A formative intervention for developing Learner Representative Council (LRC) voice and leadership in a newly established school in Namibia

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Abstract
This is a qualitative interventionist case study within a critical paradigm aiming to intervene in order to develop learner voice and leadership within the Learner Representative Council (LRC) members of a newly established school. This is Phase Two and is a continuation of *a study published in Namibia Educational Reform Forum Journal, Volume 30(1), August 2022, 'Learner Representative Council Voice and Leadership in a Newly Established School in Namibia*' which was *Phase One. The finding from Phase One prompted the researcher to conduct Phase Two of the study. The study used one of the formative intervention methods within a critical paradigm. Within this paradigm, critical researchers aim at unpacking the structural, historical and political aspects of reality in order to arrive at change that is emancipatory in nature. To promote change in the leadership of the newly established school the study followed the steps of expansive learning cycle. The data for this phase were generated during the three Change Laboratory workshops with 13 LRC members and 1 LRC guardian teacher, as well as from a focus group interview conducted after the Change Laboratory, with 9 LRC members. The Change Laboratory method was used to provide an answer to an over-arching question: In what ways can LRC participation in a Change Laboratory process contribute to their leadership development? Data generated were deductively analysed, using the activity theoretical principles of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and double stimulation. Of significance was that LRC participation in the Change Laboratory process contributed positively to the development of voice and leadership in learners. During the Change Laboratory process, the LRC developed a new artefact – the vision and mission statement of the school – this signified that the learners expansively transformed the object of their activity. Recommendation emerging out of the study included that the School Management Team (SMT) see the 'newly established' status of the school as an opportunity for development, rather than a limitation, and therefore invite the LRC to participate in the different leadership practices as the school becomes established.*

Key words*: learner voice and leadership, double stimulation, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), expansive learning, change laboratory, researcher-interventionist.*

Introduction

To develop learner voice and leadership within the structure of the LRC, an interpretive case-study (Phase One) was first conducted to give the researcher a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study and to gather participants' understanding of the phenomenon of learner leadership in the school. Data generated from Phase One of the study which was published in Namibia Education Reform Journal, Volume 30 (1), August 2022 as stated in the abstract were immediately analysed and served as a stimulus to continue with this Phase Two. It was crucial to first understand the current status-quo of learner voice and leadership before intervening in practice.

The aim of this Phase Two of the study was to intervene in order to promote change in school leadership. Therefore, in order to explore and bring about transformation of learner voice and leadership in the school, this interventionist study used one of the formative intervention methodologies called Change Laboratory. A formative intervention is defined as "purposive action by a human agent to create change" (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 15). The Change Laboratory is a formative intervention method used in "developing work activities by the practitioners in collaboration with researcher-interventionists" (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 19). The Change Laboratory was desirable in this study to bring about changes to the structure or circumstances of the school's learner leadership because it is used normally to promote change in a work place such as a school (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). Thus, a formative intervention enables participants to work on and improve their own practice (Sannino, 2008). Developing learner voice and leadership in this newly established

school was crucial because it could create opportunities where "young people can learn democratic principles by sharing their opinions and working to improve school conditions for themselves and others" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 522).

Statement of the problem

As echoed by researchers in the field (Uushona, 2012; Shekupakela-Nelulu, 2008), learners in schools are not empowered and accepted as leaders who are able to act responsibly and maturely in making decisions. Although the Education Act 16(60) of 2001 stipulates that every state secondary school must establish a body of learners to be known as the Learners Representative Council (LRC) (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture, 2002). It is also stated in Education Act 16 of 2001 that the LRC should be the highest body of elected leaders of learners and must liaise between learners and the School Management Team (SMT) (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture, 2002). Moreover, the policy states that the role of the LRC is to provide a voice and to promote learner leadership in schools, since LRC members are also to participate in decision-making bodies, such as the school board and SMT meetings (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture, 2002). From the researcher's experience as a high school teacher the elective learner body – the LRC – at some Namibian schools exist purely for the sake of adhering to the Educational Act 16 of 2001, but authentic inclusion of learners in organisational decision-making does not often happen. It is on this basis that a formative intervention study aimed to develop LRC voice and leadership in a newly established school was conducted.

Research question

Guided by the research statement of problem, this interventionist study was done to intervene in order to bring changes within Learner Representative Council (LRC) structure in a newly established school and to provide an answer to an over-arching question: In what ways can LRC participation in a Change Laboratory process contribute to their leadership development?

Literature review

Development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is the theoretical and analytical framework used in this study. After tracing its origin to Vygotsky's work of mediation action, CHAT has three generations, which draw from the work of different theorists, however this study employed CHAT up to the second generation only. CHAT has its origins in Vygotsky's work of the 1920s and early 1930s (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). This means that the first generation draws on Vygotsky's work based on "mediated action which involves an interaction between the individual and mediated tools" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 16). The first generation is grounded on how the relationship between human agents and their environments are mediated by the cultural means of tools and signs (Engeström, 2001). The idea of mediation is presented in the triangular model as shown in Figure 1.

