Representative council for learners' understanding of the learners' code of conduct

by

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Supervisor

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that **"Representative council for learners' understanding of the learners' code of conduct"** is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. It has been submitted for the degree of Master in Education at the University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signed at University of Pretoria on this ……………….. day of ……………….. 2019

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Ethics Statement

The highest ethical standards were maintained in this thesis. The ethical considerations for this study are discussed in detail in Section 3.8

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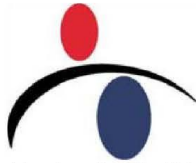
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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family who have supported me throughout the journey. I would not have made it without the constant encouragement from my children Jaydin, Bokamoso, Palesa and Katlego.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the understanding of learner representatives of their involvement in drawing up and implementing the code of conduct of a school. The researcher addressed the aim by undertaking an appropriate literature review and doing an empirical investigation. A qualitative approach, which was modelled on a case study, was used to explore the experiences of learner representatives in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct in their respective schools. Six learner representatives from six schools in the Johannesburg Ekurhuleni District who are Representative Council for Learners (RCL) and members of the School Governing Body (SGB) were interviewed. It was found that the learner representatives are not fully involved in the drawing up of the code of conduct for learners. Learner representatives' presence in the SGB is tokenistic because they are side-lined when it comes to the drafting of the code of conduct for learners. The study further found that learner representatives want a review of some of the rules contained in the code of conduct for learners, including the policy on hair and dress code. The recommendations arising from this study are, therefore, that the SGBs must consider involving learner representatives in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners. This may assist in the curbing of indiscipline in schools. Finally, schools can involve learner representatives in the review of the existing code of conduct.

KEYWORDS: Code of conduct for learners, learner discipline, learner involvement, learner participation, learner representatives, policy drafting and implementation, school governance, secondary schools, South African schools, the right to freedom of expression.

Abbreviations

ANC – African National Congress

Code of conduct – Code of Conduct

DoE – Department of Education

LR – Learner Representative

RCL – Representative Council for Learners

RSA – Republic of South Africa

SASA – South African Schools Act

SGB – School Governing Body

SMT – School Management Team

UNCRC – United Nations Convention for Rights of the Child

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHOD

1.1 Introduction and background of the study

This chapter presents the research problem that has led to the undertaking of this research project and the purpose thereof. The particular research question and its subsequent research sub-questions are given. Policy implementation theory, and in particular the co-constructive policy implementation, was used as the lens through which I unpacked the rest of the document, including the rationale for the study.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) 1996 prescribes, in particular, the structuring of rules, norms and actions, and the accounting for those, "to democratise school education by devolving decision making to the local structures, i.e. the individual school communities. It also promotes the formation of citizen/community and state partnerships" (RSA, 1996). In essence, the intention with the Act is "to create an enabling context for school-based management of education" (Gamage, 1996). A prerequisite for such devolution of decision-making is the election of School Governing Bodies (hereafter referred to as SGBs) by parents, staff and learners in secondary schools (grades 8-12). According to SASA (1996), membership of SGBs is constituted of "elected members, the school principal and co-opted members. The elected members of the governing body are individuals chosen from parents of learners and educators at the school, members of staff that are not educators, and learners who are in the eighth grade or higher in secondary schools" (SASA, 1996). However, the parents are assigned a majority representation with a guaranteed 50% plus one member chosen from their ranks.

This school-based management model for education aims to "allow schools and their associated communities to decide democratically on matters concerning their schools" (SASA, 1996). This includes the drawing up and endorsement of a code of conduct for learners by the SGB in "consultation with the relevant learners, parents and educators of the school" (SASA, 1996: Section 8.1). In addition to drawing up the code of conduct for learners, the SGBs also have the right to make policies around issues such as languages, religious observances and school fees and code

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of conduct for learners (van Wyk, 2004). It is important to note that apart from all school-based policies, these policies must be developed in accordance with the guidelines of the constitution as well as all applicable national and provincial laws. That means that SASA and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) provide a framework for all policies drafted by the SGBs.

In other words, the SGB is tasked with organising a disciplined and purposeful school environment committed to optimise the quality of the teaching and learning process as well as to minimise the suspension and expulsion of learners from schools (Gonzalez, 2012) and to protect the right to education of the children of the community (SASA, 1996). The SGBs are therefore tasked with the regulation and governance of all aspects of learners' behaviour in schools (Roos, 2003). SASA devolves the necessary powers to the SGBs to fulfil this mandate. Section 8 of SASA (1996) requires every secondary school to "have a code of conduct therefore, it is imperative for the SGB to compile, adopt and implement a code of conduct for learners in consultation with parents, educators and learners" (SASA, 1996).

A vital principle of the model is that the SASA (1996) separates school governance from professional school management. According to Bush and Heystek, "most education systems make a distinction between school policy-making, which is the responsibility of the governing body, and operational management, which is the preserve of the principal" (Bush & Heystek, 2003). The Department of Education (DoE) delineates "the respective roles of the governing body and professional management of the school" (SASA, 1996). Bush and Heystek further states that the governing body has extensive responsibilities, but it excludes issues relating to teaching and learning in the normal course of the school day. Its responsibility includes procuring educational supplies, the operational management of personnel and finance. The drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners are also core duties of the governing body of a school.

It is however imperative to bring to light the fact that regardless of the presence of the code of conduct for learners, learner indiscipline has become a serious challenge in South Africa and globally (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the understanding held by the learner

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representatives in Gauteng secondary schools of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct.

The following section further explains the reasons behind the undertaking of this study. It unpacks the core issues involved and the motivation for this research project. It briefly outlines issues around indiscipline in schools while also highlighting the role of the code of conduct, which is a tool to curb its occurrence. A few cases of learners challenging the validity of some contents of codes of conduct are cited. The role of the learner representatives in the SGBs, and particularly in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct is what this research is trying to bring to the fore.

1.2 Research problem

Research by a wide variety of researchers make a compelling case that the discipline of learners in South African schools is deteriorating (Maphosa, 2011; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010; Marais & Meier, 2010; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012; Morrell, 2001). Educators are becoming increasingly distressed about discipline problems. A lack of appropriate knowledge and abilities to design and enforce the learner code of conduct is reported to be one of the contributing factors to learners' increasing indiscipline in schools (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012).

Research from the global perspective also reports that secondary school educators in Pakistan have repeatedly ranked disruptive behaviour as one of the most serious hurdles impeding effective teaching process in classrooms (Gazi, 2005). Haydin (2014) also found that misbehaviour was a serious and widespread problem in English schools. Lochan (2010) adds that the issue of indiscipline has plagued the Trinidad school system for many years while Eshetu (2014) reports that because of the indiscipline of learners, educators in Ethiopia are highly disappointed with their teaching profession. It is for this reason and many others that Maree (2000) refers to schools as war zones.

Learner indiscipline has wide-ranging effects on everybody involved in the school. Violence in schools makes both educators and learners appear justified in fearing for their safety (Fishbaugh, Schroth & Berkeley, 2003). Fishbaugh et al. (2003)

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further assert, "the learning process is stymied by the need to deal with unruly behaviours and to prevent serious episodes of aggression and violence". According to Naong (2007), many educators are not satisfied with their work and feel under pressure. This leads to absenteeism and educators being lost to the profession because of their inability to maintain discipline in their classes. Besides the fact that disruptive learners deny other learners their right to education (Haydin, 2014), their constant contraventions often result in their suspension and/or expulsion from school (Hoffman, 2014).

Debate on the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools in South Africa has led to unfortunate and tense clashes between schools and the DoE. There have already been several cases of litigation where the way the school governing bodies managed the code of conduct for learners was contested. These include: *Mfolo and others v Minister of Education, Bophuthatswana 1994 (1) BCLR 136 (B); Christian Education SA v Ministry of Education 2000 (4) SA 757 (CC); 2000 (10) BCLR 1051; Danielle Antonie v Governing Body, The Settlers High School and Head of Western Cape Education Department 2002 (4) SA 738; and MEC for Education: KwaZulu-Natal v Navaneethum Pillay 2008 (1) SA 474 (CC).* In 2014, an "Organisation for Religious Education and Democracy (OGOD)" filed an application in the Gauteng High Court against six public schools advertising themselves as exclusively "Christian" or as having a "Christian ethos" with the intention to obtain a generally valid ruling declaring certain religious practices in public schools unconstitutional (Thamm, 2014).

Similar incidents as those cited above occur even outside the courts of law. Recent cases in point are *Kempton Park School, Pretoria High School for Girls, Sans Souci Girls' High School, and Lawson Brown High School* (Eyewitness News, 2017) where learners raised issues regarding the code of conduct). In almost all the cases, the MECs have urged governing bodies of the schools to rework the code of conduct for learners. In doing this, the MEC for the Gauteng DoE instructed the SGBs to involve learners in the re-drafting of such policies (Eyewitness News, 2017).

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Such incidents are not just confined to South Africa. In London (UK), 12-year-old Chixkayzea Flanders was disparaged by his school for wearing his hair naturally. His mother took up the matter with the school. She considered it as a discriminatory policy on hair. Authorities recommended that an assessment of school uniform policies should be done on a national level (ENCA, 2017). At Fulham Boys School in London (UK), a child was told to cut the hair or face expulsion. This was considered by activists as a violation of the child's right to equality. The authorities recommended that schools needed to update their codes of conduct to come in line with accepted human rights principles and that these should be reviewed each year (ENCA, 2017).

While some scholars blame the shift to self-governance on schools (Bush & Heystek, 2003), others point fingers at the adult management who deny learners participation in decision-making forums (Fullen, 2013; Matsepe, 2014; Sithole, 1995). While acknowledging these arguments, this study focuses on neither of them. Instead, it argues that the code of conduct for learners is an important, sensible and useful disciplinary tool pertaining to the safety and security of learners and staff (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). However, the study questions its effectiveness and fairness. It, therefore, aims to investigate the understanding of learner representatives of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners.

It is my assumption therefore that with the learner representatives present in the SGB of every school (SASA, 1996), challenges such as those cited previously can be minimal. Learner representatives should be able to consult with the RCL and the learners as to what can be done to maintain discipline in schools. Learner representatives in all schools should be able to advise their SGBs on all matters, including learner dress codes. Therefore, the learner representatives' role in the SGBs with regard to the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct was investigated in this study.

1.2.1. Research purpose

The first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27th April 1994 paved the way to a new democratic dispensation. As a result of the new era of democracy, the

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Constitution with the Bill of Rights as well as the SASA came into operation in 1996. Amongst others, the Constitution calls for "the upholding, preserving and protection of children's rights and hence harsh and punitive disciplinary measures were outlawed (Maphosa & Mammen, 2011). The Bill of Rights outlines the rights of the citizens, including the right not to be subjected to torture (RSA, 1996). Subsequently, SASA (1996) abolished the practice of corporal punishment in schools.

On the one hand, some sectors gave the abolition of corporal punishment credit, claiming that it guaranteed human dignity (Marais & Meier, 2012; Naong, 2007). Organisations such as Children's Rights International Network and United Nations Conventions on the rights of the child (Nthontho, 2017) applauded and welcomed the protection of children against harm and abuse through the abolition of corporal punishment. On the other hand, others heavily criticized the Constitution and SASA arguing that the banning of corporal punishment in schools further increased discipline problems because no viable alternatives were introduced (Marais & Meier, 2012; Naong, 2007).

One such case was that of *Christian Education SA v Ministry of Education 2000 (4) SA 757 (CC); 2000 (10) BCLR 1051 (CESA).* This case saw a challenge to the constitutionality of Section 10 of the SASA (84 of 1996), which prohibits corporal punishment at school; from an organisation representing concerned Christian parents. According to Christian Education South Africa (CESA), "corporal punishment" forms part of a system of "discipline" embraced by the Christian faith and scriptures. The organisation further claimed that corporal punishment, as administered at its schools, was part of the common cultural heritage of such schools, a culture protected by certain provisions of the Constitution. Educators also felt that the banning of corporal punishment exacerbated disciplinary problems in schools (Motseke, 2010). Hence, parents and educators lobbied for the return of corporal punishment into the system (Mohapi, 2014).

Based on the cited court cases and incidents mentioned in previous sections, it is evident that despite the presence of learner representatives in SGBs during the drafting of the code of conduct in secondary schools in South Africa (SASA, 1996)

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learner indiscipline followed by unconstitutional disciplinary measures are daily occurrences (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). The purpose of this study is, therefore, to find out from learner representatives in the SGB how they understand their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners.

1.2.2. Research question

What is the understanding of the representative council for learners on the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in schools?

1.2.3. Sub-questions

- What do learner representatives understand by the role of the code of conduct for learners in schools?
- How do learner representatives understand their role as SGB members in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in schools?
- To what extent are the learner representatives involved in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in schools?
- What are the learner representatives' reactions towards the way schools deal with discipline processes in schools?

1.3 Theoretical framework

The purpose of the current study is to explore the understanding of learner representatives of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in Gauteng secondary schools. It is for this purpose that I used policy implementation as the frame of reference to explain the implementation process of the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools. The top-down and bottom-up perspectives of policy implementation have been widely discussed in the literature. (Datnow & Park, 2009). While the former views deviations from the original policy implementation as unacceptable and enforced policy decisions using the available enforcement structures of the organisation, the latter views deviations in original policy implementation as unavoidable and expected adjustments to

policies from those implementing it and faced with the realities of the situation (Datnow & Park, 2009).

For successful policy implementation to take place, top-level bureaucrats deciding on appropriate policies to achieve the desired goals of the organisation have to first ensure an efficient and trustworthy bureaucratic system at the bottom which is tasked with the policy implementation (Jakab, 2015). There is, therefore, a clear distinction between policy formulation and policy implementation (Hill, 2012). Policy formulation involves "the design of a coherent, justifiable, legitimate, and integrated policy" (Lane & Hamann, 2003) by the education department for implementation at the appropriate levels. Policy implementation involves the function of "ongoing interpretation, negotiation, bargaining, managing ambiguity, discretion, and sense-making" of the policy to be implemented by the school, for example (McLaughlin, 1987, Spillane, 1998). Hill further argues that the distinctive study of the two processes can lead to misunderstandings when we study them separately because we may not understand the whole.

