

Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university

by

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Declaration of Originality

I, Pontsho Moepya (student number 11248875), hereby declare that this full dissertation, entitled: “*Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university*”, has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this university (University of Pretoria) or any other university; that this is my own work in design and execution and that all material from published sources contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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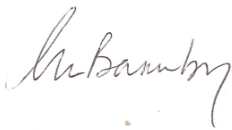
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To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, an English editor accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the master's dissertation titled "Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university" by Pontsho Moepya.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family members; Aunt Martha Moepya, Uncles Andries and William Moepya and my cousins, Takatso, Karabo, Kgomotso and Kediegile, in recognition of their outstanding support, care, love, and encouragement; to my daughter, Olitilwe Masutu Moepya and brother Bonolo Moepya, the joy of my life; to my best friends, Mmapheko Tau and Mbali Mtshali, for their continued support during this difficult journey; and also to the memory of my late grandmother, Elizabeth Mmatau Moepya, and my late mother, Hellen Mmamakwe Moepya – May their spirits live on.

For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.

(Aristotle)

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university. The study explored their participation in the decision-making of the university, the roles they play and the value they add both to the university and to themselves in the process of their engagement. The ladder of community participation was adopted as a conceptual framework that guided the understanding of how student leaders may contribute in the decision-making of the university and how the process may benefit them as well as the society. The study adopted a qualitative approach which was modelled on a case study in order to explore the experiences of student leaders during their participation in the governance of a transforming university. Ten university student leaders from two different student structures in the Faculty of Education were interviewed.

The findings revealed that the student leaders at the ground level participated to some extent with the process allowing them to “hear and be heard” although they lacked power to influence final decision-making. The study further found that student leaders at the faculty/departmental level have access to experiences and information that may improve the quality and accountability of decision-making. Based on the study findings the following recommendations were made, namely, the need for university management to consider the full participation of student leaders from faculties, departments and/or committees because they have the potential to assist with problem solving at the local level in respect of issues that have an immediate impact on students while offering an opportunity for building a sense of community between students and management.

Keywords: Student leaders; higher education, participation; involvement; transforming university; decision-making, university governance; university management and accountability

Abbreviations

DoE – Department of Education

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

DSA – Department of Student Affairs

HEC – Higher Education Council

HEF – Higher Education Forum

HEIs – Higher education institutions

HESA – Higher Education South Africa

NCHE – National Council on Higher Education

NPHE – National Plan for Higher Education

NSFAS – National Student Financial Aid Scheme

SASCO – South African Student Congress

SRCs – Student Representative Councils

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS

1. Introduction

In this Chapter I briefly present background of the study, cite the rationale for and purpose of the study and states the research questions. The chapter then briefly discusses the concept of student participation and also the research design and research methods used in the study. Finally, the chapter explains the significance of this study.

1.1 Background of the study

One of the aims of the democratic government in South Africa was to bring about transform in the post-apartheid era. Accordingly, through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the state aimed at fostering democratic values such as human dignity, equality and freedom and also redressing the inequalities of the past and social injustices (RSA, 1996a). South Africans, therefore, regard the Constitution as a significant building block in the process of overcoming the challenges caused by apartheid legacy in both societies and in educational institutions (DHET, 2013; Rwebangira, 2013). Participation in the decision-making processes of higher education was granted by the government through the White Paper 3 of 1997 and which resulted to the promulgation of *Act 101 of 1997* (DHET, 2013). This Act provides that '*co-operative governance should be practised in the governance of public higher education institutions*' (DHET, 1997). For example, Section 35 of the Higher Education (Act 101 of 1997) provides for the establishment of student representative councils (SRCs) at public higher education institutions in South Africa (DHET, 1997). This section further makes provision for the creation of structures and facilitates the processes that may enable differences within an educational institution to be negotiated through participative and transparent dialogues (DHET, 1997).

Research evidence has acknowledged that universities in South Africa are transforming from the autocratic, top-down model of governance to the democratised participation of all stakeholders' model (Hossian, 2015; Moreku, 2014; Obiero, 2012). The autocratic top-down model of governance was highly controlled by the apartheid government and students were not perceived as stakeholders. As a result, student involvement in the decision making of university governance was limited (Moreku, 2014). On the other hand, the new democratised model of governance has made it mandatory for students to legally be involved in the decision-making

structures of the universities through the representation of the SRCs (Student representative councils) (DHET, 1997). This suggests that student leaders have legally been given a platform to make their voices heard as they serve on the councils, senates and institutional forums of public HEIs (DHET 2013; Moreku, 2014). In a similar vein, Redaelli (2015) argues that “democracy requires active participation by the student”. Dundar (2013) also argues that it is not possible to attain genuine participation and democracy in higher education governance until students are actively involved in the decisions regarding education policies and the implementation of such policies, educational practices and educational processes, thereby suggesting that ‘student involvement in governance is key to the transformation of South African higher education institutions (Badat, 2010; Dundar, 2013; Luesher-Mamashela, 2010).

In support of student participation in university governance, Obiero (2012) adds that students’ participation may make significant contributions to the quality of decision-making in university governance. Obiero (2012) further argues that “for effective transformation of a universities governance, the voices of student leaders should be considered and encouraged”. In the 1960s and 1970s student leaders, contributed and participated in debates and discussions on the future of HEIs during the process of a transformation to a democratic South Africa through their different formations (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010; Moreku, 2014).

It is also important to highlight that the student political associations played an important role in the establishment of the involvement of students in public HEIs by advocating the need for student leaders ‘participation in the governance of these higher learning institutions (Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017). Through various political structures, such as the Pan Africanist Student Movement (PASMA), Azania Student Congress (AZASCO) and South African Student Congress (SASCO), student leadership was established to transform student representation in the governance of public HEIs (Moreku, 2014). Leaders of students communicated their concerns to university management, which was viewed as the agent of the apartheid system, through violent political strikes, protests and campaigns in public higher institutions. As result, the HE (Act 101 of 1997) which declared the SRCs in public HE institutions to be statutory bodies with a significant role to play in the governance of universities, was enacted (Malabela, 2017).

A similar situation arose in the majority of countries after they had attained independence. Students had to fight for their voice to be heard in issues that affected the running of their institutions through the student associations and movements in the 1960s and early 1970s in

Europe, North America and East Africa (Bergan, 2014). Students associations such as the Tanganyika African Welfare Society (TAWS) and the Student Union of Nairobi (SONU), both from East Africa, to speak out against the education and curricula that was racially inclined to favour the white populations (Klemenčič, 2012). The contributions of students to the transformations that have occurred in higher education institutions suggest the importance of student involvement in university decision-making processes. This study investigated how universities govern their day-to-day operational activities with the focus on the participation of student leaders in the decision-making processes. The study was grounded in the democratised participation of all the stakeholders in transformation which, in the context of this study, was limited to student participation in the governance of transforming universities (Badat, 2010; Smith, 2010). Studies that have explored student participation in decision-making have focused primarily on the students' views and needs in relation to their participation in the decision-making processes (Dundar, 2013) and the way in which students may contribute to good governance in public higher institutions (Sebola, 2017).

In addition, the extensive research that has been conducted into this phenomenon has adopted a quantitative approach, for example, surveys and questionnaires. For instance, a recent quantitative study by Luescher-Mamashela (2010) utilised surveys that indicated that the representation of students in decision-making at institutional level remains a matter of concern. This study investigated the nature of student involvement in the governance of HEIs in the post-apartheid era in South Africa using a qualitative approach to the nuances of the phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative studies on the subject have tended to focus primarily on administrators and management and have side-lined the students (Luesher-Mamashela, 2012). It is for these reasons that this study employed a qualitative research approach in order to contribute to the field of participative governance by including the voices of student leaders through the use of semi-structured interviews and the analysis of documents pertinent to the research topic (Maree, 2012).

In view of the important role played by the concept of transformation in the study, I deemed it important to provide an insight into various scholars' perception of the concept and, thus, I conceptualised the term within the university context and what it meant in this study:

1.2 Problem Statement

South African universities are struggling to address their own apartheid legacy and become public universities for all citizens within a democratic society (Suransky & Van der Merwe,

2014). Studies by Badat (2010); Dundar (2013) and Tamrat (2016) suggest that student participation in university governance is severely constrained with such constraint being found to be one of the key obstacles to the development of democracy and transformation (Obiero, 2012). Studies by Menon (2005), Obiero (2012), Moreku (2014), Sebola (2017) and Tamrat (2016) found that, despite the presence of student unions, students still have limited or no access to decision-making processes at the university governance level. These studies found that students are able to participate in less important decisions only, such as fund raising, sports and the like.

In addition, students are not afforded equal status with management and/or faculty members in the decision-making processes. The studies by Hossians (2015) and Moreku (2014) revealed that student representatives generally occupy subordinate positions in the governing body structures, they hold lower positions, their voices are not heard and their inputs are not considered in the organisational hierarchy of university governance. These factors tend to discourage students from taking part in university governance and may, in fact, lead to deeper frustrations than may, otherwise, have been the case (Luescher, 2005; Obiero, 2012).

A lack of recognition of the student leaders by the university administrators has been proved to contribute to frequent student revolts which result in unnecessary chaos at universities (Malabela, 2017). For example, the #fees must fall 2015/2016 protest occurred as the result of the dissatisfaction and frustration of students at their not being heard in the formal decision-making spaces (Macharia, 2015; Malabela, 2017; Maringira & Gukurume, 2017). In order to address this, recent studies in this respect have recommended the importance of increasing student participation in governance (Hossian, 2015). Existing literature (Badat, 2010; Luesher-Mamashela, 2010; Moreku, 2014; Obiero, 2012) shows that the governance process at universities should be shared among the stakeholders and that students, as the principal stakeholders, should be considered and encouraged to have a voice in the governance processes of the universities. It is for the reasons outlined above that this study aimed to investigate the way in which student leaders experience their participation in university governance.

1.3. What does transformation mean in this study?

Zide (2010) defines transformation as a “complete and fundamental change which radically affects the nature of something especially for the better”. According to Mbembe (2001), Zeleza (2005) and Mudimbe (2013), transformation in the university context has been taken to suggest ‘profound and radical change which makes a clean break down with the past and energises

people towards new structures and developments in the running of a university's day-to-day operations' (Moreku, 2014). These definitions describe '*transformation both as change as well as acknowledgment that the people with whom these changes are to be affected need certain new capabilities and also that the spaces, they occupy require proportionate transformation*' (Klemenčič, 2012).

In the context of this study, the concept of a transforming university implies a "change" from a previously divided Higher Education sector to a single and more democratic sector in which all the participants are urged to contribute in a participatory mode of democracy (DHET, 1997). The aim of HEIs in the post-apartheid period is suggested in the amended HE ACT of 1997. This Act outlines the changes to be made in order to transform learning institutions in South Africa (DHET, 1997). In addition, the Act outlines the legislative imperatives of participation of the various stakeholders during the transformation of HEIs (Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017; Tamrat, 2016).

1.4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the '*extent to which student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university*'. To do so, the study explored participation of student leaders and their experiences of participation in their respective university structures. The research objective was to explore student leaders' understanding of the call for the transformation of universities, to establish the way in which university policies enable student leaders to participate in the governance of a transforming university and, in particular, to explore the strategies universities may utilise to involve student leaders in the governance of a transforming university.

1.4. Research questions

1.4.1. Primary question

Based on the purpose and objectives of the study, the following primary research guided this study, namely, *how do student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming South African university?*

1.4.2. Sub-question

The key research question was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How do student leaders familiarise themselves with the policies of participation in the governance of a transforming university?
- How do student leaders understand their roles and contributions in relation to the governance of a transforming university?
- What strategies does the university have in place to involve student in the decision-making processes?
- What power do the student leaders have in the decision-making process of the university governance?

1.5. Student leader participation in governance of transforming universities

Worldwide, public higher learning institutions are said to be transforming from a governance system where the management “decides on everything” to a shared governance that requires the representation of various stakeholders, including students, in the decision-making processes at these institutions (Kamsteeg, 2016; Tamrat, 2018). It has been argued, both nationally and internationally, that student participation in university governance plays significant part of the transformation of the higher institution space and society at large (Klemenčič, 2012; Luesher-Mamashela, 2013; Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017; Tamrat, 2016)

However, the universities’ conceptions of transformation principles vary, with this usually determining the type of student participation that may be encouraged within their respective governance systems (Tamrat, 2016). For example, those who consider universities as “sites of democratic citizenship” and platforms for developing the individual student argue in favour of encouraging student participation in the decision-making process while those who discourage student participation usually argue about a lack of sufficient knowledge on the part of the students to participate in governance of a university (Klemenčič, 2012; Tamrat, 2016).