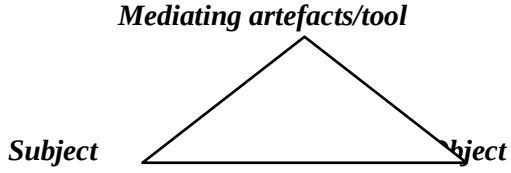


Figure 1: Vygotsky's basic mediated action triangle (Adapted from Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 17)

The subject in this triangular model portrays an individual or a group of individuals engaged in an activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The mediating artefacts can include tools, "social others, and prior knowledge that contribute to the subject's mediated action experiences within the activity" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 16). The object is the goal of the activity, in other words it is the reason why individuals or groups of individuals choose to participate in an activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The limitation of this first generation was that the unit of analysis remained individually focused rather than on an individual within the community (Engeström, 2015). For that reason, Engeström (2015) developed a second generation model of activity theory, based on Leont'ev's work, and extendend the triangle

adding other elements; that is the rules, the community and the division of labour.

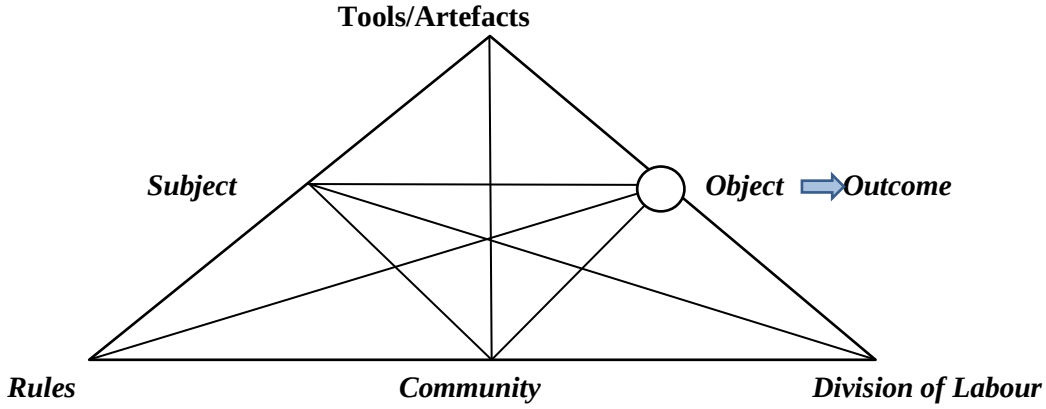


Figure 2: Second generation of CHAT developed by Engeström (Adapted from Engeström, 2015, p. 63)

In the second generation of CHAT, subject, tools/artefacts and object mean the same as explained earlier in the first generation. The additional elements include the rules, community and the division of labour. Here, the rules refer to regulations that can either be formal or informal (Sannino, Daniels, & Gutierrez, 2009). For example, rules can include policies, cultural values and norms. Significantly, the rules provide the activity with guidance on correct procedures. The community is a social group with which the subject identifies while participating in the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). This is a setting where the activity takes place, for example, the group of individuals in an organisation who share the same object. Division of labour refers to how the tasks are shared among the community (Sannino et al., 2009). These can be individual or shared roles. However, the limitation within this second generation remained, that is the relationship between the object orientation production and communicative exchange between people remained unclear (Sannino et al., 2009). This in other words meant that the second generation did not address questions of diversity and dialogue between different traditions. Hence, this limitation opened the opportunity for the development of the third generation which the researcher will not discuss as it is not part of this study.

Relevance of Cultural Historical Activity Theory to this study

First, the relevance of CHAT to this study is its belief of its "central role of contradictions/tensions as a source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Here contradictions are "historically accumulated structural tensions" within or between the elements of the activity system (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). There are four levels of contradictions namely: primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary contradictions (Engeström, 2009). However, this study worked with the primary and secondary contradictions since the study employed CHAT up to the second generation. According to the second-generation CHAT framework, primary contradictions occur within one element of a single activity system; for example, a contradiction within the subject element only. Secondary contradictions take place when two elements of a single activity system are in conflict with one another; for example, contradictions between the rule and the division of labour. Contradictions are important for this intervention study because they "have the power to reveal opportunities for creative innovation for new ways of structuring and enacting the activity and learning" (Karanasios, Riisla, & Simeonora, 2017, p. 2). The applicability of CHAT to this study is due to its "principle of historicity" (Engeström, 2001, p. 136). This means that the work needs to be analysed against the history of the organisation or against the global history of learner leadership, in other words identifying the past cycles of the activity system. Histories provide a powerful socio-cultural lens (Daniels, 2004) through which the researcher analyses the activity of the LRC as an activity system in order to understand its practice. The other reason for using CHAT in this study is that it provides the "possibility of expansive transformation in activity systems" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). In other words, the

process of using contradictions to promote learning and change in an activity system is referred to as expansive learning. Expansive learning in this study should be understood as "construction and resolution of successively evolving contradictions". Said differently, it is about "learning what is not yet there" (Engeström, 2001, p. 74). To create expansive learning the Change Laboratory method can be a useful tool as Engeström (2015) connotes that a Change Laboratory is typically conducted in an activity system that is facing transformation.