Applying the top and bottom perspectives to the South African context, researchers acknowledge that in the past dispensation neither parents, educators nor learners had the legal authority to interfere or participate in school governance matters (Heystek & Paquette, 1999). Heystek & Paquette (1999) further states that "school principals were generally considered as the only people with knowledge and authority to make decisions". By implication, parents, educators and learners had little or no experience of participatory decision-making.

In its attempt to transform the governance system of schools, the ANC (African National Congress) government through SASA, redefined the role of the SGBs (SASA, 1996). In doing so, the government adopted neither the top-down nor the bottom-up perspective but rather endorsed a co-construction perspective (Datnow & Park, 2009). The co-construction approach perspective views policy implementation as a joint process negotiated between parties affected by the contextual structures surrounding policy implementation – the School Managing Body (SMT) and SGB in the context of South Africa. Curran (2017) asserts "a unique component of co-

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construction is a focus on embedded nature of organisations within layers of social or political structures."

Mncube (2009) states that democracy will manifest in that "governance powers and responsibilities will be distributed more equally between all stakeholders: policies should be developed through a process of rigorous deliberation, with all stakeholders, regardless of age, gender or race and having equal decision-making power" (Mncube, 2009). According to van Wyk, this is based on the assumption that "when educators, parents and learners collaborate in making important decisions about educational alternatives, it leads to a true mutual responsibility" (van Wyk, 2004). The SGB is therefore viewed as the legitimate "government" of the school (Bray, 2005).

In addition, SASA (1996) requires broad and representative participation by parents, educators and learners in the governing bodies (Mabasa & Themane, 2002). Despite all the provisions, many South African schools continue to exclude learners in particular from decisions taken on the educational matters that affect them directly or indirectly. Naidoo (2005) stresses that the current structural arrangement in terms of which the school principal heads the SMT and acts as ex-officio representative of the DoE, still seems to imply that these are the pre-eminent structures in school governance. The anticipated synergy and co-operation between stakeholders, therefore, do not materialise (van Wyk, 2004).

Matsepe (2014) brings learners into perspective by pointing out that they are rarely involved in policy-making decisions because the perception is that they are young and inexperienced, with restricted authority to make decisions without the consent of their parents. According to Klemencic "this implies that the presence of learners in the SGB does not necessarily imply meaningful learner participation. In some cases, this also inhibits their freedom of expression" (Klemencic, 2014). According to Mncube and Harber, "they may be structurally visible but practically silent. Learners' legitimate presence in the SGB is seen as window-dressing or tokenistic" (Mncube & Harber, 2013). Denying learners their right to democratic participation in policy drafting and implementation has the potential of causing conflict and resulting in learner resistance to policy change.

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According to Morgan resistance, as viewed by this study, means actions taken by individuals and groups, in this case, the learner representatives, because they feel threatened in some or other way. Resistance can be manifested in different forms. For example, "passive resistance could take the form of deliberately delaying policy implementations or simply ignoring it, usually based on claims that the school lacks information on the policy reform." (Morgan, 1997). Active resistance, on the other hand, could result in class boycotts or learners misbehaviour.

The concern is that radical active resistance could threaten the stability of the whole education system as. The effects of such attitudes were alluded to by the Deputy Minister of Education in South Africa in a speech in 1997:

> *Many of our children are always absent from school, lack discipline and manners, regularly leave school early, are usually late for school, wear no uniform, have no respect for teachers, drink (alcohol) during school hours, are involved in drugs and gangs, gamble and smoke at school, come to school armed to instil fear in others. (Mkhatshwa, 1997).*

The examples given above serve as an illustration of the "possible devastating long-term results and inevitable destruction of a culture of teaching and learning" (Fleisch & Christie, 2004) that could be caused by active resistance from stakeholders, including learners. It is therefore through this lens that I see the involvement of learner representatives in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners as representing an example of democratic participation, hence having a minimal effect on learner discipline. Because of the gap discovered in the literature and the lens through which I want to explore this phenomenon, the chosen research question and sub-questions drove this study.

1.4 Rationale for the study

As an educator, I have always wondered what makes a learner behave acceptably. During the tenure of my teaching career, I have noticed that learners behaved well if they knew what was expected of them. I, therefore, assumed that learners' behaviour would improve if they were actively rather than passively involved in the

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process of the ==drafting and implementation== of the code of conduct for learners in schools (Fullan, 2013).

The SASA provides for the democratic process of ==drafting and implementation== of the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools (grades 8-12) (SASA, 1996). Before and since the publication of the schools act, extensive research has been done on learner discipline and the discipline policies in schools. Most of these studies, however, focused on educators and administrators (Amado, & Freire, 2009; Haydin, 2014; Karanja & Bowen, 2012; Leefon, Jacobs, Le Roux, & De Wet, 2013; Mestry & Khumalo, 2012; Motseke, 2010; I, 2009).

Some studies engage in document analysis where the content of the policies is scrutinised to determine their effectiveness and fairness towards learner discipline (Anyon et al., 2014; Curran, 2017; Hoffman, 2014). There are very few studies that involve learners' experiences on the implementation of disciplinary policies, and they mostly involve learners in quantitative studies using questionnaires (Ncontsha & Shumba, 2013; Payne & Petch, 2017).

I saw a gap in the missing voice of learners in the policy-making processes that affect them either directly or indirectly. I saw a need to protect and promote democratic participation, inclusion and social justice as significant principles of democracy (Mthethwa & Sommers, 2014, SASA, 1996.) It is my understanding that as learners participate in these processes, they learn about democratic rights and responsibilities. In this way, their right to an education is being respected, protected, promoted and instilled.

Undertaking this study will not only earn me a Masters' degree but will also benefit the school governance system in several ways. Among other benefits, the study is aimed at (a) providing a platform for learner representatives to voice out their perceptions pertaining the code of conduct in their schools "Nothing about us, without us" (Watchel, 2010); (b) share their understanding of the role of the code of conduct for learners; and (c) provide recommendations to the national and provincial policy-makers pertaining areas of concern in the ==drafting and==

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implementation of the code of conduct for learners in future (Fishbaugh et al., 2003; Human Rights Commission, 2006).

In the next sections, the following are discussed: policy drafting and implementation in schools, research design methods, research findings and conclusions and recommendations. Learner representatives' perceptions about their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners are also explored. The qualitative research approach was used as a design for data collection and analysis. Research findings as perceived from learner representatives own views are also outlined. Recommendations are also given concerning the research findings.

1.5 Research design

1.5.1 Qualitative research approach

To get the understanding of the learner representatives of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in Gauteng schools, this study engaged the qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, "this is a research process that allows a researcher to develop a complex, holistic picture; an analysis world; report detailed views of participants and to conduct the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 2009). In other words, a qualitative research approach allowed me to understand the underlying reasons, opinions and motivation on how learner representatives perceived their involvement in drafting and implementation of the conduct for learners and why they perceived their involvement the way they do (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012; Maree, 2010). Qualitative research also allowed for the acquisition of insight and development of understanding in the phenomenon under study "by getting close to the data to understand the participants' point of view and obtain social knowledge" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

According to Creswell and Creswell, "a qualitative research approach involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach" to the learner representatives that were involved in this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Denzin, by engaging in the qualitative approach, this study can "become an in-depth inquiry to study a phenomenon in its setting, to make sense of, as well as to interpret the

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phenomenon in terms of meanings constructed by learner representatives" (Denzin, 2009). A qualitative study further provided an in-depth understanding of the meaning and situation of the learner representatives involved in the study (Flenning, 2004).

The advantages of the qualitative research approach are that it provided learner representatives' experiences and deeply held beliefs. According to Denzin and Licoln, it allows the researcher "to become the key research instrument, and thus, the processes of data gathering, data analysis, interpretation and reporting became my responsibility" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By engaging, the interpretive and naturalistic approach in this study enabled me to answer questions about the complex nature of learner representatives' perceptions of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in Gauteng secondary schools (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Furthermore, this phenomenon was described and understood from the participants' point of view. In other words, the learner representatives "narrate their experiences more efficiently when asked to do so in their own words during interviews" (Henning, 2004).

1.5.2 Case study design

This study engaged a case study as a research design. According to Maree, "a case study is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events, which aim to describe and explain the phenomenon under study" (Maree, 2010). Creswell (2007) describes a case study as "a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study." It provided me with a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how learner representatives in this study relate and interact with other members of the SGB in a specific situation and how they perceive their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in their respective schools. Furthermore, a case study enabled me to answer the "how" and "why" questions.

A case study also allows for a multiple-perspective analysis in which I considered the opinions and perceptions of all the relevant groups and the interaction among them. This opened the possibility of giving a voice to the disempowered social groups like the learner representatives in this study. A case study is of value to me as the researcher because it helped me to understand how learner representatives

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understood their involvement concerning the code of conduct for learners holistically and in their own words, and it allowed me to ask open-ended questions (Maree, 2010). A case study is a good choice for this research as it is not focused on a large number of participants but on "the richness or quality of the information that can be obtained from them" (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). The disadvantages of a case study are that it is dependent on a single study and incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Maree, 2010). However, I do not plan to generalise the findings but to explore the sampled learners' perceptions in the sampled schools.

1.6 Research method

1.6.1 Sampling

According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), "sampling is a process aimed at the selection of a group of participants for a study". Convenient purposive sampling was used in this study (Marais & Meier, 2010). Because I could not use every learner representative in all schools in Gauteng (Punch, 2007), a purposive sampling strategy allowed me to deliberately select learner representatives who provided data that illuminated the phenomenon under discussion (Maxwell, 1996).

I purposively selected six learner representative members of the SGB from six secondary schools in Germiston where I live and work because of the convenience and accessibility (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The sample of six learner representatives is deemed adequate as in a qualitative research approach the focus is generally on sample adequacy rather than the absolute size, as my intention was not to generalise the finding. According to Farger and Dooley "the adequacy of sampling is usually justified by the reaching of a saturation point" (Farger & Dooley, 2012) and qualitative researchers regard that as enough of a yardstick to guarantee the quality of the results (Guest, 2006). Accessing the schools was easy because I live and work in the area where the schools are, and this will save me time and costs.

Scholars like Barbie (2010) warn researchers about using purposive sampling because we may not have a full insight of whom to choose for the study, thereby choosing the wrong participants or being biased in our choice of participants. To

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address this limitation, I targeted learner representatives who had more than six months of service in the SGB. The longer the service in the SGB, the richer the information the learner representatives' involvement in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct in schools (Eshetu, 2014). Learner representative members of the SGB are sampled because of their first-hand perceptions and experiences of the code of conduct in their respective schools. Moreover, they are responsible for learner discipline, and they are also subject to discipline (Ncontsa, 2013).

1.6.2 Data collection techniques

I used semi-structured interview questions to collect data. Semi-structured interview questions allowed me to collect in-depth information from learners in this study (Creswell, 2008). Semi-structured interview questions enabled me to probe and prompt on answers given, and this flexibility of interviews helped me to collect as much information as possible (Anyon, 2014). For the convenience of the learner representatives, the interviews were conducted at their schools after school hours (Bowen, 2009). It is, however, worth noting that even though semi-structured interviews are known for their flexibility in allowing participants to share their experiences, they are prone to subjectivity and bias (Cohen *et al.,* 2011). To address this concern, I used member checking wherein learner representatives were allowed to check the accuracy of the findings (Bryman, 2008).

1.6.3 Data analysis

I, as the key data collection instrument, did the analysis and interpretation of data because of my thorough involvement throughout the data gathering process (Rossouw, 2003). The transcription was read and re-read, after which, as per Leedy, "content was coded and categorised, aided by the interview schedule used in all interviews" (Leedy & Ormond, 2001). Then, as prescribed by Bryman, "primary patterns were identified as per coding and the final categories established" (Bryman, 2008). Information was consolidated into themes and structured according to learner representatives' perceptions of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the learner Code of conduct (Marais & Meier, 2010). After

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categorising responses, themes or patterns, the final stage is to interpret the data and write a report (Shenton, 2004).

1.7 Conclusion

As with most Masters Studies, this study was concluded in three phases. The first phase concentrated on the review of literature based on the research topic. Policy drafting and implementation in South African schools were extensively explored to understand the challenges faced by learner representatives in their roles as SGB members in schools. Data collection was done in the second phase. Six learner representative members of the SGB from six different schools in Gauteng were purposefully selected. Data analysis was done in the third and final phase, where research findings were structured. Learner representatives' narratives were the basis on which data, the research problem and theoretical framework were synchronised. The report of this study comprises five chapters, each exploring a particular aspect of the enquiry.

Chapter 1-Introduction, research problem and method

This chapter serves to outline the introduction and background of the study. The research problem, which led to the undertaking of this study, is also brought to the fore. The main research question and research sub-questions are also outlined. The theoretical framework of the study is included in this chapter.

Chapter 2-Policy drafting and implementation in schools

This chapter aims to provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of the learner representatives' involvement in the activities of the outlined. The code of conduct and the learner representatives' role in its drafting and implementation are also extensively explored.

Chapter 3-Research design and methods

In this chapter, the qualitative research approach is used to explore the learner representatives' experiences, perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Besides the SGB. Learner representatives' roles in the SGB and applicable laws thereof are

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research design, the overview of the data gathering, sampling and analysis procedures are outlined. The ethical considerations of the study are also outlined.

Chapter 4-Research findings

Learner representatives' narratives are presented in this chapter. Their narratives are based on their day-to-day engagements in the SGBs of their respective schools. The analysis is done based on pre-determined categories. Transcriptions from learner representatives were coded to establish differences and similarities between the codes. Then, the identification of emerging patterns, the grouping of related patterns into categories and the development of themes followed, which led to the answering of the research questions.

Chapter 5-Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter, the insights gained from this study are presented. The information discussed in other chapters of the study and the inferences drawn from the insights gained during the inquiry are presented. Conclusions are based on the inferences drawn from the experiences of learner representatives' perceptions of the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct. Recommendations on the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct are made as well as suggestions for further research.

In the next chapter, I outline the drafting and implementation processes of the code of conduct for the learners. I also discuss the relevant legislation involved concerning learner representatives' inclusion in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners.