The concept clarification below explored the prevailing international and national trends regarding the ‘participation of student leaders in the governance of transforming universities’. In so doing, the explored literature provided an overview of what is meant by the concepts of student participation and student leaders in governance of transforming university. It also discussed how literature defines the concept of governance, in general, and governance in the university context. The historical governance of higher education institutions in South Africa was also reviewed, thus enabling the exploration of various versions of the concept of transformation; transforming universities as well as how local and international scholars define this concept. Finally, the concept clarification provides an understanding of transformation and

how such an understanding may inform their participation in the governance of a transforming university.

1.6. CLARIFICATION OF STUDY CONCEPTS

As stated from the above, it was important for this study to clarify the following concepts, which I frequently utilised throughout this research.

1.6.1. Student participation

The concept “participation” has various meanings (Carpentier, 2012; Barnes et al., 2018). However, it is important to highlight that the most common definitions of participation is associated with action, ‘taking part in something’ (Meenu, 2015; Barnes et al., 2018). This study focuses on student participation in respect of the way in which student leaders “take part” in the governance of a transforming university. Given the definitions of the concept of participation of the ‘ability to take active part in something, student participation is, therefore, defined at the most basic level as the students formal ability to express their views and influence decisions made in the context of the governance of a university (Kouba, 2017).

1.6.2. Student leaders

In this study student leaders are ‘students’ who are democratically elected by the student body to form a structure that represents the views of the students. The students’ representation became a legislated governance structure in all South African universities (while previously it had only been formally recognised in certain university private acts and statutes, and in the Technikons Act 125 of 1993) (Luescher et al., 2020). In this study, student leaders in a “faculty structure” representing a faculty student body to that ensures their interests are communicated appropriately within the decision-making structures (Hossian, 2015; Sebola, 2017).

1.6.3. University governance

The South African universities are regulated and governed by the Higher Education (HE Act 101 of 1997) which requires that HEIs become democratic structures by ensuring that all the participants involved are represented in the decision-making platforms (DHET, 1997). For example, Section 35 provides “for the establishment of student representative councils (SRCs) at public higher education institutions HEIs” (DHET, 1997). This section further creates structures and facilitates the processes that may enable differences within the institutions to be negotiated through participative and transparent dialogues (DHET, 1997). In this study, the university governance structure is comprised of a council, senate, institutional forum, the SRCs

that represents the student body and the faculty student leaders who represent the faculty (DHET, 1997).

1.6.4. Transforming South African universities

In the context of this study, the concept of a transforming university implies a “change” from a previously divided Higher Education sector to a single and more democratic sector in which all the participants are urged to contribute in a participatory mode of democracy (DHET, 1997). The aim of HEIs in the post-apartheid period is suggested in the amended (HE Act of 1997). This Act outlines the changes to be made in order to transform learning institutions in South Africa (DHET, 1997). Furthermore, the transformation of HEIs is said to require increased and broadened participation (White Paper 3 (Act 101 of 1997). The participation of student leaders in university governance structures legitimises the decision-making in public HEIs and it contributes to the progress of ‘change’ (Tamrat, 2016).

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were four delimitations for this study; the sample size, geographical location, the research design and approach.

The study sampled population of ten (10) student leaders in one faculty. These views could have been triangulated by students in other faculties of the same university as well as the SRCs; the student council that represent the whole student body. Therefore the results cannot be generalised to the greater population.

The study focused on student leaders’ nature and extent of participation using qualitative strategies and instruments, while mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative could have given better representation of the study results and findings. The study was also conducted on a single case; of a public transforming university in Gauteng meaning the results could have been different or similar to other university in Gauteng as well as other provinces. These exclusions are the gaps that can be utilised for future research. For the purpose of this research, given the nature of research; the case study approach allowed me to explore student participation using more than one lens to obtain a clearer understanding of what was really happening (Creswell, 2014).

1.7. Research design

This study was grounded on a qualitative research approach underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2014). The study involved a case study design utilising semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Yin, 2012). The university selected for the purposes of the study was a public university that is said to be a transforming institution (Creswell, 2014). Ten university student leaders from two different university structures respectively and who represented the targeted population were purposefully selected to participate in the study (Maree, 2016). The qualitative research approach was utilised to gain an in-depth understanding and description of how student leaders perceive their participation in the governance of a transforming university (Maree, 2016). An analysis of documents pertinent to the study was also utilised to corroborate the data collected from semi-structured interviews (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The thematic approach was utilised to analyse the data which had been collected (Yin, 2012).

1.8. Significance of the study

The objective of this research was to examine ‘the experiences of student leaders who were participating in governance of a transforming university’. The findings of the study were significant in that they contributed to the existing body of knowledge on student participation and how best transforming universities may include students in partaking in the decisions making platforms.

The findings of the study showed that students comprise a significant body of a university and that, without them, the higher learning institutions may not effectively serve its purpose. It is through their participation in the governance of the university, that they are able to acquire new ways in which they may present issues affecting to the management of the university. In addition, the findings suggested that *‘increased student leaders’ participation in the decision-making processes in the university’s governance may help to reduce the conflicts between the management and the students of a university’* (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). The results also provided insights into more effective ways the universities may govern through student participation in the transforming universities in South Africa. The study findings concurred with the findings of Ashwin and McVitty (2015) regarding the fact that “student leaders’ participation enhances student learning and other desired outcomes as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education systems”. Accordingly, I am of the opinion that this study may be enlightening for the stakeholders in public higher education institutions, for example,

the management, and the department of higher education and policy makers. They may find the results beneficial in determining convincing matters that direct education policy and practice that may contribute to progress in transforming higher learning institutions.

1.9.Outline of chapters

This dissertation is organised as follows into 4 chapters:

Chapter 1: Orientation to the Study

This chapter comprises an introduction to the study by demonstrating an orientation to the topic of the study, the problem/challenge, and rationale of the study, purpose, aims and objectives, the significance of the study, then the research design, approach and method that was used in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 conceptualises participation, student participation and student leaders and then links these concepts to arguments about student leader's participation in the governance of a transforming university.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The Chapter 3 of this study outlines the research approach, paradigm, design and research methodology utilised in this study. The criteria followed in the selection of the participants and the strategies employed for the data generation and data analysis are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Research Findings and Discussion

The Chapter 4 of this study presents the research findings, an analysis of the findings and a discussion of how the findings relate to the relevant available literature.

Chapter Five: Research Conclusions and Recommendations

The Chapter 5 of this study presents a summary of the research findings, the conclusions drawn, and recommendations based on the research findings.

1.10. Conclusion

In this Chapter, I presented the background to the study, research problem, the rationale for the study and research questions. The extent to which student leaders participate in governance of

a transforming university and how they experienced their participation in the decision-making processes of their respective university governance. The concept of “student participation” was also discussed. The chapter also presented the research purpose, research objective and the significance of the study. The next chapter contains a review of relevant, available, national and international literature on both the participation of student leaders in decision makings of a transforming university in order to provide a contextual background to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented a mind map of the way in which I intended to conduct the study. This involved discussing issues such as the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions that underpinned the study. The research design and the research methods I planned to use to collect and analyse the requisite data were also briefly presented. These issues are discussed in more detail in chapter three. This section outlines a review of the relevant, available literature on the participation of student leaders in the governance of public, transforming universities. Firstly, I conceptualise participation, student participation and student leaders. I also link these concepts to argue in favour of student participation in the governance of a transforming university. Governance, management and leadership represent three separable, but overlapping, concepts and are the most important concepts in the process of democratic participation in decision making of a transforming university (De la Rey, 2015). These concepts are, therefore, unpacked with a view to highlighting their relatedness.

2.2. Student participation: Meaning in context

The concept of “participation” is interpreted differently in various fields of (Barnes et al., 2018). According to Carpentier (2012), participation is “grounded” in democratic theory because of its focus on the inclusion of people in political decision-making processes. Meenu (2015) argued that it is only within a democracy that people may be empowered to demand and shape better policies, express grievances and hold the government to account. In the context of governance, participation refers to the process whereby stakeholders influence and share control over policymaking, resource allocation and access to public goods and services (Claridge, 2004; Meenu, 2015). Within a community context participation refers the ways in which citizens exercise and influence and have direct control over decisions that affect them (Claridge, 2004). In the context of teaching and learning, participation is defined as students being active and engaged in the classroom (Bergmark & Westman, 2018).

It is clear from the above that the definitions of participation vary considerably although most of them do refer to one fundamental aspect, namely, the ability to actively take part in or share ideas about the issues that affect them (Barnes et al., 2018). Accordingly, this study focuses on

student participation in respect of the way in which student leaders “take part” in the governance of a transforming university.

Given the definitions of the concept of participation, student participation is, therefore, defined at the most basic level as the students’ formal ability to express their views and influence decisions made in the context of the governance of a university (Klemenčič, 2012; Kouba, 2017; Planas et al., 2013). Furthermore, the South African Act (101 of 1997) provides that the democratisation of universities should promote participation that ensures that all participants are contributing in the decision-making platforms (DHET, 1997), thus, ensuring that all stakeholders affected by the decisions have a say in making such decisions, either directly or through elected representatives (DHET, 1997; NCHE, 1997). This study, therefore, adopted Rousseau’s (2005) analysis of a participatory system that highlights the following two points, namely, participation in making decisions and the theories of representation in governance as a way of guaranteeing that all the participants involved are represented in the decision-making spaces higher learning, for example, universities (DHET, 1997; Rousseau; 2005; Bergmark & Westman, 2018).

Student leaders have legally been given a podium to participate in the decision-making process of their university (DHET, 1997). The student leaders are democratically voted by the students to form a structure that ensures that the students are represented and that their interests are communicated appropriately within the decision-making structures (Hossian, 2015; Klemenčič, 2012a; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010; Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017). I found Rousseau’s (2005) participatory system to relevant to the purposes of this study as he argued that the participatory process should be an educative process aimed at developing responsible individuals who are prepared to take their place in society at large (Kooimaan, 2003; Rousseau, 2005). Lizzio and Wilson (2009) concurred that there is educational benefit to be derived from student participation because individuals learn through participation and, in view of the fact that a university is a space for learning, participation in decision making should be considered fundamental. However, the literature revealed that students do not play a greater and more demanding role in the channels and structures for participation (Planas et al., 2011). Hence, this study sought to ‘*explore the experiences of student leaders serving in the decision-making structures and bodies of the university*’.

According to Bergmark & Westman (2018) student, student leader structures are usually well-organised bodies with the necessary skills to enable the students to channel their capability and

commitment toward improving university life for their fellow students. These bodies function as important communication mechanisms between the university and the students (Tamrat, 2016). Without such bodies, the university would not be aware of the students' views on educational change because no one would ever ask them (Kouba, 2017). Consequently, the student representatives have significant potential in relation to change at universities as the students, as the “guardians of the existing culture can be the final negotiators of any change” (Bergmark & Westman, 2018). Kouba (2017) has pointed out that students are perceived to lack the knowledge and skills required to participate in the university decision makings. Hence, a study by Hossain (2015) suggested the need for training that may equip student leaders with the necessary skills to enable them to make decisions that will not compromise the interests of the students whom they represent in the governance of the university.

2.3. Governance: Meaning in context

Another key word in this study is governance. Nanda (2006) defines governance both as the process of decision-making and the process whereby decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance is relevant to any institution, whether small or large and for profit or not and extending beyond local contexts all the way to global institutions that have an impact on people's lives (Ali, 2014). In all contexts of governance there are people/actors involved who, in most cases, are referred to as stakeholders (Kooiman, 2003). Furthermore, governance varies depending on the level or context, for example schools, cooperatives or universities. However, the participation of the various stakeholders is key to good governance (Nanda, 2006). Good governance involves the processes for making and implementing sound decisions (Ali, 2014; Kooiman, 2003). *‘It is not necessarily about making “correct” decisions but, instead, it is the best possible process for making decisions’* (Ali, 2014). This study focused on university governance and the participation of student leaders in the decision-making processes at a university.

Participation is a fundamental concept of governance. It is a concept that may be explained as engagement between stakeholders and, hence, the core of governance is not the leader but the interaction between the stakeholders involved (Obiero, 2012). These interactions are important conditions in respect of the possibility of participation as they emphasise dialogue, partnership and negotiation (Carpentier, 2012; Seemndze, 2013). In the governance of an institution, decision-making is a negotiating process which is guided by the principles of democracy (Kooiman, 2003). In other words, all the stakeholders involved have the right to hear and to be

heard. In the governance of a transforming university in South Africa, all the stakeholders are urged to partake in decision with a participatory mode of democracy, which then suggest that the students playing a fundamental role in the process (Hossian, 2015; Luesher-Mamashela, 2009, 2013; Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017).

