct assured a sense of understanding and direction of the LRC. In this theme, it emerged that for the cultivation of leadership to be assured, the provision and attendance of regular training workshops offered for the LRC were very important and giving them positions where they must lead in schools for more than one term would also assist in their leadership cultivation for their future endeavors. These sub-themes combined to cultivate grounds for the LRC to understand their leadership roles, participation, and future ambition. The sub-themes also demonstrated that leadership among learners is a learning process and there are marked intricacies to adhere to in achieving leadership understanding and participation.

4.5. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter demonstrated the participants' views on the central objectives and research questions of this study, and the data presented. The TLOs at the schools expressed their roles in the Learner Representative Council and how understanding their roles enabled them to ensure the cultivation of leadership skills by the LRC.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented and discussed the study findings. In this chapter, I summarize the study and its findings, present conclusions, and make recommendations. In Chapter Four, the discussion of data was organized under themes and the participants' voices were used to substantiate the findings and claims. In this chapter, I highlight the extent to which the research questions have been addressed. However, before I present the conclusions in this final chapter, I commence by providing a study summary, highlighting important points from previous chapters to remind the reader about the essence of each chapter. After that, I restate the research questions that underpinned the study to frame the discussions of the conclusions. Then, I present the findings and recommendations categorized into two parts: Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education and Recommendations to researchers, as well as my final word on the research.

5.2. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

I began this study by setting the orientation in Chapter One, where I introduced the topic of the study. I also provided the background and rationale for conducting this study. The background of the study highlighted through literature that “our learners are growing up in an atmosphere of general political apathy. There needs to be a process whereby the learners become exposed to civic issues. During the days of apartheid, politicization was very much at the forefront of learners’ consciousness. Today’s learners have forgotten the roots of the LRC and are unaware of the power of the LRC to effect change” (Lewis, 2015, p. 194). Thus, the chapter demonstrated the imperativeness of exploring the role of teacher liaison officers (TLOs) in growing students who will actively participate in the learner representative council at selected secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Key concepts of the study were defined, namely, leadership, management, Teacher Liaison Officer, and Learner leadership. I concluded the chapter by outlining the layout of the study, which indicated what each chapter entailed.

Chapter Two presented a discussion of the relevant literature relating to the concept of leadership and how it is used to understand how teacher liaison officers perform their roles as leaders in growing learners for leadership in the LRC. The chapter also discussed understanding the concept of ‘leadership development’ and how leadership occurs in the school context. The chapter also discussed who the Teacher Liaison Officer is as well as the roles and responsibilities of TLO. The literature proceeded to examine the TLOs, the election, and the training of learners in LRC. International literature of TLO and LRC is also discussed and lastly, the theoretical framework with particular focus on the transformational leadership theory was discussed.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research design as well as the research methodology that I employed. Using the interpretive paradigm enabled me to elicit an understanding of the experiences TLOs face in cultivating learner leadership in schools. The study was a qualitative case study of four secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. I used semi-structured interviews as the data generation method. I was able to understand the experiences of TLOs and their roles in cultivating learner leadership in the LRC through the data generated during interviews. The study employed various strategies to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the data. I used purposive sampling, as this was qualitative research, to ensure that the selected participants would help generate an in-depth description of the phenomenon. Among other ethical considerations, I reported in the chapter that all TLOs targeted gave written consent to participate in the study.

In Chapter Four, I presented and discussed findings that emerged from data analysis. Research sites, schools, and participants were profiled in detail, giving readers a detailed picture of the research site and the background of the participants. This can be found in section 4.2 of Chapter Four. Findings were presented using two broad themes that emerged from the data, namely: Teacher Liaison Officers’ experiences of the role they played among the Learner Representative Council in Schools for the cultivation of learner leadership, and how the cultivation of good leadership skills can be ensured for the productivity of Learner representative councils. A summary of the findings is presented here; the detailed findings can be found in section 4.3 of Chapter Four of this study.

5.3. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section summarizes the findings of this study, as discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The key research questions are used to summarize the findings. They will provide a clear picture of how the research tried to answer the key questions asked in the study.

5.3.1 How do Teacher Liaison Officers experience the roles they play among the Learner Representative Council in Schools?