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CHAPTER 2:
POLICY DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, I provided the framework of my study. In so doing, I provided the mind map of the study I aimed to undertake. In this chapter, I aim to engage both local and international theories pertaining to policy drafting and implementation at the school level. Based on the purpose of this study, in this chapter, I explore the literature review on the perceptions of learner representatives on their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners. In so doing, I first discuss the policy drafting being the responsibility of the SGB in schools and the position of learner representatives as provided for by both the legislation, education policies and literature. Secondly, I outline the policy implementation process as the mandate is supposed to be carried by the management of the school and the role of the learner representatives in this process. During the discussion of these two major processes, issues such as the position of learner representatives in the SGB, their role and involvement in the policy drafting and implementation are crucial.

2.2. The code of conduct for learners: Extent of learner representatives' role in drafting process

Section 2 (11) of the SASA 1996 stipulates that the RCL should be part of the SGB and be vested with the responsibility of drafting and adopting a code of conduct for learners (SASA, 1996). In other words, the government is not in favour of a top-down or bottom-up implementation of the code of conduct for learners (Steinmann, 2013). Instead, co-operation between stakeholders in implementing policy through a co-constructive perspective is favoured and expected to lead to mutually agreed policies and the practice of democracy in schools (Mncube, 2009).

According to Mestry "research shows that cases of learner indiscipline are on the increase in South African schools" (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012), and educators are becoming increasingly distressed about the issue of pupil indiscipline in schools.

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Thus, there is a need to research what role is accorded to secondary school learner representatives in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct. A lack of the required knowledge and abilities to design and enforce the learner code of conduct is also reported to be one of the contributing factors to increasing learner misbehaviour (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Through the learner code of conduct, the SGBs regulate and govern all aspects of learner behaviour in schools (Roos, 2003). According to Haydin, "a code of conduct promotes proper and good behaviour and sets standards for positive discipline" (Haydin, 2014).

According to the guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in a code of conduct for learners, "a code of conduct is a legal document and must be drafted within the parameters provided for by the Constitution of South Africa" (RSA, 1998). According to the guidelines, a code of conduct must "give effect to the constitutional values, democratic principles and human rights culture in a school situation." With regard to the governing body of the school, the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners (1998) further state that "in adopting the code of conduct, the governing body must act within its powers and in the best interest of the school and learners" (RSA, 1998). It is important to note that without proper implementation of the code of conduct, there would be chaos in schools (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). The SASA, 1996), however, requires democratic participation by all stakeholders in a mutually beneficial engagement of policy. Co-constructive policy implementation in schools gives rise to true mutual responsibility towards policy formulation and implementation among the actors involved (van Wyk, 2004). Ngwokabuenui goes on to state that globally, educators and educational administrators battle daily to keep order in schools mainly because corporal punishment, the tool they relied on, has been abolished. According to Ngwokabuenui (2015), educators feel disempowered because corporal punishment is instant, swift and effective in learner discipline. However, the abolition of corporal punishment through the introduction of the SASA (1996) and the legal involvement of learners in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct is in line with the values of the constitution.

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Although learners are expected in both the United States and the United Kingdom, to be involved in school matters, their positions are considerably less powerful than that of the other stakeholders and they are restricted to very basic policy concerns in the school such as the decisions about waste recycling (Wallace, 2000). Some African countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa have devolved the school management decisions to school stakeholders because it is considered good governance to promote broader participation through the establishment of local school governance structures (Mulwa, 2015).

2.3. The code of conduct for learners: Learner representatives' role in implementation process

As I have indicated before, implementation involves sense-making of the policy at hand and the management of ambiguity (McLaughlin, 1987). In the case under consideration, the code of conduct, which has been drafted through co-constructive policy-making mechanisms, has to be implemented. The inclusion of learners as stakeholders in the school decision-making processes is in line with the worldwide movement endorsing increased participation by young people in the processes in their daily settings (Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, 1989). However, central to the debacle of how best to manage the discipline of learners is the contentious issue of the participation of learner representatives in the writing and enactment of the learner code of conduct (SASA, 1996). The concept of involving learners in school governance originates from the belief that the state should not continue to manage schools alone because SASA (No. 84 of 1996) legislates the participation of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and learners in the governance of schools.

Theoretically, the co-constructive policy implementation approach the government is taking with the SASA (1996) is to have responsibilities distributed among all the actors involved to avoid repression by one stakeholder by another. Therefore, power-sharing between the stakeholders as the basis for the control of the schools has been seen essential (Tsotetsi et al, 2008). Furthermore, SASA (1996) propagates the establishment of SGBs that will allow all the stakeholders (parents,

educators and learners) to play an active role in taking decisions on behalf of secondary schools from grade 8 upwards.

Even though learners are legally allowed to participate in SGBs (SASA, 1996), they are often not allowed to fully participate in crucial decision-making by the adult members of the SGB directly or indirectly (Mncube, 2008). The reason is that adult members see learners of the SGBs as having limited experience in decision-making (Phaswana, 2010). However, Duma (2014) states that it is easy to see the contribution that learner representatives make to school management activities. From a similar point of view, Wilson (2009) points out that learners who participate in learner governorship also benefit from the sense of relevance, increased confidence, and improved relationships with teachers and their peers. Furthermore, Mncube (supports the view that "other benefits include improved functioning of the school as well as the promotion of democratic values" (Mncube, 2007). However, Duma (2014) states that learner representatives and principals are often wary of one another as they are unsure of the role each should play in the school management and governance. Principals that do not support learners' participation in the governance of schools often fear that too much learner involvement in school governance will compromise their sense of professionalism (Duma, 2014).

Phaswana (2010) explains another reason for the tensions concerning learner participation in decision making in schools. Learner representatives are only allowed tenure of one year in the SGB while their adult counterparts (parents, teachers and non-teaching staff) are accorded longer terms of office in the same SGB. This means that the learner representatives are not taken seriously because they may not become fully familiar with SGB proceedings in that one year.

In the next sections, I review how learner representatives are selected in the SGB, their role in the SGB and the code of conduct. I also review the involvement of learner representatives in other countries.

2.4 Learner representatives in the SGB

One of the actions of the first democratically elected government of South Africa after 1994 was to implement policies to decentralise school governance and pass

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the appropriate supporting legislation. Therefore, SASA (1996) was a milestone in the legislation through which democratic school governance structures were established in schools (Carr, 2005). SASA require all public secondary schools in South African to have SGBs with learners' representation (Karlsson, 2002). However, the RCL guide holds the position that learner representatives are a potential threat, and consequently, their participation is limited and conditional (Nongubo, 2004).

School governance has long evoked struggles between stakeholders in South Africa. Although legislation (SASA, 1996) is prescriptive about the form of school governance and the role the stakeholders including the learner representation, there is still widely differing opinions about in which areas and to what extent learners should become involved in school governance (Pendlebury, 2011). Duma (2014) asserts that the lack of the experience of learners in the school governance leads to the systematic silencing of the voice of learners, although learner representatives enhance and promote democratic school practices. This means that involving learners and considering their views are important and provide insights into their capabilities and perceptions of their own lived experiences in terms of the needs and problems affecting them (Mager & Novak, 2012). Therefore, learner participation in the ==drafting and implementation== of the code of conduct for learners can greatly assist in identifying problems and solutions because "learners have unique knowledge and perceptions of their schools and about leaning, teaching and schooling." (Mager & Novak, 2012).

According to Phaswana (2010), some principals have concerns about recognising the RCL as the only legitimate student body structure at the school level. This is caused to some extent by a rigid interpretation of rules, roles and responsibilities stipulated in SASA (1996) by principals and lack of training of the principals and other stakeholders in the SGB (Xaba, 2011). Such school principals are contravening the law because the DoE (1996) provides for learners "to participate in school governance in three ways; namely, through representation on (1) the RCL, (2) the SGB, and (3) through the participation in drafting and adopting a school code of conduct' (SASA, 1996). For this reason, every public school with learners from

grade 8 and above is required by SASA to establish an RCL, and the DoE (1996) only recognises the RCL as a legally constituted body for learners in public schools.

By implication, learners in public schools are accorded an opportunity to participate fully in the decision-making processes of the school (Magadla, 2007). According to Njozela, "principals and other stakeholders should not underestimate the contributions of learners, especially if learners are allowed to develop their skills and their level of maturity" (Njozela, 1998). Jeruto and Kiprop is of the opinion that "there are very few aspects of school governance and decision-making in which learners cannot be meaningfully involved – depending on their age and experience" (Jeruto & Kiprop, 2011). Areas of learner participation may include the drafting and implementation of classroom rules, suggestions to the RCL on the updating of the code of conduct and suggestions to teachers about the homework roster among other matters pertaining to their schooling. Section 20 of the SASA (1996) outlines the duties and responsibilities of the SGB with regard to school governance to make a distinction between management and governance of a school. We exist in a democratic era, and the term democracy in the education context implies the participation of all stakeholders in education matters that affect them (Matsepe, 2014).

According to Pashawa "there is increasing evidence that points to adult governors in the SGB as obstacles to learner participation". (Phaswana, 2010). This is demonstrated by the actions of some parents who are unwilling to take part in discussions with minors during SGB meetings (Phaswana, 2010). Other difficulties experienced by learners about participation in school governance, especially in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners, are the power relations between them and the parents or teachers and "lack of support and guidance in understanding concepts of leadership and democracy" (Xaba, 2011). This is contrary to the values of co-operation and democratic participation by all stakeholders in a school entrenched in the SASA (1996) and the Constitution (RSA, 1996).

Top-down implementation of the code of conduct for learners will only lead to strife between the school managers and learners because of the illegal exclusion of

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learner representatives in policy drafting and policy implementation. Moreover, learners are disadvantaged by their limited understanding of their participatory roles. This highlights the "negative perceptions of young people prevalent in South African society" (Mabovula, 2009). Huddleston (2007) contends that learners should participate in all areas of school life. Wilson is of the opinion that "participation broadens the learners' insight, improves practical learning skills, and promotes a greater understanding of school values" (Wilson, 2009).

However, according to Mabovula, "the potential limitations, constraints, consequences, and challenges facing learners in the school governance structure need to be revealed and debated" (Mabovula, 2009). Mabovula goes on to state that it is ironical that "although democratisation of school governance has given stakeholders a powerful voice in school affairs, learners voices are seemingly being silenced. This problem in schools is compounded by the fact that the SASA, which is supposed to give guidance to schools, only portrays a narrow conception of democratic participation (Mabovula, 2009). Mabovula (2009) further states that SASA (1996) lacks the conception of participatory democracy. In other words, according to Mabovula, "SASA is superficial and trivial and does not spell out how this participation could take place or be achieved for good governance in schools".

Good governance as promulgated by the Constitution (RSA, 1996) and SASA (1996), promotes representative and participatory democracy. This is promoted by decentralising decision making, involving the affected citizens in the decision-making, sharing responsibilities and promoting the democratic process in decision making through electing representatives on the SGB and performing other prescribed functions such as the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct. Unfortunately, ambiguity by SASA in prescribing the involvement of learner representatives in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct leads to non-participatory practices such as teachers' pre-eminence in SGB meetings, exploitation of learners in the SGB by teachers to endorse decisions and using learners as window dressing among others.

Fletcher (2005) warns against contravening the laws that protect learners from exclusion by denying the learners' representatives the primary tool for decision-

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making on the SGB. He states that some of the adults on the SGBs act to "negate the voice of students and encourage tokenism" by merely using the students on the SGB to obtain a stamp of approval for decisions in which the students cannot participate.

2.5 How learner representatives become the SGB members

According to the SASA, RCLs have to be established at every public school that enrols learners in the eighth grade or higher" (SASA, 1996) and this council will be "the only recognised and legitimate learner body at the school" (SASA, 1996). School managers are responsible for the establishment of RCLs in their schools and for facilitating proper elections in this regard (RSA, 1998). In addition, the national DoE provided guidelines for RCLs in 1999 to support its policy for supporting democratic governance in schools. Among the roles required by the RCL is that it should provide "a voice for learner expression" in public schools (SASA, 1996).

Five of the schools I sampled are former "Model C" schools, and only one is a black township school. Model C schools are former whites-only schools established in 1991 by the apartheid National Party government before the 1994 democratic elections. The following process is used by the schools to elect learner representatives, including those that will serve in the SGB: – (a) Leaders are first elected from grade 12s; (b) class representatives are then elected from all grades; (c) the Learner Representative Counsel (LRC) is elected from the elected leaders and class representatives; and (d) the elected LRC then elects two members to represent the council in the SGB. In the township school, the class representatives are elected from all grades. This elected class representatives then elect an LRC, which will then elect a member to the SGB.

According to the SASA "all public secondary schools in South Africa must establish SGBs, and learners must have representatives on these SGBs" (SASA, 1996). Learners elect the RCL members in a secondary school, and the elected members of the RCL elect a learner representative who will represent them on the SGB (SASA, 1996). The RCL representative serves on the SGB for one year (SASA,

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1996). However, the RCL guides have drawn immense criticism from scholars (Phaswana, 2010) particularly for the limited level of participation by learner representatives outlined in them. Some scholars are against the tone of language used in these guides. The guides "position learners as potential threats who need to be treated with caution" and are, therefore, only engaged as communication tools to liaise on behalf of the learners (Nongubo, 2004). Consequently, learners' participation is limited and conditional.

2.6 Learner representatives' role in the SGB.

According to O'Connell, learners have always demanded their inclusion in education affairs that affected them, "but the role of learner representatives in school management has always been at the centre of the struggle for educational reform in South Africa" (O'Connell, 1991). According to Levin, the 1976 learner uprisings "paved the way for changes in the education sector in South Africa and led to the devolution of more power and authority over education matters to local communities" (Levin, 1998).

Moreover, according to Mncube, in the South African context, "there is a general conviction that the secondary school learners have earned their right to be heard through their participation in the liberation of the country" (Mncube, 2008). For this very reason, SASA (1996) makes it possible for stakeholders like parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners to form SGBs, which makes decisions for the school. SASA (1996) clearly states that learners should be allowed to participate in the decision-making in affairs that affect them. SASA represents an enlightened form of democratic school management and governance (Tsotetsi, 2008) and it also, according to Mbcube, "accords stakeholders active and responsible roles to encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making in the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct".