Students' participation in governance is essential in making universities accountable, transparent, flexible and effective sites for knowledge, society and culture, thus ensuring that they are able to interact with growing demands of the modern and global world (Moreku, 2014; Tamrat, 2018). Recent studies in this respect have asserted that involving students in university governance is instrumental in the creation of improved trust and understanding within the university community (Cloete, 2011; Hossian, 2015; Luesher-Mamashela, 2013; Sebola, 2017). These studies further found that lack of student participation in the governance HEIs usually results student unrest. Tamrat (2016) points out that "student protest at South African universities over service delivery issues are becoming a regular occurrence in the South African landscape and most of the cases of such student unrest signal a lack of student participation in the formal decision-making processes". However, several studies have also pointed out that the major obstacle to participation in more democratic decision-making is to be found in the power relations between student leaders and management (Barnes et al., 2018; Leannie & Tachi, 2013; Moberg, 2016). Studies by Luesher-Mamashela (2013) and Obiero (2012) suggest that the practice of democratic participation in governance promotes peaceful co-existence within a university.

2.4. Student participation: Contestations and prospects

The issue of student participation in the decision-making spaces of higher education institutions has been debated on several continents, for example, Europe, American, Africa and Australia although there is still much to explore on the topic (Luesher-Mamashela, 2013). In Europe much has been written about the involvement of student leaders partaking in the governance of higher learning decisions platforms (Hossian, 2015; Luesher-Mamashela, 2013). In almost all European countries, the transformation of a university requires the participation of students in the internal governance structures (Kehm & Kretek, 2012). Scholars such as Bergan (2004), Persson (2014), May (2009) and Klemenčič (2012) have explored the participation of students in the governance of higher education institutions in Europe. Their findings suggest extremely low rates of student involvement or representation in HEIs.

A rough estimate of student participation across European countries suggests that student turnout in most cases is less than one third (Bergan, 2011; Kouba, 2017). This is perplexing especially in those countries that have established radically democratic structures and are open to student participation (Kouba, 2017). Moreover, the available literature suggests that student participation in the governance of higher learning remains minimal in the majority of countries (Boland, 2005; Luescher-Mamashela, 2011; Moreku, 2015; Parejo & Lorente, 2012; Persson, 2004; Sebola, 2017; Tamrat, 2016). However, the majority of studies highlight the significance for student participation in the decision-making platforms. For example, within the European context, it was affirmed at the Praha conference that students should participate in and influence the decisions made in the governance of higher learning spaces because of their contribution to the reform of the higher education in Europe as result of the 1968 protests in the streets (Bergan, 2003; Obiero, 2012).

The same phenomenon has also been witnessed in the history of Africa in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Swaziland, Lesotho, Uganda, Senegal, Ethiopia and South Africa (Akamolafe & Ibijola, 2011; Hossian, 2015; Kouba, 2017; Moreku, 2014; Obiero, 2012; Sebola, 2017). In Europe, students fought for the recognition of their participation in the decision making platforms of higher education institutions and, as a result, they have legally been given an opportunity to participate in such governance through the representation of the student body in the decision-making processes (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011). In Kenya, Obiero (2012) reported a student protest caused by registration issues at Kenyatta University in 2009 and which turned violent, resulting in the death of some students. There have been several student protests in Nigerian universities and resulting to the temporary closure of the universities and the death of several students (Fomunyan, 2017; Omonijo et al., 2014).

The most common cause of these protests was student dissatisfaction and their lack of involvement in matters affecting them. In 2011 a violent student strike broke out at Mbabane University, Swaziland where the students were protesting the closure of their university and threatening to derail the registrations (Fomunyan, 2017). In Limkokwing University in Lesotho the students protested over bad management and poor services (Fomunyan, 2017; Khama, 2010). However, this is not the case in the majority of universities worldwide where students continue to strike and protest over matters such as general disagreements with their public institutions management of governance issues with regard to high fees and poor living conditions in the residence (Gukurume, 2017; Macharia, 2015; Malabela, 2017; Yingi, 2017).

In the majority of cases the disagreement and conflicts are caused by a lack of participation with the students' voices not being heard in the formal decision-making forums (Tamrat, 2016).

Several universities in African countries have been shut down in the past as a result of student protest over high fees, allowances, slow internet, residences and poor services in HEIs (Fomunyam, 2017; Macharia, 2015; Malabela, 2017; Omonijo et al., 2014; Yingyi, 2017). These institutions include the University of Zambia, Copperbelt University in Zambia, University of Nairobi, University of Botswana, University of Dar es Salaam and several South African universities such as the University of Johannesburg, Tshwane University of Technology, University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University where the strikes became more violent (Bawa, 2016; Fomunyam, 2017; Mfula, 2016). Students have said that they had no choice but to protest for their grievances to be heard and matters to be resolved (Fomunyam, 2017; Khama, 2010; Omonijo et al., 2014). These conflicts and unrests indicate extreme dissatisfaction. However, if students were allowed their fair and equitable place in university governance; basically, being allowed to participate in the making of decision that affect them; the level of protests could have been eradicated or, at least, minimised (Fomunyam, 2017).

Obiero (2012) suggested that, in the interests of the transformation of the universities, all stakeholders represented in governance structures should be involved in the decision-making processes in order to negotiate issues with a shared, mutual understanding. This means that all university constituencies, such as the administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, faculty members and students, who interact in the everyday activities of the university should be heard at the same level in the structures where they are represented (Moreku; 2015; Obiero, 2012; Sebola, 2017). At the time of this study there were few studies attesting to the extent of the formal involvement of students in university governance by means of participation in key governing bodies such as council or senate (Fomunyam, 2017; Klemenčič, 2012; Miles, 2008; Moreku, 2014).

The available literature revealed that student participation in the governance of higher education institutions depends to a large extent on informal relationships such as protests rather than on postulated formal rules and measures (Klemenčič, 2012, 2014; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014). It has also been argued both nationally and internationally that student protest in order to express their voices and preferences. This may suggest that their participation in governance decision-making is lacking (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015). In the case of the Latin American culture that allowed students to partake in the decision making platforms of

higher learning institutions, the results included a climate of calmness and minimal interruptions at the universities (Luescher-Mamashela, 2011; Obiero, 2012). This implied that the increased participation of student leaders in the governance of HEIs and meaningful shared governance between them and the management of HEIs are important in transforming public universities (De la Rey, 2015; Moreku, 2015; Sebola, 2017).

The transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) into democratic establishments requires decisions that must reflect the opinions of a cross section of the staff and students if such decisions are to be acceptable to all (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). This means that shared governance remains a significant aspect of the process of transforming HEIs (Sebola, 2017). This assertion is supported by the literature which was reviewed which showed that “university governance is a teamwork and that the issue of institutional effectiveness should not be perceived as the problem of the Vice-Chancellor” (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). However, it is imperative that all the participants involved across the university board; have a role to play in the decision-making structures where they are represented (Moreku, 2014). Recent studies by Tamrat (2016); Fomunyam (2017) and Sebola (2017) illustrated that there is, indeed, a degree of consensus concerning strategies aimed at improving the level of participation by students in the shared governance of HEIs. Hence, the recommendations made in these studies suggested that student representation in the decision matters that affect them the most should be increased (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011).

Based on the rationale for students’ participation in university governance, studies have opined that *‘the level of student participation in university governance could be improved by allowing representatives of the students’ union government to serve as members of all university statutory committees, senate, council committees and management has to ensure that students’ contribution at meetings are taken into account in the final decision-making process’* (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). There are, however, different points of view which critique student participation in the governance of HEIs based on the issues such as student representatives who do not follow the policies and rules underpinning the democratic governance of student associations, who misuse their student roles; for personal or party-political interests, they then fail to meet student expectations due to inactivity and who feed student scepticism over the state of democracy within their student associations, university and country (Klemenčič, 2012; 2014; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014). It is, therefore, vital that students’ representatives who serve in the decision-making governance structures are trained, that they are aware of what it means to serve other students and that they play a

meaningful and effective role in the university governance. Planas et al. (2011, cited in Mafa, 2016) suggest several strategies which universities could explore to involve students in governance of the university, and they are provided below:

“First, universities should provide clear information about the rules and regulations of all boards and governing bodies involved in the functioning of the university and providing more and better information on the rights of students. Second, universities should cultivate a positive attitude at different organisational levels towards students’ proposals and establishing of trusting working relationships with student representatives. Third, considering the provision of spaces and times for student representatives to be able to inform and consult students. Fourth, universities should maintain and improve formal spaces for participation, and making the functioning and decision-making of bodies more transparent. Sixth and most importantly, universities should offer specific training for student representatives, since certain skills and attitudes are required for fulfilling the duty of representation”.

Researchers such as Persson (2004), Boland (2005), Bergan (2004), Akomolafe and Ibijole (2011) and Leuschner (2011) also suggest some of these strategies because their implementation does not involve financial implications. The study by Mafa (2016) suggests that communication and engagement with the students may enhance effective student participation in decision-making and, thus, help to minimise conflicts and protests. This study explored the extent to which student leaders participate in the governance of transforming universities in South Africa.

2.5. University governance in the South African context

The South African universities are regulated and governed by the Higher Education (HE Act 101 of 1997) which requires that HEIs become democratic structures by ensuring that all the participants involved are represented in the decision-making platforms (DHET, 1997). For example, Section 35 provides “for the establishment of student representative councils (SRCs) at public higher education institutions HEIs” (DHET, 1997). This section further creates structures and facilitates the processes that may enable differences within the institutions to be negotiated through participative and transparent dialogues (DHET, 1997). The governance structure in HEs in South Africa comprises a council, senate, institutional forum, the SRC that represents the student body and the faculty student leaders who represent the faculty (DHET, 2013). The SRCs are also represented in other structures such as the student services council where the students’ voices must be heard. However, it is important to highlight that the public

HE statutes all differ. These statutes determine how students are represented in statutory bodies (Moreku, 2014). This means that student participation in HEIs differs based on whether students are serving, not serving or are underrepresented (Leuscher, 2010). Although students have legally been given an opportunity in decision making spaces to make their voices heard (DHET, 1997), it is the responsibility of the university management to correctly interpret the policies and legislations to allow students to participate effectively in the decision-making processes (Moreku, 2014).

As guided by the ‘Higher Education Act (101 of 1997) and the White Paper 3; the governance of public higher institutions requires democratic values in order to create an enabling space that promotes effective student participation in the governance of these institutions’ (DHET, 1997, 2013; Moreku, 2015). The democratisation of public HEIs legalises the decisions of stakeholders within the governance structure and also ensures freedom of speech and participation (Fomunyan, 2017; Mbembe, 2015). In the process of transforming the governance of HEIs, a broadened participation of stakeholders; access to information, transparency, engagement, negotiations and partnerships are required (Moreku, 2014). Furthermore, according to the White Paper 3, which guides the programmes and processes of transforming HE in the post-apartheid era, it is essential that there is change in order to replace the apartheid system for a democratic order (DHET, 2013; Moreku, 2014). Bergan (2004) argued that higher education has a role in developing a democratic culture by encouraging students to be involved in the governance of HEs because, without this, it would not be possible both for democratic institutions to function and for democratic societies to exist.

Students are an important part of society and serving in the governance structures of public higher education institutions through SRCs exposes them to the democratic values they will encounter when they enter the job market (Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). Research conducted primarily in Europe and North America has found that “*education, in general, and higher education, in particular, plays an important role in the development of a democratic citizenry and democratically minded leaders*” (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015). Student political associations have played a significant role in fighting against the undemocratic governance in the history public higher learning institutions (Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017). Their involvement decision spaces and structures of South African governance of higher learning is a recognition of the role they play and continue to play in the democratic South Africa and in the process of transforming HEIs (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015).

The transformation of higher education “is part of the broader process of South Africa’s transition to a single, coordinated, higher education system that may successfully address the legacy of the past” (Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). In addition, the fact that students are given a voice on the decision-making platforms means that the values and practices of democracy are strengthened and the students trained to become responsible, democratic citizens (De la Rey, 2015; Klemenčič, 2011; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume, 2014). It is important that students partake in and influence the decision that affect them, in governance of public HEIs and, hence, the intention to conduct this study (Klemenčič, 2012).

The history of student participation in public, higher education in South Africa supports the need for and the importance of student involvement in the decision-making processes in the governance of higher education institutions. Researchers such as *Thobakgale (2001)*, *Mandew (2003)*, *Tabane et al (2003)* and, especially, *Luescher-Mamashela (2010, 2011, 2012)*, have documented the importance of student participation in the governance of HEIs. They have affirmed that the capacity for “student involvement in university governance has been shown to have a major impact on the success of the HE sector and also to enable it to play its expected role in the development of democracy and transformation”. De Boer and Stensaker (2007) also support the ‘participation of students in the governance of public HEIs’. They highlighted that the participation of student leaders in such governance has positive educational impacts on both the individual and the university (Luescher, 2008).