The Change Laboratory Method

The Change Laboratory is an interventionist method developed within the framework of activity theory (Sannino, 2011, p. 571) and is used in this study to transform learner voice and leadership within the LRC structure. The Change Laboratory method is suitable for this study as it has also been used in different countries in workplaces, communities and educational institutions to manage challenging situations (Engeström, 2015). Figure 3 depicts the layout and instruments used in the Change Laboratory process.

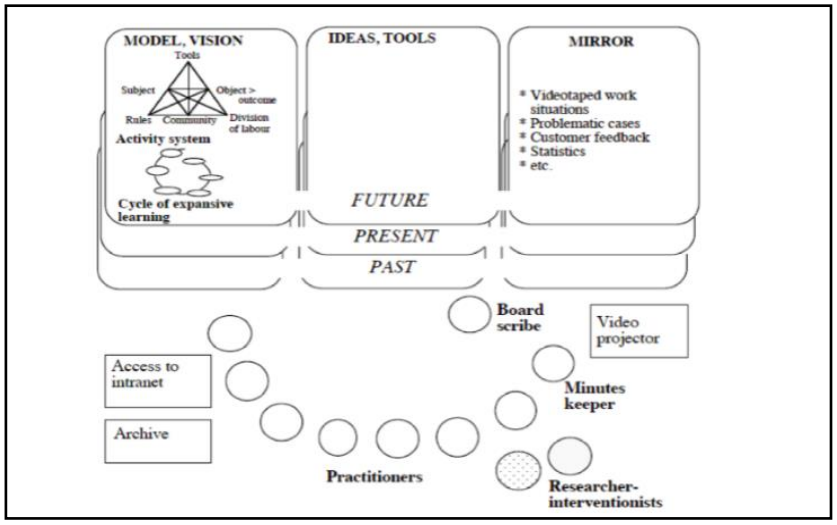


Figure 3: Layout and instruments of the change laboratory space (Adapted from Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 16)

The central tools used in the Change Laboratory sessions are set in three parts. The first part on the right-hand side represents the mirror; the mirror surfaces are comprised particularly of the historical data generated (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). Videotaped work, as well as photographs, stories, interviews, quotes, narrative accounts are used as mirror data. The second part, the model and vision on the left hand, are kept for modelling the past, present and future structure of the activity, as well as the inner contradictions in the current activity system (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). The third part in the middle, is reserved for ideas and tools in analyses of problem situations. Moreover, practitioners represent the participants, which, in this case, are the LRC members. The board scribe in front signifies the chair of the activity, which is also one of the LRC members, with me at the back as the researcher-interventionist. The principle of double stimulation derived from CHAT is used in this study because "it can show how an individual can gain the power to use outside resources to determine his or her own behaviour" (Sannino, 2011, p. 585). The Change Laboratory method is therefore used to create expansive learning, by following the steps of the expansive learning cycle to enable participants to analyse their current situation and project to the next stages of the activity and design new models (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

Expansive learning

According to Engeström (2009), "expansive learning is the process in which participants search for solutions to contradictions" (p. 97). In other words, expansive learning is a creative type of learning in which "learners join forces to literally create something novel, essentially learning something that does not yet exist" (Sannino, Engeström, & Lemos, 2016, p. 7). For that, the study emphasised expansive learning with reference to Figure 4 because it has the "quality of transformative agency" (Sannino et al., 2016, p. 7), thus the study aims for transformation of learner voice and

leadership in the school.

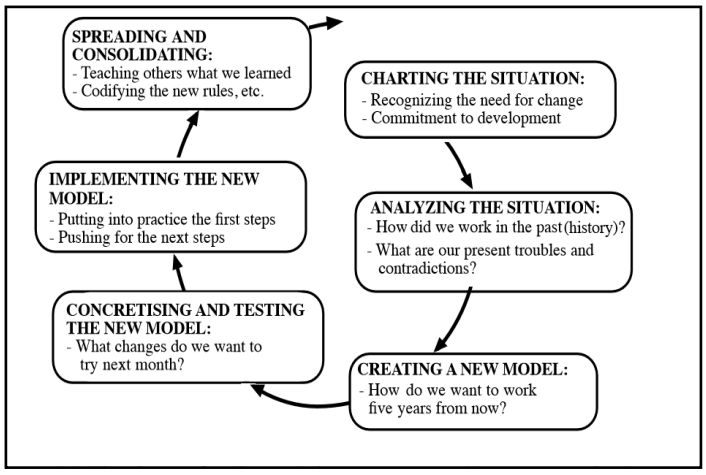


Figure 4: Steps of expansive learning cycle (Adapted from Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 17)