According to Bray "learner representation at secondary school level inculcates the values of school practices" (Bray, 2005). Bray (2005) further states that although a learner may not legally contract on his own, he is mature enough from an intellectual and educational point of view to represent the learner corps of the

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school and act in its best interests. The first and major goal of the learner representative in the SGB is to contribute to the drafting of the code of conduct for learners (SASA, 1996). The learner representative is uniquely qualified to contribute to learner issues and interests in the SGB (RSA, 1998).

According to the DoE "it is the duty of learner representatives to contribute to the drafting of the constitution of the council and submit it to the SGB for approval" (SASA, 1996). They are a vital part of the resources utilised to contribute to the maintenance of order in the school as per the approved school policies.

As the overseers of the learner body, they must become role models and lead by setting positive examples of good discipline, loyalty, respect, punctuality, academic diligence, morality, cooperation and active participation in institutional activities. In this process, they facilitate communications between the staff and learners; the school, the parents and the community; and promote good relations between the learners themselves. According to the DoE, "the learner representatives must also promote responsibility and leadership among learners; promote support for the educational programme of the school; and promote the culture of the school by maintaining and refining the traditions of the school" (DoE, 1999, pp. 16–17).

Nonetheless, the mandate for the democratisation of school governance (SASA, 1996) is hindered by the fact that some SGB members find it difficult to accept learners as members of the SGB (Mabasa & Thamane, 2002). However, this should certainly not be the case as the DoE supports the participation of stakeholders (parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners) in the activities of the school, and has laid down policy to underscore this. Furthermore, SASAs espoused strategy is "to create a democratic school governance landscape based on citizen participation and partnerships between the state, parents, learners, school staff and the community" (SASA, 1996). In addition, they have devolved decision-making powers towards individual schools and communities (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004). In their research, Lewis and Naidoo found that "learners and parents faced challenges in expressing their voices in governance through the SGB" (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004)." Learners are excluded from decision making because they are considered immature, and the principals and teachers make decisions without the consent of

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parents who are considered illiterate. On paper (RSA, 1996; SASA, 1996) learners are recognised and are invited or welcomed to meetings of the SGB but, according to Duma "are kept at an arm's length because they are unsure of the role that each should be playing in school management" (Duma, 2014).

The Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) and other national law (SASA, 1996) confer a variety of rights to learners, which must be respected by all involved in education including the principals and parents. According to SASA, among the many rights conferred to learners is the freedom of expression, which "includes the freedom to receive and impart information or ideas, artistic creativity and academic freedom" (SASA, 1998, Section 16). Learner representatives should be given the space to express themselves about how they feel about policies in education and their schools through their participation in the SGBs (Mncube, 2007). However, Mncube (2007) goes on to state that learners' participation in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct in South Africa is not appreciated. Several reasons are provided for their non-participation.

According to Nthontho (2017), one of the reasons is that the active participation of learners in decision-making is a very recent development in developing countries, and there is not a lot of experience with the model. However, social constructivist theories explain that society has created its concepts about childhood from a concept of biological immaturity. According to Matsepe, learners are perceived as "social beings that are too vulnerable, incompetent and immature to make decisions that can be trusted" (Matsepe, 2014). Nthontho (2017) further states that in a quest for a simplistic, ideal model, society would prefer to use age as the main yardstick to determine "who should and who should not enter decision-making forums. This view associates age with wisdom." This is underscored by the fact that in many countries in Africa, learners can only vote in local and national elections at the age of 18 (Nthontho, 2017). All citizens are allowed to vote from the age of 18.

Instances of direct participatory democracy for the learner representatives in the SGB are reflected in cases like the adoption of the code of conduct for learners (SASA,1996). According to Phaswana, "the SGB must adopt a code of conduct for learners only after consultation with learners, parents and educators of the school.

The rationale for this high standard of democratic participation is that consultation will ensure learners' commitment to the rules, which govern them" (Phaswana, 2010). There are compelling reasons why learners should be allowed to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them. Apart from the contribution that learners can make, Phaswana (2010) has found that learners who gain experience on learner representative councils tends to benefit from increased confidence.

2.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, processes involved in the inclusion of learner representatives in the SGB in schools were thoroughly outlined. The drafting and implementation process, as supported by SASA (1996) and other relevant legislation were also explained. The learner representatives' role in the SGB and the possible contributions they can make were discussed.

The following chapter deals with the research design and methods utilised to explore the research question.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to explore the understanding of learner representatives of their role in drafting and implementation the code of conduct for learners in Gauteng secondary schools. In this section, I describe the research design leveraged to undertake the study. I clearly explain the instruments used in the data collection and how the data was subsequently analysed to address the research questions. I also cover the factors like trustworthiness and credibility that had to be taken into account to ensure that decisions could be reached with confidence from the data. Lastly, I address the ethical issues and how these have been accommodated in the study. The understanding of learner representatives of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct in Gauteng secondary schools were probed using qualitative research methods. The research techniques used to collect the bulk of the research data were based on semi-structured interviews undertaken by the researcher.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Qualitative research approach

To get the understanding of the learner representatives towards the code of conduct for learners in Gauteng secondary schools, this study engaged the qualitative research approach. According to Hess-Bieber and Leavy, "qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to ask different kinds of questions than its quantitative counterpart" (Hess-Bieber and Leavy, 2004). Saldana (2011) calls it "a method for the study of natural social life", while Hesse-Bieber and Leavy (2004) calls it "a method used to understand something about social reality". According to Creswell, the qualitative research process enables the researcher to develop a "complex, holistic picture, report detailed views of participants and conduct the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative research approach allowed me to better understand the underlying reasons, opinions and motivation on how learners understand the code of conduct for learners and how their perceptions are formed.
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(Bechuke & Debeila, 2012; Maree, 2010). A qualitative research approach also helped me to acquire insight and develop an understanding of the phenomenon under study; as pointed out by Denzin and Lincoln, quality research achieves this by allowing the researcher to "get close to the data to understand participants' point of view and to obtain social knowledge" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

According to Creswell, "a qualitative research approach involves an interpretive" and "naturalistic approach" to the world (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By engaging the qualitative approach, my study could benefit as described by Denzin by becoming "an in-depth inquiry to study a phenomenon in its setting, to make sense of, as well as to interpret the phenomenon in terms of meanings and understandings constructed by people" (Denzin, 2009). A qualitative research approach provided me with an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning as constructed by those involved in the study (Flenning, 2004). It provided me with the opportunity to experience the deeply held beliefs and feelings of the learner representatives in this study. It also allowed me to become the key research instrument. According to Denzin and Lincoln, "the processes of data gathering, data analysis, interpretation and reporting is the researcher's responsibility" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). By engaging the interpretive and naturalistic approach in this study, I was able to answer what Leedy and Omrod calls "the complex questions about the nature of learners' perceptions of the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Furthermore, this phenomenon under study was described and understood from the participants' point of view. In other words, participants could convey their experiences more clearly when allowed to do so in their own words in an interview (Henning, 2004).

3.3 Research design

The research design engaged in this study was a case study. According to Maree, "a case study is a systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aim to describe and explain the phenomenon" being studied (Maree, 2010). Creswell (2007) describes a case study as "a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study". A case study provided me with a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how learners related and interacted with other members of the SGB in specific

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situations and how they made meaning of the code of conduct for learners in their schools. Furthermore, a case study enabled me to answer the "how" and "why" questions.

A case study also allowed for a multi-perspective analysis in which I, as the researcher, considered the opinions and perceptions of all the relevant groups of actors and the interactions among them. It also opened the possibility of giving a voice to the powerless and voiceless social groups like the learner representatives in this study. A case study was of value to me as a researcher because it helped me understand how learners display undisciplined behaviours with regard to the code of conduct for learners holistically and in the learner representatives' own words. A case study also allowed me to ask open-ended questions (Maree, 2012).

A case study was an appropriate research design because this study was not focused on having a large number of participants but on "the richness or quality of the information obtained from them" (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). The disadvantages of a case study are that it is depended on a single study and incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Maree, 2010). However, I did not aim to generalise the findings but rather to explore the sampled learners' perceptions in the selected schools.

3.4 Data collection methods

3.4.1 Sampling

According to Johnson and Christensen, "sampling is a process aimed at the selection of a group of participants for a study". (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Convenient purposive sampling was primarily used in this study (Marais & Meier, 2010). Since I cannot use every learner representative in all the Gauteng schools (Punch, 2007), a purposive sampling strategy allowed me to deliberately select learners who provided data that illuminated the phenomenon under discussion (Maxwell, 1996).

Six learner representative members of the SGB were purposefully selected from six different schools in Germiston, Johannesburg, where I live and work as a matter of

convenience and accessibility (Cohen et al., 2011). However, a sample of six learner representatives may be considered as small, but in qualitative research the emphasis is not on the number of participants but rather on whether the sample would represent all the viewpoints adequately, as mentioned earlier on, it was not my intention to generalise my findings. The adequacy of sampling is usually justified by the reaching of a saturation point" (Farger & Dooley, 2012) and qualitative researchers regard that as enough of a yardstick to guarantee the quality of the results (Guest, 2006). Because I live and work in the area where the schools are, accessing the schools was easy and that saved me time and costs.

Researchers are warned about using purposive sampling because we may not have a full insight of whom to choose for the study, thereby possibly choosing the wrong participants or being biased in our choice of participants (Barbie, 2010). To address this limitation, I targeted learner representative members of the SGB who had at least six months service in the SGB. The longer the service in the SGB, the richer the information about the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct for learners in schools (Eshetu, 2014). Learner representative members of the SGB were sampled because of their first-hand perceptions and experiences of the code of conduct for learners in schools. Moreover, they were responsible for learner discipline, and they experienced discipline themselves (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

3.4.2. Participants' profiles

For this study, learner representative one will represent school one. I will now present each one of learner representatives in terms of their gender, race, how they ended up in the SGB and their role in the SGB.

Table 1: Learner Representatives' profiles.

Participant	Grade in secondary school	School location in Gauteng	Experience in SGB	Gender	Race
L R 1	12	Germiston Johannesburg	1 year 8 months	Female	Black
L R 2	11	Germiston Johannesburg	8 months	Female	Black
L R 3	11	Germiston Johannesburg	8 months	Male	White
L R 4	12	Germiston Johannesburg	1 year 8 months	Male	Black
L R 5	12	Germiston Johannesburg	8 months	Male	Black
L R 6	12	Germiston Johannesburg	8 months	Female	Black

3.4.2.1 Learner representative one (LR1)

Learner representative one (LR1) is a black female 18-year-old grade 12 member of the SGB in her school. She holds the position of deputy president of the RCL. Her school is an English medium former Whites-only school, which was turned into a "Model C" school situated in Germiston, Johannesburg. A "Model C" school refers to former Whites-only schools, which had to enrol other races after the first democratic
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elections in South Africa in 1994. The term "Model C" school is no longer being used in reference to former Whites-only schools. Her school uses a system where leaders are elected from the grade 12s, and the class representatives are elected from all grades. The RCL is then elected from these elected leaders and class representatives. The elected RCL members then elects two members who will represent them in the SGB. Her role as a member of the SGB was extremely limited and was a cause of disagreement in this study. Functions allocated to her included keeping order in the hallways, schoolyard, reporting on learner grievances on matters like the uniform and doing fundraising, among others.

3.4.2.2 Learner representative two

She is a black 17-year-old grade 11 learner member of the SGB in her school. Her school is also a former English medium former Whites only "Model C" school. Her position in the RCL is that of treasurer. Her school uses the same system of electing leaders from grade 12s, class representatives, RCL and lastly two members of the SGB as in LR1's school. Her role as the SGB member can best be described as tokenism.

3.4.2.3 Learner representative three

Learner representative three, a member of the SGB, is a white 17-year-old grade 11 male learner. His school is an Afrikaans medium former "Model C" school. In the schools' RCL, he holds the position of secretary. In his school, as in the previous two schools, they use the same system of electing leaders from grade 12s, class representatives, RCL and then the two members to the SGB. His role is limited to keeping order in the school, supervising late coming in the mornings and fund-raising activities among others.

3.4.2.4 Learner representative four

He is a black 18-year-old currently in grade 12 and representing the RCL in the SGB. His school is a dual-medium (English and Afrikaans) former "Model C" school as well. He holds the position of deputy president of the RCL. The system of electing leaders, class representatives, the RCL and then the two members to the

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SGB is also used in his school. Meaningful roles like taking part in the drafting of the code of conduct for learners and attending disciplinary hearings for learners are non-existent in his role as SGB member.

3.4.2.5 Learner representative five

He is from a black township school currently in grade 12 and a member of the SGB in his school. He holds the position of secretary in the RCL. His school uses the system of electing class representatives who will elect the RCL members among themselves. His role is limited to keeping order in the school and organising learner functions, among others.

3.4.2.6 Learner representative six

She is an 18-year-old black grade 12 member of the SGB in her school. She holds the position of president in the RCL. Her school is also a former "Model C" English medium school. Her school also uses the system of electing leaders from grade 12, class representatives, the RCL and then the two members to the SGB. Her role as an SGB member is extremely limited, and she is not allowed to question anything about the code of conduct for learners.

3.5 Data collection methods

Learner representative members of the SGB were able to provide me with valuable in-depth information during my semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2008). I was able to probe and prompt the learner representatives, and in that way, I collected as much information as possible (Anyon, 2014). All interviews were conducted after school hours at the participants' schools for their convenience. (Bowen, 2009).

3.6 Data analysis

I collected the research data myself through semi-structured interviews with the learner representative members of the SGB. This made me better placed to analyse and interpret the data because I was thoroughly involved in the data gathering process (Rossouw, 2003). After I transcribed the data, I read, coded and categorised it aided by the interview schedule that I used in all the interviews. After I

identified the patterns and categories, I consolidated the information into themes. I then interpreted the data and wrote this report.