On the other hand, Klemenčič (2011) argues that *‘representation is necessary but not a sufficient condition for active and effective participation in institutional governance with this perhaps hindering the benefits to be derived from student leaders participating in university governance’*. As pointed out by Luescher (2008), people with vested interests may hinder such participation at different levels of the university. According to Akomolafe and Ibijola (2012), “the lack of a culture of openness and frequent dialogue on issues counters the participation principle”. Akomolafe and Ibijola (2012) added that, in such cases, ‘when decisions are made, those participating in the decision-making may feel marginalised and may not embrace the change they represent even when it is both beneficial and necessary’. As a result, the governance of external (public) universities remains a state-controlled system (Luescher, 2008; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013).

Eustace (1974) and Morrow (1998) in Luescher (2008) critique the importance of student representation on university committees. They believe that novice student leaders and, by

extension, junior members of the university community, are not able to contribute towards the governance of public HEIs (Luescher, 2008). The main reasons for this, according to them, include the fact that students do not have the experience required for formal participation in universities and, in addition, they contend that students' lack of understanding of governance will result in a significant waste of time for the universities (Luescher, 2008, Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). However, as Mafa (2016) points, it is a question of a lack of the correct information. In view of the fact that the students may not be aware of the extent to which they should be involved and the benefits accruing from their involvement in university governance, they may be ignorant of such organisational structures (Bergan, 2004; Planas et al., 2011).

Studies by Luescher (2005) and Akomolafe and Ibijola (2011) found that it would appear that the universities themselves have no proper structures to involve the students in university governance. Students who acknowledged such participation explained that they did so through their student representatives who would communicate their views to the authorities although it would seem that their voices and views are not taken into account when final decisions are made. The studies by Bergan (2004), Planas et al. (2011), Akomolafe and Ibijole (2011) and Luescher (2011) also suggested some of the strategies which may be used to involve students in decision-making at universities and further concluded that there is need for universities to revisit their policy on student involvement to ensure that information on the university structures that offer students opportunities for involvement in such decision-making reaches all students.

2.6. Transforming universities

A university is a place where education should be taking place. In general education may be seen as transformation, thus implying minds should be liberated in the process. In the higher learning context, it is essential that the minds of students are liberated if they are to change the world (Du Preez et al., 2016). As Paphitis and Kelland (2016) suggested, universities must become spaces for transformation rather than merely functioning as transformed spaces. According to De la Rey (2015), the transformation priority must be based on a transformative process whereby students come to properly understand social justice that will ensure that they go on to promote social justice within the broader society. The processes of change involved in a transforming university mentioned in this study refer and relate to the following definitions and concepts discussed below.

Zide (2010) defines transformation as a “complete and fundamental change which radically affects the nature of something especially for the better”. According to Mbembe (2001), Zeleza (2005), and Mudimbe (2013), “transformation has been taken to mean thoughtful and radical changes which bring about a complete disruption with the past and energise people in relation to the new structures and processes involved in running a university’s day-to-day operations”. The definitions presented above describe “transformation both as a concept of change and as recognition that the people by whom these changes are to be affected require certain new capabilities and that the spaces, they occupy require commensurate transformation” (Mudimbe, 2013). In South African universities the concept of change means a change from a previously divided HEIs sector to a single and more democratic sector in which all the stakeholders are urged to contribute in a participatory mode of democracy (Sebola, 2017). Transformation in higher education in South Africa includes changes issues such as epistemological change, discrimination and exclusion in terms of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and language, the Africanisation or decolonisation of the curricula; beliefs, attitudes, values and commitments of the whole system; power; diversity; and intellectual justice (Du Preez et al., 2016).

The intention of higher learning institutions in the post-apartheid period is postulated in the (*HE Act of 1997*), as amended (DHET, 1997). This Act outlines the changes to be made in order to transform education in South Africa (DHET, 1997). The Act frame worked the legislative requirements of the participation by the various stakeholders while transforming HEIs (Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017; Tamrat, 2018). The transformation of the HEIs in the country was encouraged by ‘the democratisation of South African society, which introduced public institutions to the values of fairness and justice and the redress of the undemocratic order of the past’ (DHET, 1997, 2013). Accordingly, the democratisation of the universities was viewed involving a transformation of the internal governance arrangements in keeping with the vision of university as a representative democracy (DHET, 1997). *Within such a representative democracy, the students, as stakeholders, have a right to participate in the governing of the university through the representation of the student leaders* (DHET, 1997, 2013). By virtue of serving in the democratic decision-making bodies in higher education institutions, students are afforded an opportunity to become good citizens and better future leaders than may otherwise have been the case (Bergan, 2004; Klemenčič, 2011; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010).

The transformation of HEIs is said to require increased and broadened participation (White Paper 3 of 1997). The participation of student leaders in university decision making bodies legitimises the decisions taken in governance of higher learning spaces and empowers student leaders to become responsible citizens for the good of the public (Klemenčič, 2012). Student leaders in university governance may act as a bridge between the university administration and the student body (DHET, 1997, 2013) with improved use of the communication modes available within the university enhancing student participation in the decision-making process (Moreku, 2014; Sebola, 2017; Tamrat, 2016). Klemenčič (2011) further adds that the majority of South African higher education institutions, especially the traditional and historic apartheid White universities, claim that they are working towards the transformation of student involvement/participation and the racial demographics of the academic staff although there appeared to little or no evidence to support this claim (Klemenčič, 2011; Tamrat, 2016).

It is clear from the literature presented above that the area of student participation in university has been extensively explored. However, I wish to highlight the fact the following: Firstly, that, in as much as this may be the case, very little, if any, research has reported on the way in which student leaders perceive their participation in the governance of a transforming university, secondly, although transformation has attracted the attention of researchers in recent times, it would appear that scholars have tended to focus on curriculum reforms and technology and pay little attention to the governance of higher learning institution and, thirdly, as the literature has highlighted, student participation in the decision-making at higher learning institutions is minimal and at time superficial and, thus. Their voices on their participation in university governance are silent. Accordingly, I anticipated that the findings of this study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the administration of HEIs.

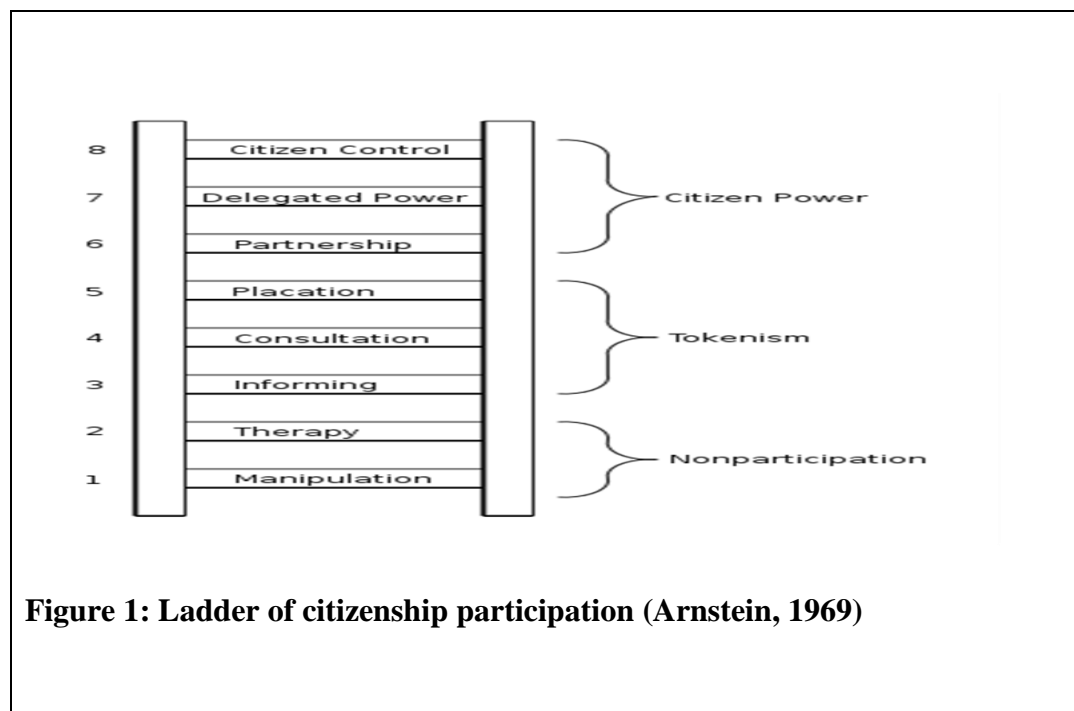
2.7. Conceptual framework

The term “concept framework” encompasses two words, ‘concepts’ and ‘framework’. It was therefore important for me to define “conceptual framework” by explaining both the concept and the framework. Concepts are defined by Irvin & Stansbury (2004) as abstract ideas that are fundamental to build a block of something; either a belief or theory. A framework is defined “a set of ideas that you use when you are forming your decisions and judgements (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This suggest that, conceptual frameworks come from theories; to make a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and provides lens to the study (Pitney, 2009).

A conceptual framework is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs research (Bowen, 2009b). The conceptual framework of this study is rooted on the ladder of citizenship participation;

2.7.1. Ladder of citizenship participation

The ladder citizens of participation provided the lens with the concept that guided this study. According to Irvin & Stansbury (2004), the important benefits are derived from increased community participation in government decision-making. This argument is in favour of the need to enhance citizen participation as it frequently focus on the benefits of the process itself. Nelson and Wright (1995), for example, emphasise the participation process as a transformative tool for social change (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). A ladder of citizenship participation, developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, represents different levels of involvement on the part of community with each step of the ladder demonstrating the level of participation by the community members – in the case of this study, university stakeholders (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).



2.7.2. Ladder of participation: Three levels of participation

The first two steps of the ladder of citizenship participation are deemed to be “non-participatory” while rungs three to five of the ladder are referred to as the “tokenism” level. Within the tokenism degree of participation, there are some effective tools and steps in relation to holistic citizen participation (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). However, constructive, singular acts

are not able to take the place of real community involvement (Arnstein, 1969). Finally, at rungs 6 to 8, some level of control and power is given to community members in the decision-making process. Accordingly, this study utilised the ladder of citizenship participation to “explore how student leaders participate in the governance of the transforming universities”. The steps in the ladder are to gauge the level at and the degree to which student leaders participate in the governance of the universities.

a) Non-participatory rung

The non-participation rung is level (1) therapy and (2) Manipulation; at this level student leaders *do not participate* in either planning or conducting programmes within the university. In this stage, management has all the power to control the student leaders’ decisions (Arnstein, 1969; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

b) Tokenism

In step 3 and 4 progress to the levels of "tokenism" that given the student leaders the opportunity to hear and to have a voice in the decision-making processes – (3) *informing* and (4) *consultation*. It is only when student leaders are offered the opportunity to voice their opinions to management as the full extent of participation, that they may, indeed, hear and be heard (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). However, under these conditions’ student leaders lack the power to ensure that their views will be taken into account by management (Arnstein, 1969). When participation is restricted to these levels, there is, in fact, no participation and no assurance of changing the status quo, thus implying that transformation of governance has a long way to go. Rung (5), *placation* is simply a higher level of tokenism because the ground rules that can be set by the management can allow student leaders to give advice, but the governing councils make all the decisions (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

c) Citizen control; participation

Further up the ladder are the levels that allow the participation of student leaders and increasing degrees of decision-making in the governance of the university (Arnstein, 1969). Student leaders may enter into a (6) *partnership* that enables them to negotiate and engage with the management in the decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). At the top step and level (7), *there is delegated power*, and then (8), citizen control, student leaders *are able to participate* as stakeholders in the university governance (Arnstein, 1969; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004).