Research method and paradigm

A case study was the most appropriate approach to this interventionist study because it focuses on "practice, intervention and interpretation with the aim of improving the situation" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 182). Hence, this study aimed to intervene in order to develop learner voice and leadership within LRC members. The study used one of the formative intervention methods within a critical paradigm. In the context of this study, Nieuwenhuis (2007) defines a paradigm as "a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view" (p. 47). A paradigm addresses fundamental assumptions taken on faith such as belief about the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and assumptions about methodology (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The critical paradigm used in this study sees reality as "shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and other dynamics" (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 27). Within this paradigm, critical researchers aim at unpacking the structural, historical and political aspects of reality in order to arrive at change that is emancipatory in nature (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This, in other words, means critical researchers aim to critique and transform society to be equal and fair by revealing, for example, hidden power relations. This was the appropriate paradigm for this study since the study was concerned not only with understanding and describing but also with intervening in order to promote change in the school (Engeström, 2016).

Change Laboratory workshops

Three Change Laboratory workshops were conducted over a period of three weeks with the 13 LRC members and one LRC guardian teacher. In the first change laboratory workshop, the researcher introduced the activity system and explained the Change Laboratory process to participants. She discussed the exact number of Change Laboratory workshops, and the time and duration of the sessions. The second Change Laboratory workshop was aimed to mirror data generated collected during Phase One of the study. During this session, the researcher's role as researcher-interventionist was to present the challenges and contradictions experienced by the LRC in developing their voice and leadership in the school. After she mirrored data about the problematic aspects of the LRC's current learner leadership practices, participants were given time to identify the most important area that needed a solution. The third and last Change Laboratory session engaged participants to select one challenge or contradiction that was appropriate for them to work on. Significantly, these Change Laboratory sessions created an opportunity to invoke learner voice and leadership within the structure of the LRC in the school, through the steps of the expansive learning cycle. Moreover, the Change Laboratory workshops were learner-driven and the researcher was the facilitator in the role of researcher-interventionist, with the task of "[intervening] by provoking and supporting the process led and owned by the learners" (Sannino et al., 2016, p. 3). During these Change Laboratories the researcher also observed how participants behaved, interacted and, more specifically, led these sessions themselves. All Change

Laboratory sessions were video recorded with participants' consent. As Simpson and Tuson (2003) encourage, "if we are dealing with people, video recording can be a great help as it allows the same observation to be reviewed many times, with each viewing having the potential to elicit additional information" (p. 48). Figure 5 depicts the setup of the three Change Laboratory workshops.

Change Laboratory 1

Change Laboratory 2

Change Laboratory 3

Figure 5: Setup of the Change Laboratories

Focus group interview

A focus group interview was conducted at the end of the research process after the Change Laboratory sessions were concluded. The interview was conducted with 9 participants simultaneously in a group (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A focus group interview was conducted with nine LRC members; these were the learners who attended the third and final Change Laboratory session. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) stipulate, "group interviews can be useful with children because it encourages interactions between the group, rather than simply a response to an adult's questions" (p. 433). A focus group interview was done as a reflection and mainly to find out participants' experiences during the Change Laboratories.

Data analysis

A set of predetermined categories were used to deductively analyse data using the second generation of CHAT. The second generation of CHAT as a unit of analysis was used in the study to reveal the contradictions within and between the elements of the activity system under study (the activity of the LRC) because of its principle of the "central role of contradictions as a source of change and development" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137).

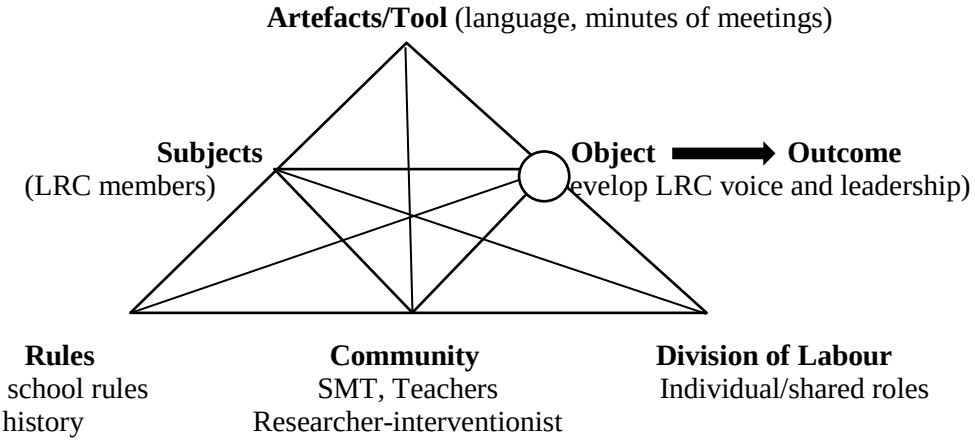


Figure 6: Second generation of CHAT as a unit of analysis

Figure 6 depicts different elements of the activity system for this study. All these elements of the activity system are important as they can mediate changes that may lead to an outcome of not only the object but between each other (Sannino et al., 2009). The subjects in this activity system were the LRC members. Their relationship with the object was mediated by four elements which carry cultural meaning and historical development, namely: tools, rules, community and division of labour. The "object is the goal or the motive of the