3.7 Trustworthiness

According to Mertler, "trustworthiness refers to the accuracy and believability of data" (Mertler, 2006). According to Niewenhuis, "trustworthiness can be used as a criterion against which data analysis, findings and conclusions could be assessed as they occurred in a study" (Niewenhuis, 2007). According to Lincoln and Guba, "the aim of establishing trustworthiness is to ensure that research findings are useful and can be taken into account" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Since learner representatives narrated their experiences to me, I had to ensure that each narrative was credible, provided a thick description, and satisfied the criteria of conformability, and auditability. This was achieved when the learner representatives and I collaborated to produce an intersubjective meaning of the narrative (Nthontho, 2013).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility is described by Lincoln and Guba as "the result of an evaluation that intend to determining whether the research findings represent a credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In this study, I applied various strategies to ensure credibility. First, I was transparent in the documenting and use of my research methods and, as required by Lincoln and Guba, "consistent in operating within the assumptions and traditions of the research paradigm and design" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Secondly, I identified strategies in the literature on research methodology, including agreement between the adopted research paradigms and chosen research methods, as well as ensuring interaction with the participants over an extended period regarding the phenomena of interest, making use of audiotaping and the taking of field notes. Third, I collected data over four weeks, and this helped me to establish a rapport with the learner representatives and gain their trust. According to Clandin and Connelly, this is important "to make them feel comfortable and give them the freedom to share their

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views openly, hence increasing the credibility of the stories as well as the interpretation of such experiences" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

3.7.2 Thick description

I ensured that I complied with the requirements of Clandin and Connelly to "compose field texts; draft, redraft and share interim research texts with participants" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) to ensure that my data captured "thick descriptions" of the learner representatives' experiences. By doing so, I ensured that I did not exclude anything that would assist in capturing the essence of the learner representatives' experiences. This action also helped with the transparency component I mentioned earlier. As recommended in the literature I made sure to use of "rich" descriptions and include the participants' own words whenever possible, so providing them with a voice to express their experiences. This was necessary to validate the narratives used in the study and ensure the authenticity of data used. In describing the detail and the contexts accompanying the learner representatives' experiences of their involvement in drawing up and implementing the code of conduct for learners, I collected enough verifiable data to support the construction of descriptions that were "thick" enough to be viewed as credible and trustworthy.

3.7.3 Conformability

Lincoln and Guba describe conformability as "the measure of how well the research findings are supported by the data collected" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The data I collected consisted of the lived experiences of the learner representatives who participated in this study, as their beliefs, thoughts and perceptions at the time. To ensure objectivity, I strived to find deeper understanding and valid interpretations of the phenomena under study by asking questions at various stages during the interviews (e.g. "Is this what you said, what do you mean by this?"). At the end of the interviews, I engaged with participants in discussions by inviting them to accept, modify or reject my interpretation of the interviews. This provides a reality check for my presentation of the experiences of the participating learner representatives and ensures its authenticity.

3.7.4 Auditing

Schwandt (2007) describes auditing as "a procedure where a third party examiner systematically reviews the audit trail maintained by the researcher". My supervisor audited the raw data to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the data. This process covered all the data records including the audio tapes, the data reflected in the interview transcripts and supplementary material, the list of participants with their profiles, as well as the field notes I compiled throughout the study. I also sent the transcriptions to the participants and asked them to correct where indicated, to ensure that I represented the information and their views accurately (Mertler, 2006).

3.8 Ethical considerations

The well-being of the learner representatives in this study was my top priority. I sent them all written invitations to participate in the programme. (See Annexure "G") as well as informed consent letters. The parents of the learner representatives were also fully informed in writing of their children's participation in the study (See Annexure "F"). Participating schools were informed in writing of the purpose of the study, who the participants would be and what would be expected of them, as well as the fact that participation would be voluntary and the arrangements concerning confidentiality.

Permission to undertake the study and collect the data was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (See Appendix C), and all the rules and guidelines of the committee were implemented. Written permission was also obtained from the relevant structures at DoE (See Annexure "A").

I considered the issues of anonymity and confidentiality as of critical importance as the details of the learner representatives lives at the school were scrutinised in the research, hence great care was taken to ensure the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of anything that was said by them (Nthontho, 2013). This included strategies like fictionalising to ensure confidentiality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter summarised and became an orientation to the research design and methodology, used in this study. The research design discussed in this chapter served as a road map to the proper investigation of the phenomenon under study. In this chapter, I clearly stated what I wanted to research and why and how I planned to investigate the chosen area of study. I also outlined the sampling strategy and its merits. I explained the steps I took to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings and what I did to ensure that the study was ethical.

In the following chapter, Chapter 4, I present and interpret learner representatives' perceptions on the writing and enactment of the code of conduct in their schools.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the understanding of the learner representatives (LR) in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in schools. Chapter 3 of the study outlined the research methodology and methods that were used as the lens through which the research process was driven. In this chapter, the data that was collected through in-depth interviews with the participating learner representatives was analysed. The findings emanating from the data analysis are presented and discussed as I answer the research questions that drove me into this study.

The discussions of the findings are organised under six main sections. The first section presents the role of the code of conduct for learners in schools from the RCLs' point of view. The second section presents the RCLs' views on their role as SGB members in the writing and enactment of the code of conduct for learners in their schools. Thirdly, the challenges the RCLs face as members of the SGB in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners are presented. The effectiveness of the code of conduct for learners in maintaining order in schools as perceived by the learner representatives is presented in the fourth section. The one but the last section shows learner representatives' views on the treatment of learner disciplinary issues in their respective schools. The last section puts forward the suggestions by learner representatives about the writing and enactment of the code of conduct for learners in schools.

As I present the learner representatives' views, acronyms such as LR1 to LR6 will be used to represent the participating learner representatives and their schools. Finally, based on insights I gained from listening to and analysing participating learner representatives' views, as well as from my understanding of their narratives, I present my conclusions about the effect that their experiences might have had on the way they performed their governance role in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in schools.

4.2 The role of the code of conduct for learners

To recollect the role of the code of conduct for learners in schools, the learner representatives shared their understanding of what the concept means to them. They described the code of conduct as a set of guidelines that help with the functionality of a school. According to the learner representatives, the learner code of conduct is a set of rules and regulations that helps keep order in a school. LR1 testifies to this. "*Firstly, as learners, we tend to want to do things our own way, so I feel that a code of conduct is a set of guidelines as to how the school is run*". LR2 adds that "*It also helps us to have order in a school because I feel like if we had no code of conduct, no rules then the school would have much problems than we already face.*"

In a similar point of view, LR4 finds their code of conduct to be directing how learners must behave while they are at school. "*The role of the code of conduct is to govern the learners in order to differentiate what's right and what's wrong, and what is expected of them as they come in the premises",* he said. LR5 added that "*Learners' code of conduct are rules that ensure that there is a conducive teaching and learning environment as well as acceptable discipline in classes".* LR6 concurred that *"Learners' code of conduct helps to manage learner appearances, how they behave and just everything learners have to do."* She further mentioned that "*with the increasing indiscipline by learners in their schools, a code of conduct is a very important document for every school to have and implement properly".*

However, LR3 sees the code of conduct for learners from a different perspective. He stressed that "*These rules protect learners without disciplining them*". The learner representative goes further to say, "*They (the learners) use the rules to get themselves out of trouble. In that way, I find the learner code of conduct protecting learners' rights without stressing their responsibilities*".

Based on the above views of the participants, it becomes evident that the code of conduct for learners is a vital tool to promote a conducive learning environment where learners feel safe, and discipline is maintained. According to them, it also "helps the learners feel protected and helps them differentiate between right and

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wrong because a copy is given to every learner at the beginning of each year." As learner representative two indicated, "*the conduct papers are handed out first week of the academic year*". Almost all learner representatives in this study agree that the code of conduct for learners is a form of identity as to what the school stands for because it controls the appearance of the learners, their general behaviour in the classrooms and around the school.

It is also important to mention that from the learner representatives' perspective, almost all the schools that participated in this study do due diligence in making sure that they do have a code of conduct. They make the code of conduct available to learners so that learners cannot claim ignorance when they break the rules. The availability of the code of conduct for learners can, therefore not be stressed enough because, without it, there will be chaos in our schools. This was stressed by LR5 when he said, "*I think a code of conduct is basically rules that we must follow as students or as a group of people to make sure that the school goes in the right path*". From the learner representatives' perception, it is important for learners to be well informed about their schools' code of conduct. The learners' code of conduct is one of the many ways indiscipline can be curbed in schools because it promotes good behaviour and sets standards for positive discipline. Having heard how learner representatives describe their code of conduct, it would be interesting to hear how they view their role in its drafting and implementation.

4.3 Learner representatives' understanding of their role in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct

The learner representatives see themselves as the liaison between the learners and the SGB, school management and teachers. LR1 put it thus; "*We take learner grievances to the SGB and negotiate interference*". A similar thought came from LR4 who mentioned, "*I understand my role as being a leader and to ensure that I speak on behalf for all the learners since we cannot all be part of the SGB meetings*". In this way, the learner representatives in this study feel the obligation to speak on behalf of and represent the learners by taking their burning issues to the SGB or school management.

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They help with the maintenance of discipline in their schools by a demerit system. This was cited by LR2 who stated: "*it is my role to see that the demerit system where learners are given points which will determine which punishment to be given to a learner who breaks any of the school rules is properly applied*". While on the maintenance of discipline, LR5 emphasised that "*when a learner reaches a certain number of points, he/she can be given a punishment ranging from community service (cleaning the school or any manual chore the school sees fit), detention or suspension*". In this way, these learner representatives find themselves the implementers of the code of conduct for learners in their schools.

Although the majority of learner representatives in this study understand their role mostly to be implementers of the learner code of conduct, they have a feeling that their participation is not fully given attention. LR6 was emphatic that "*my participation in the SGB is very limited as I mostly get involved in non-essential matters like extra-mural activities, extra classes and the introduction of the matric jacket, and that has very little impact to the running of my school*". Regarding the drafting of the learner code of conduct, learner representatives have a perception that the SGB would not agree with their opinions. "*Well I think that even if we can be given the opportunity to have a say in the drafting of the policy, the SGB members will not agree with it*", LR3 pointed out. LR2 who also feels that their participation in policy drafting is marginalised, perceives that as members of the SGB, "*We should be given an opportunity to speak up as to what we think is right and what is working or not working for the school based on our experiences out there*".

However, learner representatives' perceptions revealed that some school principals and other SGB members welcome learner representatives' views and opinions in decision-making processes in their schools. While speaking to this point of view, LR4 declared that "*Yes, I really do feel they give me the space and respect as a young person and they do consider what I have to say and what I put on the table, so I really think they do adhere to what I have to say*". The same sentiments were shared by LR5 who concealed that, "*They do listen to us but it is really difficult as young as I am to air out my opinions to such old people who have different mind-*

sets". Furthermore, LR1 underlines that *"They usually ask me 'our child, what is your point of view in this matter, what do we have to add or change."*

Based on the recollections of the learner representatives above, they seem to understand their role as members of the SGB and representatives of learners. The majority of them, however, see their role mostly as (a) the liaison between the SGB, management, and learners' body, and (b) implementers of the code of conduct for learners. Very few of the learner representatives view themselves as participants in the policy drafting processes. They feel that their participation can add value to the governance of the school since they have extensive experience in terms of what works better and what does not. Although some of them see the need for their involvement in these activities, others find it difficult to deliberate issues concerning school governance with adults. As a result, they come to meetings to listen, get directives and leave. With this conclusion, I would like us to hear what learner representatives perceive to be their challenges in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in their respective schools.

4.4. Challenges learner representatives face in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct

By law, in their capacity as SGB members, the learner representatives are allowed to take part in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners. However, according to learner representatives' perceptions, they are still not taken seriously when they make suggestions to the SGB regarding the rules contained in the code of conduct. This feeling was expressed by LR6 that, "*We are just there and whatever we bring forth…proposals and all sorts of issues are never taken serious and we do not get positive feedback for our suggestions. We are not involved in the drafting of the code of conduct. We get to school and we find it there",* stressed LR6.

In a similar thought, LR2 underscored that "*the adult members of the SGB do not want to move with the times; instead, all they do is to keep traditions*". He explained his point of view, "*In my school, they tend to do things the same way as in the past forgetting that times change and we need to keep with those changing times".* "*We*

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of today *are not afforded the opportunity to propose new ideas about what can work better and what improvements schools need in order to keep with times.* " LR2 said. LR1 appealed that "*we need to be seen as members of the SGB, not children who are part of the SGB. Our opinions are not spur of the moment, and as the executive, we think about things and don't just bring issues because we feel like it".* She went on to say, "*We also think about issues that we would like to raise as those are collective opinions from the learners' body,*" LR1 emphasised.

The learner representatives in this study feel undermined by the adult members of the SGB and are made to follow what is in the code of conduct without question. According to them, their opinions do not matter because they are seen as children who cannot be trusted with making informed decisions on matters like drafting the learner code of conduct. They have a strong perception that given a chance to participate in school processes can deepen their commitment to the rules that govern them and lead to better relationships with teachers, among other benefits.

In addition to what learner representatives perceive to be their challenges in the writing and enactment of the code of conduct for learners, teachers and other learners undermining their leadership featured strongly as another obstacle. When speaking to this perception, LR3 put it this way, "*The teachers sometimes pass to us remarks such as 'you think that you are the boss, leave that to the teachers…'*". LR4 lamented that "*I think at some point teachers and other learners don't really feel the necessity to involve me in issues that affect them even if I feel I can have a major impact. They just conclude that 'he is young and there is not really much he can say' so I think they undermine me*". He recalled an incident when he called out a learner on code of conduct violation and the learner said '*my teacher is okay with it'*. Learner representatives in this study felt let down by the teachers who are also unfair in their application of the code of conduct. In agreement with the perceptions above, LR2 mentioned that *"in my school, a teacher or a person of authority is always right. That way it's unfair because if I swear a learner I would be reported but if the teacher does it to me, there is nothing wrong*". "*The teachers' inconsistent and unfair application of the code of conduct and uncaring attitude compound the status quo*", uttered LR1. This learner representative further pronounced "*obviously*

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in every single place there is going to be rebels who decide that they are not going to do what is spelt out in the code of conduct", LR1 said. LR2 goes on and stated "*Learners don't understand why they have to follow the leadership of someone my age. They have a feeling that 'she is my friend and we are in the same class. She is no better than me and I am no better than her "*. LR1 uttered.