The study found that Teacher Liaison Officers had different experiences in the role they played in the Learner Representative Councils for the cultivation of learner leadership. The participating TLOs explained the different roles which included (a) ensuring that the LRC is well constituted and that they hold quarterly meetings (b) supporting school electoral officers with representatives and LRC elections, and (c) bridging the gap between the SMT, staff and LRC. These roles were fully explained and contained in section 4.3 of this study. The study found that the participating TLOs ensured that the presence of the LRC was achieved in schools by properly constituting the LRC body and encouraging learners to participate fully in the LRC to fulfil the mandate as enshrined in the constitution of South Africa. The study noted that, even though the role of the TLOs and the existence of the LRC was constitutionally mandated, some of the schools hesitated to constitute and recognize this body in their institutions. Those schools that constituted the LRC operated at a skeletal level because the schools did not offer the type of support needed for the LRC to function. While the TLOs made efforts to effectively represent and cultivate learners for leadership, the management tended to turn a blind eye to the matter. Thus, to make the LRC visible in schools and allow members to participate in the school management process, the TLOs ensured that the LRCs were well constituted and that they held quarterly meetings. Added to this, they also supported electoral officers in making sure that elections were properly conducted to elect officers who would manage the activities of the LRC. The study also found that the roles performed by the TLOs assisted in cultivating learners for leadership because, in the process of constituting the body and holding meetings, learners learned how constituted organizations and societies operate.

5.3.2 How can LRC leadership skills be cultivated?

The study found that TLOs were responsible for ensuring that learner leadership was cultivated in the schools. However, the study also noted that although cultivating learner leadership was imperative for learners, the TLOs usually were not intentional about this but they offered frameworks that learners could learn from and develop as they grew. The study therefore discussed three subthemes namely (a) provision and attendance of regular training workshops offered for the LRC (b) Giving them positions where they must lead in schools, and (c) Training of LRC on the code of conduct. This is found in sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2, and 4.4.3 of chapter four (4). The study found that the workshops according to the TLOs usually comprised of participation by different stakeholders that cut across industry professionals, educators, politicians, school management teams, and others. The combination of these categories of people also brought them different leadership experiences which were exchanged for the enrichment of all. Thus, when LRC attended these workshops, they could learn about so many things including how to be good leaders and the qualities expected of them.

5.4. LEARNING FROM THE FINDINGS: CONCLUSIONS

5.4.1. Conclusions were drawn in the context of the study's findings.

During this research, I learned that the role of the TLOs is very important in the school governing body, especially when it comes to the representation of learners in the LRC. I also learned that, if TLOs are not active in schools and do not insist on the constituted authority of the LRC, then it will be very difficult for the LRC to function. It is the TLO that serves as an intermediary between the school management team and the LRC for the full representation of the LRC in the school management system. I also learned that the LRC cannot on their own fulfil the mandate that is enshrined in the constitution of South Africa, even as legitimate as it is without the TLO coming out and making sure that such constituted mandate is enforced and activated.

5.5.2. Since leadership is not only innate but nurtured, I learned from this study that the TLOs need to be more intentional about cultivating learner leadership through personal mentorship. I also learned that the provision of regular workshops helped members of the LRC to learn from other

professionals who are leaders in their different professional endeavors and how they can utilize that knowledge to improve their personal leadership growth now and in the future.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section presents the recommendations of this study, recommendations to the Department of Basic Education, and recommendations to researchers.

5.5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

First, the study found among other things that most of the schools do not fully recognize the presence of the LRC in their schools which is because of the negligence of the school management teams in schools. This makes the role of the TLOs to be not fully active even though they are a legitimate body mandated by the South African constitution. The study therefore recommends that the Department of Basic Education has an important role to play in ensuring that all the schools fully constitute LRC through the TLOs who are responsible for cultivating learner leadership. The Department of Basic Education must also send their officials quarterly to schools to monitor the activities of the LRC and ensure that they are actively participating in the management body of the school and not maliciously done.

5.5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESEARCHERS

It would be very interesting to explore the perspectives of Learners in schools and their own experiences as members of the LRC. Since this study has looked at the role of TLOs in schools, it will be interesting to also have studies that explore the voices of learners participating in the LRC to have balanced views of TLOs and LRC experiences and how these views could provide more insights as well as how they cultivate learner leadership in the representative council of learners at four schools. Although the roles that the TLOs perform at these schools are not unique, rather the roles could be applicable in other schools outside the context of this study. Other schools, if explored using the same lens, will provide similar results as demonstrated in this study.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS**

Interview guide for Teacher Liaison Officers at a secondary school in KZN

Research title:

Cultivating Learner Leadership: Experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers in selected Secondary Schools, KwaZulu-Natal

By: Thobekile Madlala

Purpose of study

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of teacher liaison officers in growing students who will actively participate in the learner representative council at selected secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Participation

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. Should you feel uncomfortable to participate in the interview for whatever reason, you may discontinue or withdraw at any point in time. Privacy and confidentiality is guaranteed at the highest level. The findings from the study will be kept confidential. Interviewee personal information will not be revealed and the responses will be utilized for academic research purposes only. The interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Confidentiality

Any relevant information gathered from you will be treated confidentially. This implies it will not be published or disclosed to anyone without your explicit permission or as prescribed by law. Both the written and audio records will be available to you for verification before data analysis and publication of the report.