activity presented" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 78); in other words, this is the reason the subjects (LRC members) were engaged in the activity. In this case-study, the object of the activity was to develop the LRC voice and leadership within the school. The tools or artefacts here refer to mediated tools that contributed to the subjects' mediated action experienced within the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Language as a tool was used for action, so that within this study language was a means of communication (Roth & Lee, 2007). Members of this activity system interacted through a language. In addition, this study used minutes of LRC meetings as a tool. Rules refer to the way in which actions are structured (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Policy documents such as Educational Act of 2001, school rules, School Development Plan [SDP] of 2008, and Regulation made under Educational Act of 2001 were used as guidelines for the activity. Significantly, historical conditions, cultural values, and norms constituted part of the rules. The community referred to the setting in which the action takes place (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The community for this activity system was therefore people who shared a common object with the subjects in the school (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The division of labour is the way tasks were divided within the group within the subjects and the community (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). This was made up of individuals and shared roles.

Research findings

Systemic contradictions in the activity system under study

This section gives a brief discussion of how Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used to analyse the data that was collected using interpretive methods during Phase One of the study. Here the reader is reminded that these data were the stimulus of Phase Two of the study. CHAT as a unit of analysis as explained under the methodology was used to reveal the contradictions that constrained the LRC voice and leadership development within the LRC activity system. According to the CHAT framework, a primary contradiction rises within an element, for example within the subjects, while a secondary contradiction arises between two elements of the single activity system, for example, between the community and the rule (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).

A primary contradiction within the subject (LRC members) which was likely to hinder the development of the LRC leadership was noted. Data from the questionnaires with LRC during the first phase revealed that the LRC members experienced some tensions in managing their council.

"Some LRC members walked out of meetings; LRC members stopped talking to each other; LRC members screaming at each other sometimes; and some LRC members do not do their roles seriously" (Principal).

The above tensions constituted a primary contradiction because they were located within one element which, in this case, was within the subjects themselves. Such tensions hindered leadership development in the LRC because, in some cases, the LRC members did not fulfil their leadership roles. Hence, such differences had a potential to cause division and disharmony amongst the council members. On the other hand, the researcher argues that these tensions were supposed to be minimised, since the LRC members attended a leadership training camp and mentoring programmes by the guardian teacher, as the data revealed and such opportunities were offered to train them on how to handle and manage conflicts. However, such tensions could be seen as normal as Strydom (2016) mentions that there will always be tensions amongst the members of an activity system. According to the CHAT framework, the possible underlying cause of this primary contradiction was cultural differences. Since the subjects came from different home environments, their cultural upbringings were different. As a result, these learners (LRC members) could have copied such behaviours (shouting and not talking to each other) from their parents at home.

The exclusion of the LRC in the 'decision-making process' was noted as a secondary contradiction between the rule (policy) and the community (Principal and LRC guardian teachers). The School Board is regarded as the highest decision-making body in the school. According to the Education Act 16 of 2001 "the School Board must be made up of two LRC members, parents, and teachers including the principal" (p. 33). The role of the LRC in the School Board is "to represent the interest of learners in this board, by ensuring that the decisions taken do not negatively affect individual learners or the school community" (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture, 2002, p. 18). This means that, the LRC is the voice of other learners at the School Board meetings. The principal

highlighted that "*such meetings requires confidentiality especially when it comes to certain disciplinary issues involving teachers".* Data revealed that the LRC of the newly established high school was excluded to attend some meetings of a disciplinary nature involving teachers and not to all School Board meetings. This indicated that the LRC's right to participate in decision-making processes was denigrated. This showed that learners were not valued as knowledgeable, intuitive and discerning members of the school community (Grant & Nekondo, 2016). Therefore, this was a secondary contradiction between the rule (policy) and the community, because the policy advocates for the LRC's representation in School Board meetings and the community members restricted the LRC to take part in such meetings, at all times. This contradiction constrained the LRC voice in the school, in that they were not being allowed to be part of the decision-making process around governance issues; hence, the object (LRC voice and leadership development) was not achieved in this situation. The exclusion of the LRC from the School Board meetings deprived the LRC of their rights and responsibilities in such meetings, and in the general representation of the learners in the school.

The underlying causes of the above contradiction could possibly be shaped by the society's cultural values, and norms, and history of the education system. As the principal expressed during the interviews that since "*learners are still children, they still do not have hearts to keep secrets"*. These premises suggest that the exclusion of the LRC from the School Board meetings was influenced by society's cultural values and norms. It is a cultural and traditional belief that elders do not discuss important matters in the presence of children and to do that now would tarnish the respect, which children must accord their elders, and bring about decay and morass in the traditional value system (Sithole, 1998). Consequently, this resulted in learners being treated as people whose ideas did not matter (Grant & Nekondo, 2016).