From the perceptions of learner representatives in this study, it is clear that some teachers and learners do not welcome their leadership and that makes their governance role difficult. *"Teachers publicly undermine our authority and this makes our job as the enforcers of the learner code of conduct difficult"*, stressed LR3. The learner representatives lamented the fact that the teachers do not consistently support them in the implementation of the code of conduct. The learners downright disregard the learner code of conduct and undermine the learner representatives. They break the rules on about anything on the learner code of conduct like appearance, behaviour or work not done. Learner representatives are powerless without the support of the teachers, learners and the SGB in performing their duties as stipulated in the SASA (1996). While there are limitations, constraints and challenges facing learner representatives, the benefits of optimally involving the learner representatives in the day-to-day running of schools cannot be overlooked.

4.5 Effectiveness of the code of conduct in maintaining discipline in schools

All the learner representatives concur that the learner population undermine the code of conduct because of some of the absurd rules that are included. According to the learner representatives in the study, breaking these rules don't lead to any disruption to normal schooling or academic performance of learners but the schools are prepared to have them obeyed, resulting in a loss of class time for the learner. LR4 puts it thus:

> *But if we have rules against hairstyles and you say everybody must cut or shave their hair I don't really find it effective enough because at the end of the day you are making the kids rebellious in a way. What you are causing is anger in them to say the school does not want my hairstyle yet at the*

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same time, they want me to comply with a lot of this and that. If you look at it at the end of the day hair has nothing to do with education because all you need is for a teacher to teach you and for you to understand and study more and pass at the end of the year.

In support of the views by LR4, LR6 was adamant that:

I *think that my school makes too much of a fuss about tampered trousers (trousers that have been altered and size reduced to be tight on the learners' legs). Those trousers are actually neater than when trousers are loose. Tampered trousers do not affect the academic performance of learners. They are just pants and they are actually neater and at the end of the day the fact that the tampered trousers are in the code of conduct affect the academic performance of learners because the learners are out of class for not wearing the correct school pants.*

From the learner representatives' perceptions, the code of conduct for learners in their schools interfere with their freedom of expression in terms of issues of appearance. This is true because in recent cases, schools have suspended learners because of their hairstyles and the like. Firstly, suspending a learner from school violates his/her right to basic education. Secondly, as learner representatives in this study have expressed, their appearance, as long as it does not disrupt teaching and learning, has nothing to do with their education. In short, as learner representatives put it, the hairstyles, tapered pants and nose studs do not contribute to the disruption of a lesson/school or affect the academic performance of a learner but taking action against them does. This brings us to how schools apply this code of conduct for learners in schools.

4.6 How schools deal with learner disciplinary issues

Some learner representatives feel that schools do not apply rules fairly and consistently to all learners. They also feel alienated and undermined by the

teachers specifically. Moreover, they perceive the support they get from teachers in the implementation of the code of conduct to be very minimal "because *the learners do not follow the code of conduct and the teachers are not following up on the code of conduct as always. There are certain things that we shouldn't do in the school but the teachers do not care about it anymore it is just chaotic",* expressed LR5. LR6 argued strongly*, "Honestly, in my school very few rules in the code of conduct are being implemented. Some of them are being emphasised while others are not. And it happens that not all of them are emphasised on everyone"*

All learner representatives who participated in this study reported that they were not allowed to attend learner disciplinary hearings. They feel they are in a world where the adult is always right, and nobody listens to the views of the learners. LR1 stated *"When there is a disciplinary hearing for a learner, it is mandatory that one of the learners must be part of the disciplinary action. As it stands, it's not happening in our school"*. LR2 went on to say, *"We hear about disciplinary meetings in the school but we are not part of the processes"*. LR3 agreed, *"We are limited in terms of learner disciplinary hearings because we are not allowed to take part in such processes."* LR4 added that *"We are not allowed to attend disciplinary hearings in terms of knowing what is going on with the charged learner and the reasons behind his misbehaviour."* LR6 also shared the same sentiment that *"We are not part of disciplinary hearings in my school"*. LR5 took it further and stated *"We once suggested that learners should be part of the disciplinary hearings as it is provided by the legislation, but our suggestion was not taken into consideration"*.

The overall perception as put by learner representatives who participated in this study is that the legislation that guides the SGB on how to deal with disciplinary processes is not followed by the latter in some schools. For instance, as members of the SGB, learner representatives are supposed to participate in the disciplinary hearing processes. Nevertheless, according to participants in this study, their participation is still restricted. By so doing, SGBs in these schools do not only disobey the legislation that governs schools, but also violate learner representatives' right to education because their participation in such matters enhances their learning.

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4.7 Learner representatives' suggestions about the code of conduct

Learner representatives in this study feel that the relaxation of some of the rules and regulations about the physical appearance of learners will minimise lesson time lost by learners while in the principal's office for violations. Relaxation of rules and regulations in this context will mean toning down on the rigid rules and regulations found in schools and making them easier to conform to by learners. LR6 stated, "*I think my school is making too much of a fuss about tapered trousers*" (altered trousers that are tight on the legs). "*Tapered trousers do not affect the academic performance of learners. The fact that tapered trousers are in the code of conduct affect the academic performance of learners because learners are out of class for not wearing the correct school pants*". Therefore, LR6 suggested that *"Wearing tapered trousers should not be a punishable offence because those trousers are actually neater than when the trousers are loose."*

LR4 added that,

> *First is the whole issue of puberty and our hair. It has nothing to do with our education at all…at the end of the day you are making learners rebellious in a way, and you are causing anger in them to say the school doesn't want my hairstyle yet at the same time they want me to comply with a lot of this and that.*

According to him, wearing hair in a certain way does not affect academic performance, nor does it lead to the disruption of a lesson or school. He, therefore, suggested that "*My school should get rid of rules on hair because it's our form of expression and identity*". According to LR1, *"The code of conduct for the school must be thoroughly thought of by all the relevant parties." "The disciplinary rules like detention is very important if we start it at a young age*", LR5 stressed.

Learner representatives in this study perceive that their views ought to be heard and respected because they are also stakeholders in the school. This view was heard from LR3 when he said, "*I think the school sometimes listens to the RCL but they are not really paying attention to it*". He therefore recommended that "Teachers

should respect us and listen to what we have to say as leaders in the school." They want to be allowed to air their views on matters that affect them. Their views seem to not matter to the adult members of the SGB, and even if they are allowed to articulate something, nothing will come from it because the SGB rarely implements their suggestions. Learner representatives are just window dressing in most of the SGBs, as LR6 stated, *"We don't have much to say in some educational matters, we just have to follow"*. In this regard, LR2 suggested, "…*we should be given an opportunity to speak up as to what we think is right and what is working or not working for the school".* However, LR1 appeared to be satisfied with the opportunity she was afforded by the SGB to air her views. She said, "*I have done my part as to what I thought should be changed, and I didn't hold back".*

Learner representatives in this study perceive that their active participation in the writing and enactment is not appreciated. As alluded to in the previous section, contestation regarding rules on hair and general appearance of learners is not new, and schools need to find solutions to these in a manner that suits their context. One of the solutions, as suggested by learner representatives in this study, is that they should be allowed to be part of the decision-making in matters that affect them. Tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making should be encouraged.

4.8 Conclusion

From what I presented, pertaining the learner representatives' perceptions about the code of conduct for learners in their schools, it is evident that their participation in the drafting of their respective schools' codes of conduct for learners is *"passive"* rather than "*active*". That is, they are part of the SGB in meetings where decisions about the code of conduct are made. However, their involvement during such deliberations is relatively minimal. They are, however, expected to effectively and efficiently implement such code of conduct for learners. According to learner representatives in this study, it is not an easy task to implement rules and regulations if one has not been part of their drafting process. They are unable to explain some of these rules when confronted with concerns from the learner body.

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Failure to explain rules and to stand for what one puts forth weakens their leadership and governance powers.

Furthermore, learner representatives in this study asserted that the code of conduct for learners in their schools are not effective because of the absurd rules and regulations on appearance. These learners perceive that there are more serious matters that affect teaching and learning than their appearance. To them, learner performance is the most important aspect to which schools must direct their attention. Their participation in the drafting process as they put it, may lead to more focused areas of concern. They also raised a concern about their non-participation in learner disciplinary hearings processes. It is their perception that their active participation in such processes can help them understand violations committed, raise awareness to the learner body as well as avoiding such violation themselves.

The next chapter, Chapter 5 provides and discusses the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings in this study.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings of this study as they were obtained through the following research question: "What is the understanding of the representative council of learners on the ==drafting and implementation== of the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools?" This question was of great assistance as it elicited the responses that addressed the purpose of the study: "to explore how representative council of learners perceive the code of conduct for learners in terms of fulfilling its mandate as stipulated in the South African legislation and educational policies".

In this chapter, I present the conclusions I made as I interpreted the data in Chapter 4. The conclusions are based on the representative council of learners' understanding of the code of conduct for learners, their perception about the ==drafting and implementation== of this policy in their schools, their role in these important tasks, the challenges they experience as they exercise their role as well as the strategies they suggest in the review process of the code of conduct for learners. Finally, I offer recommendations for further research on this phenomenon.

5.2. Answers to research questions

5.2.1 Code of conduct for learners as rules and regulations of the school

The representative council of learners that participated in this study acknowledged that their schools have codes of conduct for learners. It also emerged from their narratives that learners are represented in the governing bodies of their schools' SGBs, the body that drafts and adopts the code of conduct for learners. In terms of Section 20 of the SASA (1996), one of the functions of the SGB in which the RCL participating in this study serve is "to develop and adopt school policies including the code of conduct for learners in the school" (SASA, 1996). Section 8(1) of SASA

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(1996) goes further and states that "the adoption of the code of conduct for learners must be done after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school" (SASA, 1996). It is therefore not surprising that the RCL in this study was aware of the existence of such a policy in their respective schools.

From the participating RCL's point of view, the code of conduct for learners signifies the rules and regulations that govern the day-to-day conduct of learners at school. Their perception concurs with the definition given by the DoE (2001) that the code of conduct for learners governs learners' behaviour. Section 8(4) of SASA further provides that "all learners attending a school must abide by the code of conduct for learners of that school" (SASA, 1996). In their interpretation of the same legislation, Mestry and Khumalo define a code of conduct for learners as "a form of subordinate legislation that reflects the democratic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) by supporting the values of human dignity, equality and freedom" (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). By implication, the code of conduct applies to all learners while they are on and off the school premises as long as they are in school uniform. This, therefore, implies that almost all members of the RCL that participated in this study have experienced the governance of the code of conduct for learners in their schools in one way or the other. The following section discusses the areas where the members of the RCL in their capacity as the SGB members have experienced the code of conduct for learners.

5.2.2 The level and degree of learners' participation in policy drafting and implementation

The right of young people including children to participate in decisions that affect their lives in a democratic way is provided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2009). Article 29(d) of the UNCRC (2009) provides that "education should be geared towards the preparation of the child". In other words, "democratic decision-making processes within schools are where learners learn what their rights and duties are" (Nthontho, 2017). In response, Section 8(1) of the SASA (1996) provides that "a code of conduct for learners is a consensus document and its drafting process should be characterised by the involvement of parents, learners, educators and non-educators at the secondary school" (SASA,

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1996). As a result, the RCL in this study did not only participate as members of the SGB but also as implementers of the code of conduct for learners in the schools.

5.2.3. Learners as SGB members: Meaning of democratic participation

The participation of learners in school councils is identified as of the domains through which schools can fulfil the mandate of democratic participation at school level (Whitty & Wisby; 2007). As they stated, they witnessed their participation in the governance of their schools. For them, the fact that they are members of the RCL, the body that represents learners in the SGB, signifies democratic participation and a huge change in the history of the South African education.

In other words, their sittings in meetings where the code of conduct for learners are drafted is an even greater step into democracy. That is, they witnessed several deliberations that produced what they understood to be the rules and regulations that govern their behaviour while at school and beyond. To these learners, their presence in such governance structures alone is an indication that the South African education sector is in a transforming mode. Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie (2006, p. 127) once said, "provision of rights and freedoms such as 'the rights of the child' and 'freedom of expression' in laws and policies that give visibility to a group that society has silenced for centuries, only on the basis of age as a discriminatory classification, marks a 'step forward' ".

Regardless of this "step forward", scholars such as Klemenčič argue that "the presence of learner representatives in governance structures does not guarantee meaningful learner participation because in some cases, this presence may inhibit their freedom of expression" (Klemenčič, 2014). Mncube and Harber concur that "learners' legitimate presence in institutional governance structures is seen as window-dressing or tokenistic" (Mncube & Harber, 2014). The RCLs who participated in this study view this scenario differently. In their eyes, democracy is more of a process than an event. That is, it starts somewhere, and its signs manifest as the journey of transformation continues. Their participation in the decision-making body is the beginning of the envisaged democracy in South Africa.

5.2.4 Learners as implementers of policy: Meaning of democratic participation

Policy implementation, according to the RCL in this study, refers to putting into action the content of the policy. In other words, the decisions that are made in their presence are then put to play. In terms of the DoE (2001), "learner representatives are duty-bound to draft the constitution of the council and submit it for approval. They are there to assist in the maintenance of order in the school in accordance with the approved school policies. As the custodians of the learner body, they are expected to set a positive example of discipline, loyalty, respect, punctuality, academic thoroughness, morality, cooperation and active participation in institutional activities. In this process, they play the liaison role by promoting good relations among the learners themselves, between the learners and staff, between the school and the community and between the community and parents." Finally, learner representatives "must promote responsibility and leadership to support the educational programme of the school; and to maintain and refine the traditions of the school" (DoE, 2001, pp. 16–17). In principle, the DoE extends governance powers to the RCL in schools.

In practice, the RCLs in this study acknowledges that their schools welcome their involvement in the running of the school in their designated roles, including the management of detention, keeping learners informed of developments in the school, motivating learners and taking learners grievances to management. Their degree and level of participation are affirmed by Jeruto and Kipbop (2011); namely, that they take part in issues about fundraising, student discipline, and sports activities.