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter discussed relevant, available literature on ‘student participation in the governance of decision-making higher learning spaces. The significance of the participation of student leaders in the decision-making platforms of transforming universities was also discussed. The chapter explained the conceptual framework which was used as the lens that guided this research. The following chapter, which is Chapter 3 discusses the research paradigm, research approach, research design and research methodology used in the study. The choice of the data collection and the data analysis procedures are justified as well as the measures utilised to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this research. Finally, the ethical principles observed in this research are presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 of the study mapped out the way in which this entire research study was conducted while chapter 2 presented the literature review that was conducted. This chapter discusses the research paradigm, research approach and research design used, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the research methodology which was selected for the purposes of the study. It also explains the sampling method used, sample size, sample site and the rationale for the selection of both the research site and the participants, followed by a discussion on the data collection methods and the data analysis methods utilised. The quality measures of conducting a research study were considered throughout this study and the ethical considerations which were upheld are also discussed.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to Sefotho (2015), researchers must determine the chosen research paradigm early in their research studies in order to give the research an “illuminated direction”. This study was located within interpretivist paradigm. I chose this research paradigm because I wanted to explore the subjective perceptions and experiences of student leaders in relation to their participation in the governance of a transforming university (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). In terms of my ontological and epistemological stance, I viewed both reality and knowledge as a “creation of subjective, social interaction” (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2016). I wanted to make sense of this phenomenon ‘from the informants’ point of view, rather than as an “expert” who passed judgement on the participants’ (Maree, 2016). I believe in multiple realities and, thus, I worked within an interpretivist paradigm which presupposes that social reality is not objectively determined but is, instead, socially constructed by human experiences and social contexts (ontology). Thus, interpretivist paradigm is best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of the various participants (epistemology) (Creswell, 2014).

In a qualitative interpretive study, “*the meaning which the researcher gave is from points of view of the participants studied*” (Yin, 2012). The knowledge I gained of student participation in the governance of transforming university was derived from the subjective experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014). I purposively utilised qualitative interpretative research

because the study was aimed at understanding a social phenomenon and building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words and reporting the detailed views of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on acquiring an understanding of a phenomenon within its natural setting and it is for this reason that I adopted interpretivism – I believe in multiple realities and, thus, I gave the participants the opportunity to share with me the various subjective meanings they accorded to the phenomenon under study in the processes of co-producing knowledge of the participation of student leaders in the governance of a transforming university.

The following key philosophical assumptions of interpretive research, as suggested by Creswell (2014), Maree (2016) and Yin (2012) underpinned this study:

- People construct meanings with the world around them. It is for this reason I made use of open-ended questions as this gave the participants an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences on the research questions (Yin,2012). I also used semi-structured interviews to guide the student leaders in sharing the views of the phenomenon under investigation (Maree,2016).
- Interpretivists assume that reality is socially constructed, and that people engage with the world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives (Yin,2012).This assumption provided me with an opportunity to interact with student leaders within the social context of the study and to attain the depth of the meaning they gave to the study (Creswell, 2014).
- In interpretative research understanding individual perceptions comes through interaction. I was a key instrument in the research as I did not distance myself from the participants (Maree,2016). On other words, there was considerable interaction between the student leaders and myself.
- Multiple realities in relation to the phenomenon under study emerged. These realities differed because of the various individual views, roles and responsibilities within their respective student leaders' structures.

I chose the interpretivist paradigm to guide this study because of the advantages of this paradigm. It enabled me to interact with student leaders through the interviews which I conducted in the institution where they performed their daily activities. According to Thanh & Thanh (2015), interpretivists view the world through a “series of individual eyes” and choose participants who “have their own interpretations of reality” to “encompass the worldview”. In

seeking answers to the research questions, I utilised the experiences and views of student leaders in order to construct and interpret understand and find meaning in the data which had been collected. An extremely significant aspect of this paradigm is that the data generated through interpretivism is related with high level of validity because it tends to be honest and trustworthy (Seidman, 2006 Thanh & Thanh, 2015). By adopting interpretivism, I was able to use twofold hermeneutics, namely, a “two-way” relationship which involves the researcher understanding the interpretation of the research subjects (Golafshani, 2003; Seidman, 2006), rather than using a “one-way” approach to predict causes and effects and to generalise the research findings (Creswell, 2014).

Although benefits were derived from the interpretive research paradigm which underpinned this study, there were also disadvantages. The interpretive paradigm is subjective in nature; and, thus, there is the possibility of significant bias on the part of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). In order to overcome this challenge, I underwent training that enhanced my knowledge of interviewing techniques. I also piloted the interview protocol (Yin, 2012). The data was also accessible to my supervisor and she helped to review the data throughout the data interpretation process. A further challenge associated with the approach selected is that it tends to undermine the reliability of the data while it is also not possible to generalise the representative, primary data generated as the data is heavily impacted upon by the personal viewpoint and values of the researcher (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Accordingly, the results may be personal in-depth or biased which may not be beneficial as those results may interfere with what is really happening (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). In order to address this challenge, I made use of multiple data sources in order to collect the requisite data (Creswell, 2014). In addition, I utilised semi-structured interviews and I conducted a document analysis ensure greater reliability than may, otherwise, have been the case (Yin, 2016).

3.3. Research approach

I adopted the qualitative approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding and description of the way in which “*student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university*” (Maree, 2016). Qualitative research approach is characterised by its representation of the views and perspectives of the participants by investigating the contextual conditions within which they live with the intention of providing insights that may explain human social behaviour (Thambekwayo, 2017; Yin, 2016). The rationale behind this choice was that I wanted to explore multiple realities by talking directly to the participants and ascertaining how

they behaved and/or act within the context of the study (Creswell, 2014). I collected the data in a natural setting (the field site) in which participants experienced the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2016). This natural setting enabled me to interact on a face-to-face basis with the student leaders (Creswell, 2014). Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction and the generalisation of the findings (Golafshani, 2003; Thomas, 2009), the qualitative approach allowed me to play an active role in the research process and to tell the story from the participants' points of view rather than that of an expert (Yin, 2012).

The other reason for choosing the qualitative approach to guide this study was because of the strong connection between this approach and the interpretivist/constructivism paradigm (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Ganong and Coleman (2014) state that the "qualitative research approach includes research methods that create a channel for the voices of the participants to be heard and gives marginalised populations an opportunity to express themselves and to add value to the data from their experiences". The qualitative approach enabled me to hear and interact with the participants and to obtain their perspectives (Yin, 2012). I had the opportunity to work directly with student leaders within their own context, for example; by reviewing the research questions and transcripts or involving the participants in the data analysis and data interpretation processes (Creswell, 2014; Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Yin, 2012). Furthermore, the qualitative research approach also enabled me to use interpretive inquiry whereby I used my own interpretations of the data as well as those of the student leaders to explain the results of the study (Creswell, 2012, 2014). In so doing, I worked collaboratively with some student leaders in the data analysis process and this helped me to report the study findings from the participants' subjective points of view (Creswell, 2014).

It is important, however, to note that there are also some weaknesses inherent in the qualitative research approach. The sampled size has limitations and, therefore, it is not possible to generalise the findings to the greater population. Although the sample size in this study was small, I attained an extensive amount of data from the field and, as a result, the data analysis process challenging. In addition, transcribing the interviews *verbatim* was both time consuming and demanding. There is, therefore, little doubt that "a qualitative investigation is for researchers who are prepared to spend time in the field and engage in the lengthy process of data collection" (Locke et al., 2010). I had anticipated that my research would take about two years. It took approximately a year for my research topic to be approved, then six (6) months for the ethics approval and then the data collection and analysis process took about 8 (eight)

months. The data analysis process was followed by the transcription, a lengthy and a challenging stage.

Although the transcription process was time consuming, it did provide a clear indication of what had taken place during the interview. The transcription process also helped me to understand the emotions of the participants in relation to the research topic as well as their thoughts in process. Consequently, I have spent long hours in the field overcoming obstacles such as trying to establish a rapport with the participants and scheduling and rescheduling appointments. It was extremely difficult when some of the participants were not able to honour their appointment and cancelled our meetings at the last minute.

3.4. Research design

I chose a case study research design for the purpose of the study. According to Yin (2009), the case study approach is particularly useful when there is a need for an in-depth examination of people or groups of people, or a phenomenon of interest, in a natural, real-life context. Given the nature of my research, which involved gathering information in a natural setting through face-to-face interactions with the participants, I found a case study to be suitable because it allowed me, as a qualitative researcher, to obtain high level and detailed data which combined both objective and subjective information, thus enabling an in-depth understanding of the data (Yin, 2012). In short, the case study approach allowed me to explore student participation in the governance of transforming university using more than one lens in order to obtain a clearer understanding of what was really happening data than may, otherwise, have been the case (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2012).

A case study allowed me to do a multi-perspective analysis, different participants were jointly examined in order to increase the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2012). In this study, the views and opinions of the student leaders from two different student structures were collated in order to develop a variety of perspectives about the topic that I investigated (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, studying a case of a phenomenon allowed me to explore and describe the case in depth and from participant' lenses (Maree, 2014). This research study focused on a single case, namely, an understanding of the Faculty of Education's student leaders' participation in the decision-making processes in a transforming university. One of the advantages of such an approach is the close collaboration between the researcher and the participants, which enables the participants to share their stories (Yin, 2012). The case approach was both appropriate and relevant for the purposes of this study

because I managed to achieve the research objective (Maree, 2014). This is in line with the research evidence which suggests that the case study design should be considered when the researcher seeks to answer the “how” and “why” questions. This study investigated “How student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university “and “Why student leaders should be considered as part of the decision-making processes in university governance”. In addition, *the design was flexible as it accommodated changes in the data information received or changes in the original research problems, questions and outcomes* (Maree, 2016).

The disadvantages and limitations of a case study research design depends on a single case inquiry that makes it difficult for the researcher to reach conclusions which are generalised. However, the purpose of this study was explore student leaders ‘experiences of participation in governance of transforming university not to generalise the conclusions and findings (Yin, 2009). The case study design was appropriate design for this study, it assisted me to understand the phenomenon in depth. .

3.5. Population and sampling

Viljoen (2007) defines ‘a population in the research context as a gathering of a group of people and a sample as the actual participants selected to take part in a study’. The sample of a study comprises the participants in a study. I used sampling as a process to select the research site (the university) and the sample (group of student leaders) that represented the population of the university where the data was collected (Maree, 2016 Wilborn et al., 2013). The selected student leaders were from two different structures that served different purposes in a transforming university and, hence, their views offer two different perspectives (Wilborn et al., 2013).

The population of student leaders from which the sample was drawn consisted of all the student leaders who participate in the decision-making at a transforming university (Maree, 2016). The reason for choosing this population sample was that; I wanted to understand the experiences of student leaders regarding their participation in the decision-making processes by talking directly to the student leaders occupying positions in the governance of the university. Initially, I had planned to sample student representative councils (SRCs) because they comprise student leaders from different political parties and, in addition, they play an important role in terms of governance and influencing the actions of students in a public transforming university. However, due to the process and procedures that had to be followed in order to speak to the

SRC committee of the university, I had to reconsider the group of student leaders who would represent the population and still enable me to complete the study within the set time frame. Although the sampled student leaders were not involved in the overall governance framework and its functioning, they did, nevertheless, have experience in participating in the governance of a transforming university.

For the reasons cited above, I used purposeful, convenience sampling to select individuals who were participating in the governance of a transforming university. According to Creswell (2012), purposeful sampling involves the researcher handpicking the participants, based on certain exact characteristics, in order to ensure a sample that is large enough yet possesses the required traits. My research aimed to select cases that were expected to provide the deep and relevant information required to allow me to gain an understanding of the topic of my study (Creswell, 2012). Purposive sampling was deemed to be both appropriate and relevant for selecting the participants for this study because it allowed me to choose participants who possessed the specific knowledge that could be used to answer the research questions.

I had initially planned to sample 15 participants. However, I learned during the data collection stage that some student leaders were not interested in participating in the study. I, then, ended up with a total of ten student leaders who indicated their willingness to participate in the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. According to Creswell (2014), using a small sample was sufficient to present the complexity of the information provided by the participants. I was sure that the ten participants would be able to provide rich data for the study.

3.5.1. Selection criteria

I used the following selection criteria for the participants. The participants had to be student leaders serving in any student structure in the Faculty of Education. The participants had to be student leaders who served after 2016 to 2019. The criteria did not stipulate that a student leader had to be either an undergraduate or a postgraduate during participation in the study. However, it was most important that the participants had to have served a full term in the Faculty of Education and the day house student structure.

3.5.2. Positioning myself in the study – critical reflection

A qualitative research study is affected by whether the researcher is part of the research study and shares the participants' experiences (Maree, 2012). My position as a postgraduate student in the public university that was in the process of transforming and the participant' of this study

posed a challenge but was beneficial to the study. One of the challenges was that, at the time of the study, I had been studying at a transforming university for about eight years and, thus, it was possible that my personal experience, knowledge and beliefs may have hindered the process of co-constructing meanings or it may have led to biases (Thomas, 2011). My handling and presentation of the data may have been better if I had been an “outsider” (Creswell, 2014).

as I may not have considered the complex meanings and contribution to the understanding both of my research topic and of the process involved in the creation of the new knowledge that was emerging (Thomas, 2011). However, I think it is important for me to highlight that I was unfamiliar with the specific experience under study. I had never served as a leader in any university, including the sampled university. My being unfamiliar with the participants’ experiences helped me to approach the researched topic from a fresh and different viewpoint, posing new questions. Then again, I should add that my experiences of studying the unfamiliar had its disadvantages and advantages (Maree, 2012).