In addition, the profiles of the principal and the teacher who participated in the study, showed that they were part of the South African Bantu Education system in Namibia (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993) where there were limited opportunities for democratic participation in decision-making amongst learners. Excluding the LRC from the School Board meetings could also be revealed by CHAT's principle of historicity (Engeström, 2001). This meant that prior to independence in 1990, the right to freedom of expression and the right to be heard in schools, was restricted amongst the majority of learners in Namibia (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture, 2002) and school governance was left to teachers and principals. Inevitably, learners were rarely given opportunities to participate in the decision-making process and, as a result, teachers often spoke and decided on behalf of them (Grant & Nekondo, 2016). It is therefore arguable that the historical background of the education system explained above, could also have contributed to the restriction of the LRC in the decision-making process.

Overview of Change Laboratory workshops

Data presented in this section provides evidence that the Change Laboratory processes also contributed positively to the development of LRC voice and leadership at Mazeketo High School. The Change Laboratory is one of the interventionist methods that have been used in different countries at workplaces, communities and educational institutions to manage challenging changes by means of expansive learning (Engeström, 2015).

Change Laboratory workshop 1

In the first change laboratory workshop, the researcher welcomed the participants (13 LRC members and one guardian teacher) and introduced herself as researcher-interventionist who was investigating how LRC voice and leadership could be developed in the school. Thereafter, participants were requested to introduce themselves by stating their names, grade and portfolio they were serving in. This was done so that the researcher got to know and also to create a good relationship between herself and the participants. The researcher further explained the purpose of the Change Laboratory Workshops that, it was a platform for participants to analyse their current leadership practices. The triangular model of an activity system for this study was also explained to the participants as Engeström (2009) suggests that the "the triangular models of activity are typically presented and explained to the participant at an early phase of the intervention" (p. 10) as shown in Figure 7. The exact number of Change Laboratory workshops to be held, estimated time, and duration of each session were also discussed. All the aforementioned were done to allow the

participants again to make a well-informed decision about joining the process (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013). Thereafter, participants nominated the secretary and chairperson to lead the next two workshops, because these Change Laboratories were planned to be learner-driven; 'kids speaking directly to kids' (Engeström, 2015) and the researcher as a facilitator. At the end, participants also decided themselves the date for conducting the next two Change Laboratory sessions. This change laboratory session took 40 minutes and the one guardian teacher assisted in taking the pictures.

Figure 7: Reseacher-interventionist explaining the model of the activity system to the participants

Change Laboratory workshop 2

Ten LRC members were present as well as guardian teacher 1. This Change Laboratory was conducted immediately after school. The main aim of this workshop was to 'mirror data' to the participants in order to prepare them for a task. The researcher presented the challenges and contradictions which were derived from the analysis of the data collected through interviews and questionnaires used in Phase One of the study. These challenges (non-systemic tensions) and contradictions (systemic tensions) were used as first stimulus for the workshop discussion as it displayed both the systemic and non-systemic tensions in the activity system under study. First stimulus refers to "the problematic situation which triggers a paralysed conflict of motives" (Sannino et al., 2016, p. 8). Consequently, the principle of double stimulation derived from CHAT was used in these Change Laboratory workshops since it has the power to show how an individual can use outside resources to transform problematic situations. 'Mirror data' presented were:

Challenges (non-systemic tensions)

- Newness of the school;
- LRC functions without the LRC constitution; and
- The school does not have mission and vision statements to guide and lead the learners.

Contradictions (systemic tensions)

- Differences within the LRC members;
- Lack of support from teachers;
- No platform to communicate with the SMT (controlled communication structure); and
- Exclusion of the LRC members from the School Board.

Thereafter, participants were engaged in a task called the 'Future Search' where they had to analyse the contradictions through the three layers of time (past, present and future). This 'Future Search' (second stimulus) was designed by the researcher-interventionist following the steps of the expansive learning cycle (Sannino et al., 2016).

Writing ideas on sticky notes

Sticking sticky notes on the charts

Sticky notes attached to charts

Figure 8: Participants engaged in the 'Future Search'

The expansive learning steps were followed because they had the quality of transformative agency (Sannino et al., 2016), which in this case was used to transform the leadership practice of the LRC in the school and to develop their voice. These steps in the end, were the intentional instructions that the researcher prepared, since Sannino et al. (2016) indicate that when a researcher-interventionist intervenes, he/she should have specific instructional intentions to provoke and support the learning process, as a starting point for a truly expansive learning process.

Step 1: Charting the situation

- Recognising the need for change (mirror data).

Step 2: Analysing the situation

- How did you work in the **past**?
- What are the **present** troubles or contradictions?

Step 3: Creating a new model

- How do we want to work in the **future**?

Step 4: Concretising and testing the new model

- What changes do you want to try; what mattered to them most?

Step 5: Implementing the new model

- Putting into practice the first steps.
- Pushing for the next steps.