In further concurring on the learners' perceptions and the views of above scholars, Hart (1992) and Sinclair (2004) agree that learners' participation in the decision-making processes of their schools takes place in levels and degrees. This could be in all school matters or specific areas. Sinclair (2004) brings in the issue of levels to which learners' participation can be categorised. That is, whether they participate in decisions that affect them as individuals or as a group. In what he terms "Ladder of Participation", Hart (1992) categorises participation of learners in "Rungs". "Rung 4" of Hart's ladder of participation, namely "Learner Assigned" best describes the

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experiences of learner representatives in this study. This means that learner representatives' involvement is assigned by adult members of the SGB, who assign specific roles, determine how, and teach them why they are being involved (Hart, 1992). In this way, adult members of the SGB morally and socially nurture these learners while they gradually "create pedagogical conditions that promote their critical and reflective thinking" (Duffy & Elwood, 2013).

Nevertheless, scholars like Mncube (2012) and Obiero (2012) argue that this kind of learner participation in educational matters that affect them is tokenistic. According to Obiero "it is especially in the area of the curriculum that learners' inputs are severely restricted, with the majority of the school management arguing that learners lack curriculum expertise and should, only observe deliberations on curriculum issues" (Obiero, 2012).

Grounded in the above discussions, I conclude that the RCLs in this study perceive themselves as a bridge between learners and the SGB, school management and educators. Although their participation in the SGB is coupled with challenges, there were also benefits. These include nurturing their leadership skills, better relations between learners and management and adult members gaining insight into needs as learners. Challenges that the RCLs who participated in this study were confronted by, are then discussed in the next section.

5.2.5 Challenges experienced by learner representatives in fulfilling their role

Regardless of the stipulated responsibilities of the RCL in several laws, some participants in this study do not get a fair share of their participation in the implementation of the code of conduct for learners at their schools. According to them, the misrecognition of their full participation manifested in several instances. These include (a) limitations in terms of age and (b) disapproval by their educators and the learner body. Detailed discussions follow in the next sessions.

5.2.5.1. Limitations in terms of age

Learner participation in decisions that affect them is recent and urgent (Nthontho, 2017). However, learner representatives in this study perceive that the adult

members of the SGBs in their schools keep them at arm's length (Duma, 2014). They perceive that they are usually not afforded full participation when decisions are made by the SGB. For instance, they are not allowed to attend learner disciplinary hearings. Their role in maintaining discipline in the school is limited to school grounds, hallways and classrooms. According to them, they want to contribute in all matters affecting learners but find that they are not taken seriously by adult members. What appears to be a concern to them is the fact that their opinions are rejected without any explanation.

Mabasa and Themane (2002) affirm that some members of the SGBs find it difficult to accept learners ("their kids") as members of the SGB. Matsepe expands that because adult members view learner representatives to be "young with limited potential to make decisions without parental consent" (Matsape, 2014), they find it difficult to consider their opinions easily. According to Nthontho, "age tends to be the main yardstick the society uses to ascertain who should and who should not enter into decision-making forums" (Nthontho, 2017). That is to say; age is interlaced with wisdom. As a result, learner representatives are said to be structurally visible but practically silent when it comes to actual decision-making processes (Mncube 2012). Mncube and Harber (2013) refer to learner representatives' presence in such sittings as tokenism. This in a way, defeats the purpose of democracy and violates the learner representatives' right to freedom of expression in matters that affect them (RSA, 1996, SASA, 1996; UNCRC, 2010). In other words, decisions that are made in such sittings where other members were excluded from discussions would, therefore, be regarded as unconstitutional.

It is, however, important to mention that there are schools whose adult SGB members enable learner representatives to participate in the implementation of the code of conduct for learners. For instance, these adult members would allow learner representatives' inputs when reviewing the code of conduct for learners. By so doing, these schools treat learner representatives as partners in change rather than recognising them as mere targets of change efforts and services (Fletcher, 2005). Mthethwa-Sommers adds that it is in SGB forums where "learner representatives bring their experiences and opinions to be heard and contrasted with knowledge

forms presented in the decision making processes where adult stakeholders and learners engage in exchanging knowledge" (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). With the understanding that learner representatives can only learn how democracy works by participating in school decision-making bodies (Luescher-Mamashela 2013), I agree with Luescher-Mamashela that through democratic participation in the SGB, they can "develop their conceptual understanding of democracy. For them to learn that democracy works, they need to experience it by influencing events and their living conditions through participation" (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). They can only get such an opportunity in school.

5.2.5.2 Disapproval by teachers and other learners

Teachers and learners are the worst affected by the indiscipline problems in schools (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). However, learner representatives who participated in this study perceive that teachers and learners are playing a role in defeating democracy and attempting to prevail in schools. According to them, teachers and the same learners whom they represent in the SGB make it difficult for learner representatives in this study to fulfil their mandate of curbing indiscipline in their schools by publicly undermining them. In other words, their authority on matters pertaining to learner discipline is not recognised by the teachers and other learners.

It is the expectation of the learner representatives in this study that teachers would better understand their legitimate position as the SGB members and give them support in their endeavour to curb indiscipline in schools. However, according to them, the same teachers unfairly implement the code of conduct for learners. In so doing, teachers weaken the learner representatives' leadership because there are learners who as a result, disregard the code of conduct. Teachers' behaviour in this regard could be age-related, where they cannot believe or comply with anything that comes from learner representatives (Mabasa & Themane, 2002; Matsepe, 2014). Similarly, they perceive that learners who voted for them in the SGB to present their views would want to see their mandate of protecting and promoting the right to learners' voice in matters that affect them being fulfilled. Nonetheless, they experience disapproval from these people.

The learner representatives in this study, on the other hand, agree that the learners undermine the code of conduct and suggest reasons for that. First, they perceive that teachers' disregard of the code of conduct for learners is influential in the way other learners react towards this policy. Secondly, according to them, the code of contact for learners contain absurd rules. For example, rules on topics such as hairstyles, tapered trousers (trousers that have been altered to be tight on the legs) and nose studs according to them, have nothing to do with learner performance. Thirdly, they perceive that the transgressions, which these rules prohibit do not contribute to the disruption of normal schooling, nor do they impact on the academic performance of learners. They further maintain that the enforcement of such rules contribute to the disruption of teaching and learning while teachers attend to these transgressions and learners spend time in the principal's office. Evident to their perceptions are cases such as those of Kempton Park High School, Pretoria High School for Girls, Sans Souci Girls High School and Lawson High School (Eyewitness News, 2017) where learners in these schools protested the prescriptive and restrictive ways the schools had to style their hair or to wear their uniforms.

Based on the preceding discussions, it becomes evident that although there are emerging signs of democracy in our schools, there is still a long way to go. Democracy is said to be a process rather than an event. It is important also to mention that although it was not the focus of this study, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion could not surface to be the limiting factors adults in the SGBs used to gauge participation of learner representatives in this study. This, therefore, demonstrates another level of transformation in the South African schools. The following section details what the learner representatives in this study perceive as strategies that can be employed by SGBs and school management in their endeavour to preserve their right to be heard and more importantly in the quest to curb indiscipline in schools.

5.3 Strategies for improvement from learner representatives' perspective

Learner representatives in this study yearn for active participation in matters that affect them and research evidence has shown the importance of learner participation in educational institutions. Their quest for participation is supported by some of the domains discovered by researchers such as decision making at school

(Mitra, 2009) and taking part in solving problems within school communities (Annette, 2009). It is within the context of these domains that the following strategies are suggested by the learners' representatives in this study.

5.3.1 Relaxation on rules regarding appearance

National legislation and policies (i.e. Constitution Act [108 of 1996], Schools Act, [84 of 1996], Children's Act [38 of 2005], as well as International Conventions and Protocols (African Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child, 2002; UNCRC, 1990, 2010), promulgate the provision of learners' right to freedom of expression in matters that affect them. In the same vein, I have earlier highlighted the clashes and court cases that played themselves out because of the restrictive and prescriptive rules and regulations on hairstyles, nose studs or tapered trousers. According to learner representatives in this study, learners are "disengaged as well as disaffected" (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2014), and this leads to apathy (Nthontho, 2017). According to the OECD, "disaffected students become bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence at schools; they withdraw from learning opportunities or even become rebellious towards teachers and classmates" (OECD, 2003).

Learner representatives in this study suggest that schools should, rather than coming up with specific rules that would limit, control and help to monitor the overall use of hairstyles, nose studs and tapered trousers by learners in schools; engage with them when it comes to how learners must wear their hair, school clothes and their general appearance. According to the learner representatives, rules and regulations that control and monitor their right to freedom of expression will then be supported. They further stated that learners want to express their individuality, culture, traditions in the manner in which they style their hair or wear the uniform. Coupled to the relaxation of rules and regulations is the missing voice of learners in learning institutions as they are discussed below.

5.3.2 Voice of learners: the missing link

Although there are provisions for rights and freedoms such as "the rights of the child" and "freedom of expression" in laws and policies (Vandenbroeck & Bouverne-

De Bie, 2006), suppression of the voice of learners on issues that affect them continues in learning institutions (Duze, 2011) according to the learner representatives. The suppression of the learner's voice is due to "the power balance and responsibilities between adults and young people within the school" (Meger & Novak, 2012). Learner representatives in this study want their views to be heard and respected. They also want to be able to speak their mind during SGB meetings without being intimidated and undermined by the adult members of the SGB. Furthermore, they stated that all they want to do is to fulfil their mandate of representing the learner masses in the SGB and helping to curb the scourge of indiscipline in schools. The following are recommendations and conclusions reached based on research data obtained from learner representatives in this study.

5.4. Recommendations and conclusions.

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the learner representatives' perceptions on the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in secondary schools. In Chapter 4, I detailed the views by learner representatives on the topic at hand, and in this chapter, their arguments were compared to the available literature on the topic under discussion. The following are recommendations based on what the learner representatives are saying and what the literature supports.

5.4.1. Code of conduct for learners

It cannot be stressed enough that no school must operate without a comprehensive code of conduct (SASA, 1996), drafted and adopted by the schools' SGBs with the involvement of learner representatives. The code of conduct must further be constructed in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and applicable Provincial Laws and relevant International Protocols. However, the code of conduct must adhere to the school's context, meaning that no two schools are the same. The school code of conduct for learners should not be an instrument of oppression of learners. This means that for instance, the school must respect the rights of learners like their freedom of expression through the learner code of conduct. The learner code of conduct must protect and nurture learners.

As with the earlier mentioned cases, the MECs instructed the schools to rework their codes of conduct with the involvement of learners.

5.4.2 Drafting and implementation of the code of conduct: Learner representatives' role

The adult members should not view learner representatives as a threat to their authority in the running of SGB affairs. Rather, adult SGB members should embrace learner representatives as partners in the common good of good governance and promotion of teaching and learning in schools. As a united front, the SGB in partnership with learners can help keep indiscipline levels down in schools. The root cause, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, is the drafting of the code of conduct for learners excluding the input of learner representatives in particular and learners in general. The limitation of learner representatives' members of the SGB and their undermining by the adult members of the SGB only serves to exacerbate the worsening indiscipline in schools. Furthermore, the SGB, teachers and management must utilise the extra help from learner representatives in the fight against indiscipline in schools. In closing on the learner representatives' role in the SGB, they are not just children but young leaders who can contribute positively if channelled in the right direction by adults so the schools must utilise the set of skills they possess.

5.4.3. Keeping order in schools: effectiveness of learner code of conduct

The SGBs must remove all the unnecessary rules about the appearance of learners from their learner codes of conduct. They only serve to waste learners and teachers' time when being enforced. Rules on the appearance of learners must be modelled in a way that does not infringe on the rights of learners. However, there should be control and limitation as to how learners should dress for school. Learner representatives in this study welcome informed control of their freedom of expression because even the Constitution (RSA, 1996) has limitations to the rights of South African citizens.

The learner code of conduct should be applied consistently and fairly to all learners in the school. Teachers undermining learner representatives while they are

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enforcing the code of conduct only serves to demonstrate to learners that these representatives have no authority in the school. In the same vein, learner representatives must be allowed in the disciplinary hearings of learners to give the adult members of the SGB insights into why learners do what they do.

5.5 Recommendations for further research.

In this research study, the learner code of conduct could be influenced by school conditions, school atmosphere, the organisation of the school and the school management itself. I recommend that further research should be done as to how these factors influence the type of learner code of conduct found in school. With the turmoil surrounding the way learners protest about rules on appearance in their schools' codes of conduct, research should be done on how the learner population view the codes of conduct in their schools. However, not all schools experience upheavals about the code of conduct for learners and indiscipline. Further research should be undertaken to find out why these schools do not experience the scourge of indiscipline, as documented in many research studies.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Block E1 Thokoza Mews

Extension 2

Thokoza

1426

13 February 2018

The Director of Gauteng Education.

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at Gauteng schools

I am a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education. I wish to apply for permission to conduct the study titled: "**Representative council of learners' perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct**" at Gauteng schools. The purpose of the study is to explore how learner representatives are involved in the formulation and implementation of the learner code of conduct by the SGB. Once you understand what the study is about, you can decide if you want to grant such permission or not. If you agree, you will be requested to release a signed letter permitting the study to take place.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured interviews, where one learner representative from your school will be requested to spend some time-sharing their understanding and experiences of their involvement with regard to their involvement in the formulation and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in their school.

- My supervisor will accompany me as the researcher in the whole data collection process.

- If we are granted permission, we intend to be at the school for two sessions after school to avoid disruption of teaching and learning (the first two days will be for research activities, which will take 45 to 60 minutes and one day for member checking 30 minutes).

- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, we will keep learners' names, the name of the school and contribution to the study private except if it is the learner's wish to be named.

- We do not think anything bad or risky will happen to learners participating in this study. If problems do arise, they can speak to us and we will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about learners' safety, we are required to inform the appropriate institution.