The benefits and advantages that I enjoyed included my familiarity with the sampled university while the sampled participants did not view me as outsider. I am of the opinion that being an insider assisted and enhanced the quality of the study as my knowledge and experience in the sampled university helped me in developing appropriate questions which were of significance to the topic of investigation (Thomas, 2011). In addition, the process of recruit the sampled participants were not as difficult as it may otherwise have been, because, as an “insider”, I had the access required to formally invite the participants to become part of the study. However, I was extremely careful and cognisant of the impact my position could have on the study. Accordingly, I focused on the following important aspects, namely, self-knowledge and sensitivity and creating relevant knowledge, while I also carefully monitored myself to find a balance between the personal and seeking information as an outsider (Maree, 2012).

3.6. Data collection methods

Data collection refers to the way in which the data required to answer the research question(s) is gathered (Maree, 2016). This section discusses the actual collection process and the steps comprising the process.

3.6.1. Seeking consent

The first step in collecting the requisite data involved seeking permission from both the relevant authorities of the participating university and the proposed participants (Maree, 2016). Thus,

letters requesting such permission were sent to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) and the Dean of the Faculty of Education. Once permission had been granted, I arranged meetings with the two student leader structures on different dates. At these meetings I described the purpose of the study and I then obtained the consent of those who willing to participate in the study. Details of the ethical procedures that followed are discussed in section 3.9 of this chapter.

3.6.2. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews

The main source of the required data was the semi-structured, in-depth interviews which I conducted (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2012). Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews are preferred by most researchers because they do not follow any particular order of questioning while the questions may be adapted, and supplementary questions asked to probe and explain the participants' responses (Creswell, 2014). The interview schedule reminded me of the major topics or themes that I had to cover during the interviews. Maree (2012) and Thomas (2011) concur that face-to-face interviews enable the researcher to develop a relationship with the participants, they yield the highest response rates of the percentages of people agreeing to participate and enable the researcher to gain participants' cooperation and encourage them to respond honestly. Face-to-face interviews allowed me both to clarify ambiguous answer and to seek follow-up information (Maree, 2012). Most importantly, the face-to-face semi-structured interviews helped me to establish a relationship with the participants (Maree, 2016).

The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were deemed to appropriate for collecting the requisite data because they provided opportunities for personal and direct verbal encounters between myself, as the investigator, and the participants in the study (Yin, 2014). I had the opportunity to observe visual clues, such as body language and levels of comfort or discomfort, which, I must say, enabled me to have full control of the interview process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2012).

The participants who were interviewed included (a) seven student leaders from the Faculty House of Education and (b) three student leaders from the day house. At the time of the study all the participating student leaders were fully registered students in their second, third and fourth years of studying for their education degrees. It is, therefore, important to mention that most of the interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the participants with the interviews being conducted before and after their classes so that they did not interfere with their studies.

On average, most interviews took about 30 to 45 minutes. The longest interview took 45 to 60 minutes (1 hour). I must also mention that, in some instances, the participants appeared to be unwilling to be interviewed. I also noticed that some of the participants were hesitant and fearful about voicing their honest opinions because they felt that I was seeking information on behalf of the university management. I managed such situations by ‘*explaining the purpose of the research and assuring the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of the data*’ (Creswell, 2014).

I formulated a set of predetermined, open-ended questions (Maree, 2012). I also used the interview schedule as my interview guide during the interviews with participants. Despite the in-depth information that the interviews provided for this study, I bore in mind Creswell’s (2014) caution that interviews may result in biased and unreliable information/data because as the investigator, I may have influenced the participant to give responses he/she wants to hear. In order to counter this, I encouraged the participants “to feel free, to share relevant information and to be sincere in doing so by assuring them that all the information was confidential and would be used for research purposes only”(Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2016). Furthermore, I asked questions that were contained in the interview protocol and I also used probing for clarification and depth. With the permission of the participants, I audio recorded the interviews and took notes during the interviews. Maree (2016) concurred with the taking of notes by saying that “taping recording and capturing non-verbal clues are extremely important data gathering techniques for a qualitative study”.

3.6.3. Document analysis

I also conducted an analysis of documents relevant to this study as another source of data for the research. The aim of the document analysis was to corroborate the information from the interviews. The document analysis is “a qualitative method which is used to collect data by analysing written materials that contain information relevant to the research topic” (Thomas, 2011). Document analysis is an important source of evidence and I have chosen it because of the informative value of the method (Babbie, 2015). The process of document analysis enabled me to uncover themes significant to the study while it also assisted me to find evidence that to compensate for the weaknesses of the interviews (Delpont et al., 2011).

I analysed various types of written documents on the transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) from the participating university with the aim of shedding light on the participation of student leaders in the decision-making processes. The written data sources I

utilised included published and unpublished documents, newspaper articles and policies that related to the participation of student leaders in the governance of the transforming university (Maree, 2012). The exploration of these documents provided me with background information both on the transformation of the university and also on how student leaders' participation in governance should be practised.

Documents may be a rich source of data in an interpretative case study research. However, Yin (2014) caution about the gaps that may arise when documents are analysed, such as the misinterpretation of information, poor organisation and biased, selective interpretation by the researcher. In this study I addressed these weaknesses by making use of documents relevant to the researched topic. The process included the evaluation of the quality of the documents to determine the authenticity, credibility, accuracy, representativeness and meaning of the documents being studied (Bowen, 2009). I also used a critical eye to establish the meanings of the documents; their contribution to the issues being explored and the relevance of documents to the research problem and purpose (Bowen, 2009; Yin;2014) and also to obtain rich data from the documents that aligned with my conceptual framework (Maree, 2012). As indicated by Bowen (2009), a clear and planned method of analysing the relevant documents minimises the issues and challenges that may be encountered.

I also used field notes and a reflective diary during the ongoing process of data collection to write reflections that captured the meanings of the interview conversations.

3.6.3.1. Field notes

Writing field notes during the research process was an important helped me process to explain the interviews further. During the data collection process, I wrote down some notes during each interview I conducted with the participants. The notes of our discussions, both formal and informal, assisted me clarify grey areas and also stirred new thoughts during the data collection and data analysis as well as during the presentation and interpretation of the findings (Babbie, 2015). I also made that I expand the notes after every interview (Thomas,2011). In addition, I also documented the frustrations and confusion I experienced in the field. Furthermore, with the permission of the participants; I audio recorded the interviews in case I missed something in my jotted down notes.

I then e-mailed the interview transcripts to each participant for authentication (Maree,2012). I used the feedback material to expand and confirm the interpretation of the data during the

analysis procedure (Creswell,2014). I transcribed the participants' keywords, phrases and statements verbatim in order to permit their voices to be heard (Yin,2012). The field notes enabled me with the development of new questions if any were considered necessary after the questions in the interview schedule had been asked and recorded (Maree,2016).

3.6.3.2. *Reflective diary*

It is recommended that the researcher keep a reflection diary in order to write down thoughts and reflections on the research experience (Maree, 2016). I had kept a reflective diary from the beginning of the research journey and my plan was to use it during the data collection and data analysis processes. However, the reflections and thoughts that I documented in this diary were not analysed. Its purpose was to assist me to continuously check if I were doing the right thing throughout the research, both methodologically and ethically (Creswell, 2014).

3.7. Data analysis

According to Bowen (2009), Creswell (2012) and Maree (2016), data analysis is a process in which the researcher makes sense of the data which has been collected. The main objective of the data analysis is to reduce the collected data to smaller themes (Bryman, 2008). The identification of themes is one of the most important tasks in a qualitative research data analysis (Thomas, 2006; Yin, 2012). Themes are described as "*umbrellas*" under which the researcher categorises information before, during and after the data collection (Yin, 2016). This study utilised inductive and ongoing data analysis with the data being analysed throughout the collection process in order to make sense of the raw data to develop the concepts and themes emerging from it (Thomas, 2006). Creswell (2014) also agrees that the essence of inductive analysis in qualitative data is to make room for findings to emerge from the significant themes inherent in the raw data codes (Yin, 2012). In the process of analysing data, I made use of both the research questions and the concepts from the conceptual framework underpinning the study (Creswell, 2014).

This study utilised the thematic data analysis procedure. Thematic data analysis is a useful way of organising and analysing the information gathered in a research study (Bryman, 2012). It is a data analysis approach that involves the creation and application of codes to data. Coding in the research context refers to the process of marking different categories of data with symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying names (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The data from the interview transcripts, field notes, policy documents and recorded audios was analysed. I

analysed the data by using the following six major phases, namely, '*familiarity with the data; generation of codes, searching for themes among the codes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and producing the final report*' (Creswell, 2014).

I analysed data in the following manner. I transcribed the interviews *verbatim* and then listened to the recordings repeatedly for the purposes of clarity and familiarity to enable me to derive the best interpretation possible from the data. I then coded the data by looking for specific words from which themes were identified (Golafshani, 2003). After coding, I merged the codes to form categories, which I then sorted into themes, and sub-themes that aligned with the research questions (Yin, 2012). The themes were created from a careful examination of the data in relation to the themes that would emerge inductively from the literature on the research topic (Creswell, 2014)

An inductive thematic analysis was deemed to be appropriate and relevant for this study because the study aimed to find answers from the data which had been collected in order to understand and explain the research topic. I wanted to work with the data, organise it and break it down into meaningful units, synthesise it and then identify "thematising meanings" (Golafshani, 2003). In short, my analysis of the data involved "working with data, organising it, breaking it into meaningful units, synthesising it and searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is learned, and deciding what to tell others (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). It is also important to note that the data analysis and interpretation exercise was an ongoing process that was interwoven with the data collection process. As mentioned earlier, I conducted the preliminary data analysis and interpretation through a review of the data each time I returned from the field.

This process helped me to check whether the data I was collecting was appropriate (Silverman, 2005). I must, however, state that an extensive analysis of data was undertaken after I had finished most of the data collection. Furthermore, as mentioned by Leedy and Ormrod (2013), it was important that the themes should reflect my values as the researcher and my experiences, and that it be constructed based on my common sense. Therefore, to familiarise myself with the data I immersed myself in the data by reading through the texts line by line. This helped me come to an in-depth understanding of the data. Yin (2016) also commented that 'it is important to relate to the findings using the existing theories in order to determine whether they stand to be true or false'.

3.8. Trustworthiness of the study

Various ways were employed in this qualitative to increase the trustworthiness of the study. The concept of trustworthiness in a qualitative research approach is said to include the following four facets, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Golafshani, 2003; Maree, 2012). Accordingly, the study focused on these aspects to ensure research ethics quality measures/ trustworthiness of this study.

3.8.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the research findings and is used to establish whether the research findings derived from the participants were correctly interpreted based on the views of the participants (Elo et al., 2014). In this study I used the following strategies to ensure the credibility of the study, namely, prolonged engagement, member-checking, peer review and triangulation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Prolonged engagement entails the researcher spending extended time in the field in the interests of a deeper understanding of the study participants' activities, culture and context (Anney, 2014). This prolonged engagement helped me to gain an insight into the context of the study which in turn minimised any misrepresentations of information that may when the researcher is in the field (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Prolonged engagement helped in terms of obtaining the trust of the participants and, as result, I was able to "dig" deeper to understand the core issues. This enhanced the quality of the data (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Maree, 2016). I also conducted member checking to enhance the credibility of the research findings.

3.8.1.1. Member checking

It is entailed taking the field texts that I had analysed to the participants so that they had an opportunity to validate the interpretations, provide context where needed or offer alternate interpretations if necessary (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). The member checking process helped me to eliminate bias when I was analysing and interpreting the findings (Anney, 2014). Peer review is a further method to minimise and eliminate biasness.

3.8.1.2. Peer review

It is a significant strategy for ensuring credibility because it provides researchers with an opportunity "to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions", from, for example, their professional peers and/or postgraduates in the same field (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2009). The process of peer review helped me to improve the quality of the

inquiry findings by using the critical comments from my peers to enhance the credibility of the study. Another strategy that helps to increase credibility is triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of multiple and different methods, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2012). The use of different sources of data such as interviews and document analysis for the triangulation of the data helped me to reduce bias and to cross-examine the integrity of the data from the different sources (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2012).