Step 6: Spreading and consolidating

- Teaching others what we learned.
- Codifying the new rules (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013, p. 16).

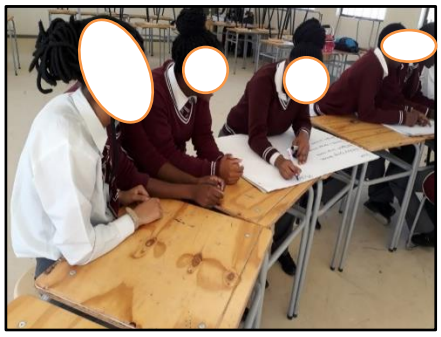
Significantly, the expansive learning steps were used during Change Laboratories as a "vehicle of time travel to construct a vision of the past and the future of the activity system" (Engeström, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja, & Poikela, 1996, p. 8). The first phase of the Future Search task offered the learners a chance to deliberate on the challenges and contradictions presented by reflecting back on the past. This meant that participants first had to confirm the challenges and contradictions in 'mirror data', by elaborating how they had been working in the past. Participants then had to identify what limited their current leadership practices (present). Lastly, participants discussed how they could improve their current leadership practices (future). This was where learners had the opportunity to engage with each other and attempt resolutions to a few of the current contradictions which were in the activity system. At this juncture, it is important to note that while the expansive learning cycle has six steps as written above, and explained in Figure 4 this study terminated at the fourth step, because of the constraints of time.

Participants together with their guardian teacher after resolving, had to choose a

challenge or a contradiction (what changes do they want to try) that mattered to them most (fourth step of the expansive learning cycle). Although this was to be worked on during the third Change Laboratory workshop, participants had to choose what they wanted to work on in the second workshop, so that the researcher could go and prepare the materials they had to use. As Sannino et al. (2016) claim, in a formative intervention the researcher-interventionist offers participants resources to engage in practical work that can lead to generative novel outcomes. Participants agreed and decided to contribute ideas to the development of a vision and the mission statement of their school which emerged as a challenge from the 'mirror data' the researcher presented. This change laboratory session lasted for about two hours and 20 minutes.

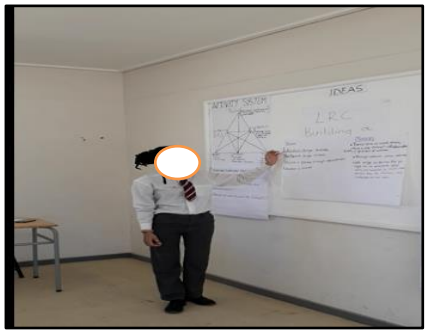
Change Laboratory workshop 3

In the third and last Change Laboratory workshop nine LRC members and their guardian teacher were present. Participants were ready for the vision and mission building exercise. As a facilitator, the researcher prepared the artefacts (materials) such as charts, and marker pens for participants to draft their ideas. Participants divided themselves into two groups. Group 1 had four LRC members and Group 2 had five LRC members. Each group was tasked to come up with their own ideas about the vision and mission statements. Thereafter each group selected a representative (presenter) to present and explain their ideas to all other participants.

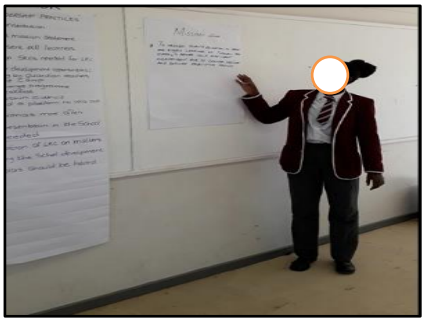


Group 1

Group 2



Group 1 presenter



Group 2 presenter

Figure 9: Group presenters interpreting their ideas of the vision and mission statements

Table 1: Vision and the mission statements that the participants from the two groups suggested

	VISION STATEMENT	MISSION STATEMENT
Group One	To become a sound, vibrant, academic oriented institution and a model education centre.	To become a centre of excellence which provides services in an efficient, transparent, innovative and responsive manner.
Group Two	To become professionals through hard work and to produce responsible citizens.	To provide quality education to each and every learner, to become self sufficient, independent through delivering productive results.

The mission and vision statements suggested were left with the guardian teacher to submit to the School Management Team (SMT), although the researcher did not follow it up to see whether the LRC members' ideas were in the end included in the formulation of the vision and the mission statement of the school. This has been a summary of the intervention

workshops and what transpired.

Potential contributions of a Change Laboratory process to the development of LRC voice and leadership

The overview of the Change Laboratory workshops evidenced that during the three Change Laboratories conducted, the LRC members collaborated with each other and with their guardian teacher as well. This showed the "collaboration with adults" which is a form of learner voice that describes instances in which learners work with adults to make changes in their school (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 524). Given these opportunities, the LRC members during the second Change Laboratory showed eagerness to suggest how they wanted to improve their leadership practice in the school. For example, in the end they suggested a chance to meet the school management to voice their opinions in matters that concerned them in and around the school (Mitra & Gross, 2009), such as requesting for an opportunity to be heard in the school by the school management and to be included in the School Board meetings. The LRC members themselves also confirmed during their focus group interview, conducted after the Change Laboratories that their leadership skills improved during these workshops.