- There will be no benefits that will be received by participants in this study. However, we hope that participation in this study will make learners feel good about themselves, appreciate and tolerate their Grade mates' understanding and experiences of social justice and learn more about socially just and/or unjust practices in their school, although, we cannot guarantee this.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, you can contact Dr. Nthontho on 012 420 2499.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Lesiba John Radebe   Student number: 10674633

Telephone: 0797320541   Email:radebelesiba4@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho   **Telephone**: 012 420 2499

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE B: APPROVAL LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

	8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	12 June 2018
Validity of Research Approval:	05 February 2018 – 28 September 2018
	2018/113
Name of Researcher:	Radebe LJ
Address of Researcher:	Block E1 Thokoza Mews
	Extention 2
	Thokoza, 1426
Telephone Number:	011 828 9014 079 732 0541
Email address:	radebelesiba@gmail.com
Research Topic:	The perceptions of learner governors of their involvement in the drafting and implementation of the learner code of conduct.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	Six Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni North, Ekurhuleni South.

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

12/06/2018

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

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1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 12|06|2018

ANNEXURE C: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EM 18/06/01**
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd
	Representative council of learners perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learners code of conduct
INVESTIGATOR	Mr Lesiba Radebe
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	23 August 2018
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	29 July 2019

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

CC

Ms Bronwynne Swarts
Dr Maitumeleng Nthontho

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

ANNEXURE D: LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Block E1 Thokoza Mews
Extension 2
Thokoza
1426
13 February 2018

The Chairperson of the School Governing Body

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at your school

I am a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education. I wish to apply for permission to conduct the study titled: "**Representative council of learners' perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct"** at your school. The purpose of the study is to explore how learner representatives are involved in the formulation and implementation of the learner code of conduct by the SGB. Once you understand what the study is about, you can decide if you want to grant such permission or not. If you agree, you will be requested to release a signed letter permitting the study to take place.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured interviews, where one learner representative from your school will be requested to spend some

time-sharing their understanding and experiences of their involvement with regard to their involvement in the formulation and implementation of the code of conduct for learners in their school.

- My supervisor will accompany me as the researcher in the whole data collection process.

- If we are granted permission, we intend to be at the school for two sessions after school to avoid disruption of teaching and learning (the first two days will be for research activities, which will take 45 to 60 minutes and one day for member checking 30 minutes).

- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, we will keep learners' names, the name of the school and contribution to the study private except if it is the learner's wish to be named.

- We do not think anything bad or risky will happen to learners participating in this study. If problems do arise, they can speak to us and we will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about learners' safety, we are required to inform the appropriate institution.

- There will be no benefits that will be received by participants in this study. However, we hope that participation in this study will make learners feel good about themselves, appreciate and tolerate their Grade mates' understanding and experiences of social justice and learn more about socially just and/or unjust practices in their school, although, we cannot guarantee this.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, you can contact Dr. Nthontho on 012 420 2499.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Lesiba John Radebe   Student number: 10674633
Telephone: 0797320541   Email:radebelesiba4@gmail.com
Supervisor: Dr Nthontho   **Telephone**: 012 420 2499
Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE E: PERMISSIONS FROM SCHOOLS

GERMISTON HIGH SCHOOL

Telephone (011) 827-8860/1
Accounts: (011) 827-2181
Facsimile: (011) 827-8317
email: ghs@megadial.com
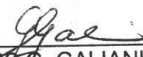
P.O. Box 95
GERMISTON
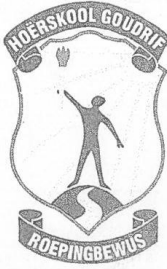1400

30 August 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We hereby give Mr L.J. Radebe permission to do research at Germiston High School.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

MRS G. GALIANI
Deputy Principal

HOËRSKOOL GOUDRIF

Afleweringsadres:
KRAFTWEG
MARLANDS
GERMISTON

Tel: 011 822 3405/6/7
Faks: 011 822 3634/
086 684 0085
E-pos: goudrif@iafrica.com
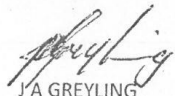
Posadres:
POSBUS 6007
Pk. HOMESTEAD
1412

24 August 2018

To who it may concern

RE: PERMISSION FOR AN INTERVIEW

I hereby grant Lesiba Radebe permission to interview one of our RCL members.

Regards

J A GREYLING
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

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Hoof / Principal: Mnr. / Mr. A. Grobler

Privaatsak / Private Bag X1032
Germiston 1400
Tel: 011 024 1003/4/5/6
Fax: 086 558 2257
E-mail: linda@primrosehs.org

2018.08.27

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The undersigned hereby give permission to Mr. L.J. Radebe to do research at
Primrose High School.

A. GROBLER
PRINCIPAL

SIZWE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

Hattingh and Kennis Street	P.O Box 54
Elandsfontein	Isando
1406	1600
Mr M.P CELE – PRINCIPAL	**Email:sizweschool@gmail.com**
Tel: (011) 392- 5597	**Fax: (011) 392-5288**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

I, Cele M.P, the principal of the above mentioned school hereby confirm that ___Mr L J Radebe___ was given permission to conduct interview with one of our learners, Tebogo Mapea, on Thursday 23rd August 2018.

Yours Faithfully

Cele M.P- Principal

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VRYBURGER

HOËRSKOOL

TELEPHONE 011 828 9047
FAX: 011 822 1114
E-MAIL: vryburger@absamail.co.za

HIGH SCHOOL

CHURCHILL AVENUE
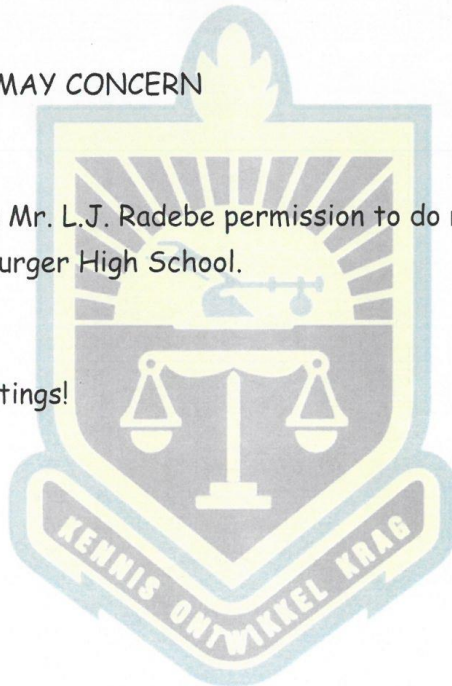P. O. BOX 2003
PRIMROSE 1416

Mr. C.A. OLIVIER

2018-08-27

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We hereby give Mr. L.J. Radebe permission to do research at
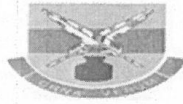Hoërskool Vryburger High School.

Vryburger greetings!

C.A. OLIVIER

PRINCIPAL

90

Bedfordview High School

1 Healey Road, Bedfordview, 2008   bedfordviewhigh@webmail.co.za   (011) 616 5220

22 AUGUST 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter serves as a confirmation that Lesiba Radebe is given permission to conduct an interview with a SGB RCL learner at Bedfordview High School.
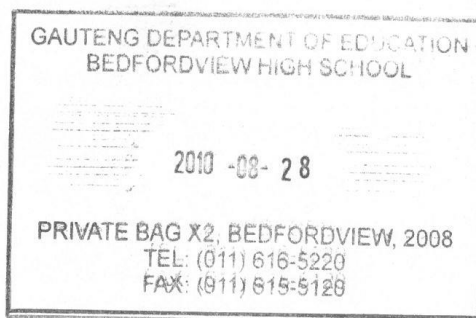
Date: 22 AUGUST 2018

Time: 11:00

Venue: BEDFORDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

Yours in Education

TSHISUDI MC
PRINCIPAL

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BEDFORDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

2010 -08- 2 8

PRIVATE BAG X2, BEDFORDVIEW, 2008
TEL: (011) 616-5220
FAX: (011) 615-5128

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Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Block E1 Thokoza Mews
Extension 2
Thokoza
1426
13 February 2018

Dear parent/ Guardian

A letter requesting that your child be part of the study

We (my supervisor and I) would like to invite your child to be part of the study titled: **"Representative council of learners' perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learner code of conduct".** The purpose of the study is to explore how learner representatives are involved by the SGB in the formulation and implementation of the code of conduct for learners. In this letter, we want to tell you about what may happen if you allow your child to participate in this project. You can then decide if you want to allow him/her to participate or not. If you agree, you will be asked to sign this consent form accepting our invitation to have your child participate in this study.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The process will take place at your child's secondary school in a form of semi-structured interview questions where he/she will be requested to spend some time with us sharing his/her understanding and experience of his/her involvement regarding the formulation and implementation of the code of conduct in the school.

- My supervisor will accompany me as the researcher in the whole data collection process.

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- If you agree that your child participates, we intend to meet with your child for at least two sessions after school to avoid disrupting teaching and learning (the first two days will be for research activities, which will take 45 to 60 minutes and one day for member checking 30 minutes).

- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, we will keep your child's name, the name of the school and contribution to the study private, except if it is your child's wish to be named. If you agree, we would like to audio tape the interviews for research purposes only.

- We do not think anything bad or risky will happen to your child while participating in this study. If problems do arise, he/she can speak to us and we will consult on the issue, and/or refer him/her to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about his/her safety, we are required to inform the appropriate institution.

- No benefits that will be received by your child for participation in this study. However, we hope that participation in this study will make your child feel good about himself/herself, appreciate and tolerate his/her Grade mates' understanding and experiences of social justice and learn more about socially just and/or unjust practices in his/her school, although, we cannot guarantee this.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, you can contact Dr Nthontho on 012 420 2499.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Lesiba John Radebe   Student number: 10674633

Telephone: 079 7320541:   Email: radebelesiba@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho   **Telephone**: 012 420 2499

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE G: Consent Form from Parents

Faculty of Education

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Informed consent

(a) Upon reading this study information, I permit my child to participate in the study.

Name: _____ _____ (Please print)

Signature_____ _____ Date 21/08/2018

(b) I give permission that you take audio recordings of my child for research purposes only.

Name: _____ _____ (Please print)

Signature___ _____ Date 21/08/2018

(c) I grant permission that my child can be named / I refuse permission for my child to be named.

Name: _____ (Please print)

Signature_____ Date_____

Note: Name and signature of the example have been deleted.

ANNEXURE H: INVITATION LETTER TO MINORS

Block E1 Thokoza Mews
Extension 2
Thokoza
1426
13 February 2018

Dear participant (Learner governor)

Invitation to participate in a study

You are invited to participate in a study titled: "**Representative council of learners'
perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct"**.
The purpose of the study is to explore how the SGB involves learner representatives
in the formulation and implementation of the learner code of conduct. In this letter, we
want to tell you about what may happen if you participate in this study. You can then
decide if you want to participate or not. If you agree, you will be asked to sign this
consent form accepting our invitation to be a participant in the study. You may refuse
to participate in the study or stop participating at any time without giving any reason.
The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The process will take place at your school in a form of semi-structured
  interviews where you will be asked to spend some time-sharing your
  understanding and experience of your involvement regarding the formulation
  and implementation of the learner code of conduct in the school.
- If you agree to participate in this study, we intend to meet with you for at least
  two sessions after school to avoid disruption of teaching and learning (the
  first two days will be for research activities, which will take forty-five to sixty
  minutes and one day for member checking 30 minutes).

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- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of your participation, we will keep your name and contribution to the study private, except if it is your wish to be named. If you agree, we would like to audio tape interviews for research purposes only.

- We do not think anything bad or risky will happen to you while participating in this study. If any problems do arise, you can speak to us and we will consult on the issue, and/or refer you to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about your safety, we are required to inform the appropriate institution.

- You will not receive any benefits for participating in this study. However, we hope that your participation in this study will make you feel good about yourself, appreciate and tolerate your Grade mates' understanding and experiences of social justice and learn more about socially just and/or unjust practices in your school, although, we cannot guarantee this.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, you can contact Dr Nthontho on 012 420 2499.

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Mr L Radebe   Student number: 10674633

Telephone (0797320541):   **Email**:radebelesiba@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho   **Telephone**: 012 420 2499

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FROM MINORS

Faculty of Education

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Informed Consent Letter

I.......... .... agree to participate in a study conducted by Mr L Radebe titled: **"The perceptions of learner governors in drafting and implementing the code of conduct for learners"**. I am aware that the research has got nothing to do with my school and my participation is voluntarily. I am also aware that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so and my decision will not be held against me.

I understand that my studies will not be disturbed and I grant the researcher permission to use some of my after school hours.

I understand that my identity and all that I will say in these research activities and tape-recorded interviews will remain anonymous and confidential.

I also understand that I will be expected to provide written or oral comments on the draft report on the interviews.

I grant permission that the research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and understand that these will be stored safely.

I have received contact details for the researcher and the supervisor should I need to contact them about matters related to this research.

Signed: _____ Date: 29/08/18

Note: Name and signature of the example have been deleted.

ANNEXURE J: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FROM MINORS

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

<u>Interview schedule</u>

Study title: Representative council of learners' perceptions on the drafting and implementation of learners' code of conduct

Study purpose: To explore how you are involved in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners.

Interview procedure: The interview will consist of six questions. The duration of the interview will be forty-five to sixty minutes.

Note: There are neither wrong nor right answers in your responses.

Remember:

1. Everything we share and discuss will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. We are interested in your personal understanding and experiences of how you are involved in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners as a learner governor.

   1. You are welcome to seek clarity should the need be.
   2. Everything we share and discuss will be audio recorded.
   3. You can stop participating at any time without giving any reason.

Are there any questions that you would like to ask for clarification before we start?

Interview questions

1. What do you understand to be the role of the code of conduct for learners?

2. How do you understand your role as an SGB member in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners?

3. To what extent are you involved as a learner governor in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners?

4. What challenges do you experience as the SGB learner governor in the drafting and implementation of the code of conduct for learners?

5. What are your views in the way issues of learner discipline are dealt with in the school?

6. What changes would you like to see made on the current code of conduct for learners?

Is there anything else you would like to share with us regarding your experiences as an SGB learner governor in the school?

Concluding remarks

Thank you for taking your time to share with us this important and valuable information.

We kindly request you to avail yourself for further clarity should we need it.

Should you have questions and/or additional information regarding this study/interview, do not hesitate to contact us.