3.8.2. Transferability

In the research context transferability poses that further trends may occur in the phenomenon under investigation. It relies on the reasoning that research findings may be generalised (Elo et al., 2014). In this study transferability was ensured through “*thick descriptions*” and the use of “*purposeful sampling*” (Anney, 2014). Thick description involves the researcher clarifying all the research processes, from the data collection, the context of the study to the production of the final report. Thick description helps other researchers to duplicate the study with similar conditions in other settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to ensure the transferability of the research findings, I provided full, detailed accounts of participants, the settings where the study took place and the research design that was used. The sample was selected purposively to meet the selection criteria with the participants having to be student leaders in transforming universities (Creswell, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.8.3. Dependability

Dependability involves ‘*the participants assessing both the findings, the interpretation and the recommendations made in the study to make sure that they are all supported by the data which was obtained from the informants in the study*’ (Elo et al., 2014). Although there may have been changes in the data collected over the period of data collection process, I documented all the findings, changes and implementation of the design and research process to ensure that the findings were dependable, providing detailed accounts thereof (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I asked for assistance from a researcher who had not participated in this research to “*externally audit*” and conduct a “*stepwise replication*” of the research and then give a report in order to eliminate any possibility of bias (Anney, 2014).

3.8.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the research findings may be confirmed by other researchers in the field and establishes that the interpretations and findings are, indeed, derived from the data that has been collected (Elo et al., 2014). This process follows the same guidelines

as dependability (Anney, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Elo et al. 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I documented all the findings, changes and implementation of the design and research process to ensure that the findings were dependable, providing detailed accounts thereof (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.9. Ethical considerations

According to Maree (2016), the most fundamental principle of ethical acceptability is that of informed consent, namely, the participants involved in the study must be informed of the nature and purpose of the research as well as its risks and benefits, and they must consent to participate in the study without coercion. The ethical guidelines, as described by the University of Pretoria were used to guide this study. The permission to conduct the study was sought from the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, the Dean of the Faculty of Education and the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) (Maree, 2012). After the ethics application has been approved, letters requesting permission were sent to the proposed participants to invite them to participate in the study. The letter informed the participants about the nature and the consequences of the before asking them to participant in it (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The interested participants then signed the consent form. Before I gave them the consent forms to sign, I shared information about my study with them to enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the study. I also informed them that their participation was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2014). The code of ethics in research requires that measures be taken to protect the identities of the participants against unnecessary exposure (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Before starting the interviews, I explained to the participants that, in adhering to the code of ethics in research, both their identities and the information they gave me would be treated with strict confidentiality to protect their identities and their posts in governance (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

I used pseudonyms when reporting the results of the interviews to conceal the identities of the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). To ensure the confidentiality of the data, all the data that I collected from the interviews and document analysis was stored on my personal laptop and the external drive that I use only for academic purposes (Yin, 2014). The data would be made available to my two supervisors for academic purpose and to the participants for verification and validation purposes (Maree, 2016). The participants of the study remained anonymous

throughout the study – the data collection, data interpretation and final report (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2012).

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology employed in this study. It highlighted the research paradigms, research approach and research design that guided this study. It also cited the advantages and disadvantages of the research methods and explained how I had addressed the challenges that I had encountered. In addition, it elaborated on the sampling and the data collection instruments that I adopted throughout the study and the rationale behind the choices I made. The chapter also described the steps I took to improve the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical principles that were followed to. The next section presents the study findings and the discussion on these findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Chapter three of the study contained a discussion of the research methodology and the research design that underpinned the study. This included a description of the research instruments and the purpose for which they were selected, the sampling procedures used, the data collection and analysis techniques and the ethical issues that were considered throughout the research study. As already indicated in chapters 1, 2 and 3, the purpose of this study was to explore student leaders' experiences of participation in the governance of a transforming university and the extent to which they do so.

Accordingly, this chapter present the experiences of student leaders during their participation in the governance of transforming university. My role, as the researcher was to record, analyse and interpret the student leaders' perspectives with a view not only to uncovering the underlying descriptions which they themselves may not have been able to give voice to but also to interpret the hidden meanings in the apparent meanings (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2012) and then to use this as my basis for the conclusions I would draw. Furthermore, it was deemed important to state that the findings of this study do not represent an overall picture of the governance of a transforming university as these represent the perceptions of some student leaders who were involved in certain decision-making processes but not the overall governance framework and its functioning.

The findings are presented as follows. Firstly, I discuss (a) student leaders' understanding of a transforming university while I also analysed documents to help me draw conclusions in terms of what may have influenced the student leaders' judgement as to (b) whether their university could be said to have transformed or not. Secondly, I present (c) the experiences of the student leaders when they participated in the decision-making of a transforming university. Finally (d) using the ladder of the participation conceptual framework as the lens that guided this study and the insights that emerged from listening to and analysing the student leaders' responses to the interview questions, I present my conclusions about the extent to which the student leaders participated in the decision-making processes of a transforming university.

Ten university student leaders from two different student structures, namely (House Education and Faculty of Education day House) participated in this study. These participants had served/were serving in their respective structures and portfolios between 2016 and 2019. The reason for these selection criteria was that I wanted to extract data from the student leaders who were in the process of implementing a shared vision of student life – a framework that was drafted in a Legotla in the second semester of 2015. The main goal of Lekgotla student life is to ensure that campus life support the students academically and also contributes in their lives outside of their studies. Below is a description of the student structures and profiles of the student leaders who participated in this study

4.2. Student structure A – House Education

Student structure (A) represented the Executive Committee (EC) of House Education. House Education is the faculty house situated at the Faculty of Education on the Groenkloof campus of the university. The structure of the Faculty of Education is in line with the constitution for student governance of the university which was the focus of this study. This faculty house consisted of 12 student leaders at the time of the study, namely, the chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, academic officer/first year guardian, marketing officer, public relations officer, community outreach officer, social/networking officer and personal and professional development officer. The role of these student leaders in the Faculty of Education was to represent a vehicle for uniting the students and staff, both inside and outside of the classroom. Their role included academic support, participating in academic activities at various levels of the university, providing students with personal and professional wellbeing support, participating in community engagement and sport, and promoting transformation according to the mission and vision of the university. Furthermore, they played a role in linking students in the faculty with the student governance structures such as the student representative council (SRC) and with academic structures such as the class representative system.

As indicated above, the main role of the student structure (A) was to provide students with academic support and, thus, the appointed members had to be eligible to represent the students. Such eligibility involved an academic average of 60% and above throughout the term of office and was monitored by the house guardian. The house guardian is an academic staff member who is appointed by the dean of the faculty to advise the executive committee (EC) and to support the committee in accordance with the university's policies and regulations. The duties and roles of student leaders in the Faculty of Education are governed by the university's

strategic plan, the constitution for student governance and the policy on student life. The dean is responsible for the implementation of these policies. As a result, student leaders in this faculty house require advice from the house guardian and, if necessary, matters are taken to the dean before a final decision were taken. In addition, the EC is jointly and individually responsible for the faculty house duties and, if needed, the members assist each other in other portfolios to protect the image of both the structure and the university. Finally, although the EC members shared duties; their roles and responsibilities varied with the portfolios they held at the time of this study. The roles of each EC member are presented in detail below:

4.2.1. Description of student structure (A) participants

The seven student leaders from student structure A comprised the following;

Student leader one (SL1)

Student leader one (SL1) served the house in the Community Outreach Portfolio. He was a black male who was in his third year of study in the Faculty of Education. His role was to liaise with the SRC's outreach portfolio, Reach Out and Give (RAG) and other organisations responsible for outreach. His outreach roles included outreaching to the disabled students in terms of sports and identifying students who required assistance, for example, "the practical clothes drive", as well as alerting the faculty to assistance that students needed. He had planned to organise several community engagement projects with the help of the public relations officer but, because of budget constraints, most of projects had not been completed. He attended meetings relevant to his portfolio and gave feedback to the structure. He also participated in brainstorming and planning meetings, expressed opinions and contributed to the making of decisions at monthly meetings of the house.

Student leader two (SL 2)

Student leader two (SL 2) served the house in the academic first-year guardian officer portfolio. She was black female who was in her second year of study in the Faculty of Education. Her role was to assist first years with their academic work, such as timetable writing, study skills and examination preparation and to ensure that each new student felt welcome and at home by assisting with programmes and activities designed to them to adjust in the new environment (university). To do so, she liaised with the faculty student advisor, the SRC academic

representative, other faculty house academic officers and the Groenkloof residence academic officers.

Student leader three (SL 3)

Student leader three (SL3) served the house as the chairperson. He was a black male who was in his third year of study in the Faculty of Education. His role was to supervise all executive committee (EC) activities and, if necessary, assist other portfolio holders in carrying out their duties. He also had to keep the faculty house guardian up to date with everything happening at the faculty house. He was accountable to the EC members of the house and managed disciplinary procedures involving EC members. He called and chaired the house meetings, represented the house education at SRC meetings, academic sub-council meetings and student forums. In addition, he sat in on academic appeals and then reported back on the meetings to the EC.

Student leader four (SL 4)

Student leader four (SL 4) served the house in the chairperson portfolio. He was a black male in his third year of study in Faculty of Education. As the main leader of the house; his duty was to call and chair meetings. On behalf of the house, he attended the appeal and curriculum committees. As the representative of the house, he also attended the SRC meetings and gave feedback on those meetings. He worked closely with the house guardian, keeping him/her updated on the activities happening in the faculty. He was also accountable for the EC members, their discipline and professionalism. In addition, he also assisted other portfolios with their activities and made sure that they adhered to both their plans of action and the constitution.

Student leader four (SL 5)

Student leader five (SL 5) had served the house twice – in the public relation portfolio and in the deputy chairperson portfolio. She was a black female who had served during her second and third years of study in the Faculty of Education. In her second year as public relation officer, she was responsible for establishing and maintaining a communication channel between the EC and other students' governance structures on all the university's campuses. Her other role was to liaise with the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) and the Faculty of Education to ensure that house education is up to date with what happening in the entire

university. She also worked closely with the secretary to send out official communications and the marketing officer for advertising and networking purposes.

In her third year as deputy chairperson, she assisted and supported the chairperson in performing his/her duties; she co-chaired the EC meetings and ensured that the EC members did not fall behind academically because of their duties in the structure. However, if this happened, she provided help to them in areas where they needed help. She also ensured that the chairperson does not conduct him/herself in an unconstitutional manner in terms of behaviour or action. If this happen, she was responsible for calling him/her to order.

Student leader six (SL 6)

At the time of the study student leader six (SL6) had served the house twice, namely, in the deputy chairperson and the chairperson portfolios. She was a black female who had served in her second and third years of study in the Faculty of Education. In her second year, as deputy chairperson, she had worked closely with the chairperson, assisted in conducting meetings, and sometimes attending the academic sub-council meetings on behalf of the chairperson. Her role was to assist all the EC portfolios who needed help and to ensure that their academics did not suffer because of their house duties.

As the chairperson in her third year, her role was to manage the house of education committee, with the advice of the house guardian. She ensured that all the other portfolios carried out their duties and assisted them if they needed help. Her role included representing the house education in SRC and academic council meeting, and student forums. She also forwarded student cases to the various committees, such as the appeal, academic and finance committees and then reported back on the meetings and committees she attended. She was accountable to the EC members of house education and, therefore, she reported back on everything she was doing to the members of the committee.

Student leader 7 (SL 7)

Student leader seven (SL7) served the house as the personal and professional development Officer. He was a white male in his second year of study in the Faculty of Education. He was responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of EC members and, thus, he liaised with the student advisor, student health unit, student support unit and the student disability unit. He worked with the academic officers to organise events that would assist students in the faculty to develop

their academic skills. He also helped students with personal problems by referring them to the responsible people. In addition, he also handled internal conflict to ensure that the EC ran smoothly.

As noted from the above, some of the student leaders had served in the structure for more than one term; some in the same portfolio and others in different portfolios. It was, therefore, of benefit for me to speak to those students who had considerable experience as student leaders of a university that is in the process of transforming. Accordingly, the participants' profiles reflect all the stated portfolios (see table 4.1.). Below table 4.2.2, I present descriptions of student structure B, the day house structure, and the student leaders who participated in the structure.