The majority of the LRC members mentioned that they had realised the significance of team work, that different people have different ideas, for instance, one LRC member during the focus group interview conducted after the Change Laboratories mentioned that:

"At the beginning, I thought it was difficult exercise to come up with the mission and vision statement of our school, but since we collaborated and did it as a team, it was so fast and enjoyable".

The contributions to the mission and vision statement building, enhanced the LRC's sense of pride and strengthened the school traditions. These Change Laboratories provided the LRC with an opportunity to interact, share ideas and develop each other socially. All LRC members participated fairly, they considered everyone's opinion; significantly none had more power than others. In addition, another LRC member indicated that:

"*I learnt to be patient, understanding and to consider others' opinions when working in a group with others".*

Another LRC member highlighted that:

"Our communication skills had really improved during these workshops, we were listened to each other, not like during our normal meetings when we used to walk out without reaching any consensus".

On the other hand problem solving skills were one of the salient aspects an LRC member mentioned during the focus group interview:

"The way we solved how we wanted to work in the future, was the thing that most touched my heart, this was like a reconciliation to some of us because we normally do not co-operate, we had so many burning issues with ourselves but never attempted to solve it together as we did in our second workshop".

From the study findings the researcher deduced that, "developing the sense of ownership" (Mitra & Gross, 2009, p. 530) was another way the Change Laboratory workshops contributed to the leadership development of the LRC. As one LRC member said, although they received some training, they never had a platform like the Change Laboratories where they were free to discuss matters around them. This showed that some of the LRC members felt valued when provided with these opportunities where they could freely express themselves. The Change Laboratories provided a democratic space (Thomas, 2006) which is one of Namibia's educational reform goals. In addition, the majority of the LRC members during the focus group interview, suggested that they sometimes needed platforms like these Change Laboratories in their school, where they have to work together with their teacher to resolve certain issues around the school.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, that was Phase Two of the study. It was evidenced by the above discussion that the Change Laboratory process made a great impact on the LRC of the newly established high school. It was an eye-opener to the LRC members who eagerly wanted to challenge the current status quo and become more involved in school wide decision-making.

The Change Laboratories conducted brought about transformation of the LRC voice and leadership in the school, by following the

steps of Engeström's (2001) expansive learning cycle. Firstly, the LRC members discussed and resolved some of the contradictions and challenges. They promised to work together, respect each other and carry out their roles as expected. The LRC members further suggested meeting the SMT to question why they were not represented at School Board meetings. This is believed to create a build capacity for leadership type of learner voice, where learners in schools serve by questioning issues such as structural and cultural injustice (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Moreover, the LRC engaged with uncovering what a mission and vision statement might mean for them and thereafter presented what it should be. This artefact in the end was left in the hands of their guardian teacher for consideration, hence developing agency in these learners. From the focus group interview, the LRC members confirmed that some of their leadership skills improved after the Change Laboratory process.

The findings above signify that, during the three intervention workshops, learners expansively transformed the object of their activity (Sannino et al., 2016). In the vision and mission statement and in the skills development, the LRC members surely achieved a concrete instantiation of the object. In addition, the Change Laboratories demonstrated how this learning process included productive deviations from the researchers' instructional intentions, to discover potentials for what Engeström (2001) has referred to as expansive learning with its core quality of transformative agency in wider communities and work settings. This is because in expansive learning, learners learnt something that was not yet there (Engeström, 2001). In other words, the learners constructed a new object and concept for their collective activity, and implemented this new object and concept in practice (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). Through the Change Laboratory process, the learners resisted management, explicated new possibilities and changed the activity. Hence, this was democracy (Thomas, 2006) and at the same time development of voice and agency in learners.

Recommendations for practice

- The study recommends that the SMT and LRC guardian teacher of this newly established school, establish a professional learning community of teachers (or run a Change Laboratory process with teachers) to determine what teachers know about the Education Act 16 of 2021 in relation to learner leadership and help them to expand their knowledge and comprehension in this regard.
- The study also recommends that the school should embrace new ways of thinking and acting in this era of independence and transformation. Therefore, the head boy and the head girl should be allowed to attend all School Board meetings and be given a voice in decision-making processes.
- This study used the second generation of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical and analytical framework, which looked at the single activity system of the LRC. I suggest that future researchers should conduct similar studies using the third generation of CHAT, as it has the potential to expand the unit of analysis to understand the relationship between multiple activity systems. Further, future studies should include both parents and learners who are not LRC members, as participants in their studies.

Learner voice and leadership is an under-researched topic in Namibia. More vigorous research is needed to grow this body of knowledge. For this reason, it is recommended that future researchers should conduct and explore more comprehensive and large-scale studies in different school settings in different regions in Namibia.

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