Interviewer: Thobekile Madlala

Date of interview: _____

Participant informed consent

I understand the aim and purpose of the study; what participation will involve and I can withdraw at any time. Therefore, I consent to participate in the study voluntarily.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Preliminary Questions (This is to enable the researcher familiarise with the participant before the main interview)

1. Can you introduce yourself?
2. How long have you been teaching in this school?
3. How long have you been working as a Teacher Liaison Officer?

Research Question 1: How do Teacher Liaison Officers experience their role in the Learner Representative Council in Schools?

1. Can you share with me what you understand by Learner Leadership especially as it relates to LRC?
2. What are your roles in the Learner Representative Council as a TLO?
Are there any policy stipulations that explain your role in the LRC?
3. How have you experienced your role in this school as a TLO?
4. Does your school allow you to perform your role as TLO by ensuring learner participation in leadership roles in the school?
5. What would you say are the challenges you face as a TLO in this school?

Question 2: How can the cultivation of good leadership skills be ensured for the productivity of Learner representative councils?

1. Do you think it is important for the cultivation of good leadership skills in learners?
2. How can the cultivation of good leadership skills be ensured in Learners and in the Learner Representative Councils?
3. Do you have any ideas or strategies in place to ensure that learners are well cultivated for good leadership in the LRC?
4. Do you think the Department of Education has any role to play in ensuring that schools support the cultivation of learner leadership for productivity in LRC?
5. Do you have any other information to add that can further enrich this study?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Compiled by Thobekile Madlala, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

APPENDIX B

GATEKEEPER'S PERMISSION LETTER



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X 9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200

Ref No.: 24/8/167

Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Email: buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Tel: 033 392 1051

Enquiries: Mrs B. T. Ntuli

Miss Thobekile Claribeth Madlala

[REDACTED]
HILLCREST
3650

Dear Miss Madlala

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "CULTIVATING LEARNER LEADERSHIP: EXPERIENCES OF TEACHER LIAISON OFFICERS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS, KWAZULU-NATAL:", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **16th April 2024** to **31st August 2026**.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

[REDACTED]
Mr G.N. Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 16 April 2024

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT CONSENT LETTER

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the study entitled “**Cultivating Learner Leadership: Experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers in Selected Secondary Schools, KwaZulu-Natal**” by Thobekile Madlala. I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

I voluntarily give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded.

My identity will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at [REDACTED] or email: thobekile@gmail.com

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I am willing to be part of the garden project and interviews.

I am also willing to allow recording by the following equipment, and the use of other data:

Digital audio recording of interviews Willing Not willing

Use of portfolio of evidence

Use of reflective diary

.....

Name of Participant

.....

Signature of Participant Date

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



09 July 2024

Thobekile Claribeth Madlala (209508081)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear TC Madlala,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007125/2024

Project title: Cultivating learner leadership: Experiences of teacher liaison officers in selected secondary schools, KwaZulu-Natal

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 05 June 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has 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.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 09 July 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX E

CERTIFICATE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

Ipat Educational Consultancy and Editing Services

CERTIFICATE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

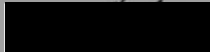
Cell: +27783166786, +2348124050000
73 Josiah Gumede Street, Pinetown, 3610, South Africa

DECLARATION

This is to certify that I have language edited the dissertation:

Cultivating Learner Leadership: Experiences of Teacher Liaison Officers in Selected Secondary Schools, KwaZulu-Natal

Candidate: T Madlala



DISCLAIMER

To the best of my knowledge, all amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

DIRECTOR: **Dr Tertsea Ikyoive**, BA (BSU), MA (Ibadan), MSS (UKZN), PhD (UKZN), TITC Business English.

APPENDIX F

TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

cultivating learner leadership 2

ORIGINALITY REPORT

11 %	8 %	2 %	8 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

MATCH ALL SOURCES (ONLY SELECTED SOURCE PRINTED)

8%
★ Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal
Student Paper

Exclude quotes	<input type="checkbox"/> On	Exclude matches	<input type="checkbox"/> < 5 words
Exclude bibliography	<input type="checkbox"/> On		