Table 4.1. Participants' profiles and description

Student leaders	Portfolios	Years of experience	Gender	Race	# of student leaders
SL 1	Community outreach	6 months (1 term)	Male	African	1
SL 2	First year guardian	6 months (1 term)	Female	African	1
SL 3 SL 4	Chairperson (2 terms) Chairperson	1 year (2 terms)	Males	Africans	2
SL 5 SL 6	Deputy Chairperson and public relation officer Chairperson and deputy chairperson	1 year (2 terms)	Female Female	Africans	2
SL 7	Personal and professional development officer	1 year (2 terms)	Male	White	1
TOTAL					7

4.3. Student Structure B – Day House

Student structure (B) comprised the executive committee (EC) of the day house. The day house is the day house situated at the Faculty of Education, on the Groenkloof campus. Docendo Day House is a recognised university structure that provides students with a holistic student life experience. The house comprised 12 student leaders at the time of this study, namely, chairperson, deputy chairperson, internal affairs officer, treasurer, secretary, first year guardian, internal culture, external culture, social officer, sports officer, mentorship officer and marketing and communication officer. The day house aimed to provide the students with an opportunity to participate in all areas of interest such as sport, culture, social life and academics.

The objectives of the structure included creating an environment in which students could feel free and safe to seek advice. At time of this study, the structure operated in this manner with the day house members functioning under the sub-committees but answering to the executive committees. The sub-committee answered to the executive committee which answered to the vice chairperson who answered to the chairperson while the chairperson answered to the house guardian, coordinator of daily life and the SRC member responsible for the day houses. A house guardian is a member of the academic staff of the university who is nominated by the chairperson of the house and appointed by the dean of the faculty to be the advisor of the house; as per the provisions pertaining to the constitution of Docendo Day House (Section 15). The role of the house guardian is to serve in an advisory capacity to the house and also to ensure that the chairperson is kept accountable.

The house guardian could also be approached by any level of hierarchy if the appropriate channel did not offer adequate relief. The house guardian functioned under the strictest confidentiality as per provisions of Section 7 and 29 of the house constitutions. Her main responsibility was to play a supporting role in the house by providing the executive committee with guidance and support in their events and endeavours in managing the house. Her responsibilities included assisting the chairperson in anticipating problems that may arise and to assist her in solving problems that may impact negatively on the house. The house guardian also assisted in all endeavours aimed at the future growth of the house and she was allowed suggest to and share ideas with the executive committee. The executive members were expected to fulfil the duties of the house collectively. However, it was the role of the chairperson to assign individual duties and responsibilities to each portfolio title, according to the strengths and abilities of the individuals holding such portfolios. The chairperson also had a right to interchange responsibilities between the portfolios. With that being said, the roles of student leaders varied with the portfolio they were holding at the time of this study. The roles of the EC members interviewed are presented in detail.

4.3.1. Description of student structure (B) participants

The three female student leaders from Structure B who participated in the study comprised the following;

Student leader eight (SL 8)

Student leader eight (SL 8) served the house in the internal affairs portfolio. She was a white female who was in her second year of study in the Faculty of Education. She was responsible for the general wellbeing of the EC and house members and mediated disputes between EC members; the EC and house members, the house members and the chairperson, EC members and the chairperson and/or the house members. This student leader served in the capacity of assisting the chairperson by training incoming EC members as part of the handover process and administering the process of EC monitoring. Her role required confidentiality as she was responsible for keeping and updating the EC members' personnel files as well as ensuring that was confidential information safe and out of the reach of unauthorised people.

Student leader nine (SL 9)

Student leader nine (SL 9) served the house in the vice chairperson portfolio. She was a white female who was in her third year of study in the Faculty of Education. Her role was to act as a chairperson in the chairperson's temporary absence. In the case of a no confidence motion against the chairperson, she would be required to act as chairperson until the case were resolved. She was responsible for supporting the chairperson in the execution of his/her duties, making sure that meetings ran efficiently, representing the house on the campus, hearing complaints and initiating the appropriate procedures to solve problem. The vice-chairperson was also responsible for basic office management; and served the chairperson in an advisory capacity to ensure that all rules and duties were implemented and enforced. Her other responsibility was to act as an administrator and to deal with the evaluation process, consisting of house evaluation of the EC, EC peer evaluation, EC self-evaluation and EC evaluation of the chairperson.

Student leader ten (SL10)

Student leader ten (SL 10) served the house in the marketing and social media portfolio. She was a black female who was in her third year of study in the Faculty of Education. She was responsible for both marketing and social duties. Her marketing responsibilities included setting up and maintaining the house website on weekly basis for all social media platforms associated with the house (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube), for marketing the house at schools and in other areas among prospective first years, marketing the Docendo House at the university's welcoming days and posting communications about events on a

regular basis using the social media platforms. In addition, her marketing responsibilities included creating the face of the Docendo brand on campus and within the corporate environment and ensuring that all the digital and printed media disseminated by the house adheres to the code of conduct and represented the good name of the house.

Her social responsibilities involved planning, organising and maintaining all aspects associated with social events. These responsibilities included organising socials throughout the year with other residences, traditional events, such as, braai day and a pub crawl, and also the music and all other events that would contribute to the atmosphere of an event, whether it is a social, internal, external, rag or any other portfolio event. She also played a role in ensuring clear and professional communication between the house and other residences as well as in the collection, safe keeping and reconciliation of any fees charged in respect of the social events of the house.

Table 4.2 Participant profiles and description

Student leader	Portfolios	Years of experience	Gender	Race	# of student leaders
SL 8	Internal affairs officer	6 months (1 term)	Female	White	1
SL 9	Vice chairperson	1 year (2 terms)	Female	white	1
SL 10	Marketing and social media officer	1 year (2 terms)	Female	African	1
TOTAL					3

Having presented the profiles of the student leaders that participated in this study, I now discuss their responses to each of the following questions:

- What do student leaders understand by the concept of “transforming university”?
- What are the perceptions and views of student leaders regarding their participation in the governance of a transforming university?
- How do student leaders participate in the decision-making processes of a transforming university?
- What challenges do student leaders encounter in participating in the university decision-making processes?
- What strategies does the university have in place to involve students in the decision-making processes?

4.4. Interview procedure

The interviews with the student leaders from both the student structures (SA and SB) were conducted on a one-on-one basis to ensure both privacy and confidentiality. The interviews were conducted in English in the interviewees' respective offices. The interviews were usually scheduled in the afternoons and at the convenience of the student leaders in order to avoid their classes being disrupted.

The student leaders were assured of both anonymity and confidentiality in the individual, one-on-one interviews. I had initially planned to interview 15 SRC (student representative councils) members as I believed would give my study more in-depth data about 'the extent of student participation in the university decision-making as they represented their entire student body'. However, obtaining permission from the university registrar to interview SRC members proved to be difficult and the time frame for my studies was limited to two years. At the same time, the student leaders at the faculty level were also suitable to provide in which the data I was looking for as they were also student representatives at the university that was said to be in the process of transforming.

As indicated above, SA consisted of seven student leaders from the House of Education faculty and the SB consisted of three from the Docendo Day House. All the interviews were conducted in English, the medium of instruction at the university. The interviews were scheduled according to each student's preference in respect of the time and the venue on the university premises.

My aim was to collect their experiences on the extent of their participation in the governance of the university. I was able to gain access to the student leaders through the dean of the Faculty of Education and the office of student affairs. I then arranged the time at which and the day on which to carry out the interviews with individual student leaders.

As suggested by Maree (2016), the criteria pertaining to the one-on-one interviews met interview venue criteria;

- Comfortable seating
- Enough space for participants and recording equipment
- Privacy or isolation to minimise interruptions.

4.5. Student leaders' understanding of the concept of a transforming university

The participants' understanding of the concept of a transforming university was extremely important as it impacted on both their opinions and actions and I was also interested in their experiences during 'their participation in the decision-making processes in the university governance'. The student leaders who participated in this study attached several meanings to the concept of a transforming university with their perceptions being based on what a public, transforming university should entail.

For example, student leader six (SL6), from structure A (SA), referred to a transforming university as "*an institution that is in the 'process' of changing its previous systems to one that is accommodating, diverse and inclusive in terms of the access of students from different socio-economic backgrounds, race, language and gender*". Participant (SL 9) from structure B (SB) echoed SL6 by mentioning that "*in the process of change, there are policies, rules and regulations put in place as measures to correct the wrongs of the past systems and injustices*". The student leaders conceptualised the concept by looking at their institution. For example, student leader eight (SL 8) from structure B (SB) commented that "*for the university that was previously Afrikaans whites only; in transitioning to English as the only medium of instruction; the university is trying to transform. I mean, by accommodating students from diverse backgrounds suggests it is in the process of change*".

Student leader five (SL 5) from structure A (SA) added that "*in our classroom, lecturers encourage tasks that require interaction with and learning from each other. For example, in most of my modules, we are randomly assigned group members and it is usually students to whom we have never talked before. In a way we learn from people who are from different backgrounds as our university is diverse*". Student leader seven (SL 7) from structure A (SA) stated that "*I want to comment on the diversity of students at the university from various background, race and ethnicity*". Student leader two (SL 2) from structure A (SA) reiterated the abovementioned points when she said "*for me, diversity and inclusivity are the most important aspects of transformation but I feel like there is still much that needs to been done in terms of some inequalities*".

On the other hand, SL 10 from SB said, "*the concept transformation is about the ongoing change of culture that creates space to enable all stakeholders involved to play a part in it*". Student leader 10 (SL 10) from SB mentioned that "*the university has put several platforms in place where student leaders are involved to ensure that policies are implemented, for example;*

transformation committees, teaching and learning committees and curriculum transformation committees. SL 8 from (SB) agreed with the above point and commented that “as an individual in a transforming university, I have a role to play by changing how I think and how I see things. If you want to see change, then be that change”. Echoing the above-mentioned point; SL 5 from SA said, “as students we have the power to influence change within our university, and that can only begin when we change the way we look at things”. She reminisced, stating that I mean there are transformation committees that gives us a platform to have a voice in the process of changing the teaching and learning.

According to the student leaders from both the student structures. A and B “transformation” has to do with *the processes of change*. They all defined a transforming university as an institution that is in the process of changing its previous institutional cultures and systems to accommodate those excluded in the past. As cited by the participants above, a transforming university is a university that is *accessible without limits* to everyone who wants to pursue his/her studies regardless of grounds including race, religion, nationality, ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. It is in this way that universities *promote diversity and inclusivity* while, at the same time, redressing the past inequalities and imbalances in terms of student access to higher education. It is, however, significant to state that the student leaders in this study were adamant that, despite the call for transformation in higher education, *status quo of post 1994 remains in most universities in South Africa*.

According to some of the student leaders from both SA and SB, *the call for transformation looks good on paper as this allows the public universities to appear as if they are responding to the call for the transformation higher education while, in fact, they are just focusing on insignificant issues that do not contribute to the progress of transformation*. In contrast, however, some of the student leaders indicated that there are, *in fact, processes in place that are resulting in change*. In addition, they believed that *everyone has a role to partake in the transformation of universities*. The interview data further revealed that the student leaders were of the view that “there are platforms and committees that allows different stakeholders to have a voice and participate in the development of the transformation processes”.

In conclusion, my findings on the student leaders’ understanding of a transforming university revealed the following themes. Firstly, transformation *as the process of change*, that seeks to redress the exclusions of the past by (a) *changing institutional culture* (b) *changing curricula* and (c) *changing language of instruction*. Secondly, the participants in the study also agreed

that a transforming university is *accessible to everyone*, thus suggesting that such a university promotes *diversity and inclusivity*, as the most important aspects of transformation. Thirdly, the participants were aware that, at the time of the study, the call for transformation was the *status quo in most South African universities* and, hence, some of the participants emphasised that *everyone has role a play* in the ongoing processes of transformation. Having presented the student leaders' understanding of concept of a transforming university, the next section focuses on decision-making processes.

4.6. Student leaders' experiences in respect of their participation in a transforming university

The student leaders' experiences in respect of their participation in the university's decision-making processes were deemed to be significant for the purposes of this study which sought to explore how student leaders perceive and understand their roles in and contributions to the university decision-making processes.

In citing their experiences in respect of *their participation in the decision-making processes in the governance of a transforming university*; (SL 4) from (SA) commented, "*firstly, it is important to mention that our role, as student leaders, is to serve the interests and be the voice of the students who elected us*". Student leader SL 3 from SA mentioned that "*we are basically representatives of the students; the management communicates with students through us; students also consult us when they need assistance from the management*". According to SL 9 from SB, "*universities would not function properly without our contributions – as student leaders we understand what is required from the students at the ground level*". Participant SL 8 stated "*according to me, at the faculty level there isn't much that we do, we are more on the academic and social side, our roles are just basic and are not as a bigger deal compared to the SRCs*". Similarly, SL 2 from SA said, "*I cannot remember contributing to any decision or engaging with management; most meetings were attended by the chairperson and vice chairperson, and then they came and told us what the management had said*". She went on to say "*we did not contribute, we were told merely what the meeting was about and what management had said and done!*"

In a different vein SL 6 from SA commented that "*although we are not afforded an opportunity to make major decisions in the governance, like the SRCs, we still play a significant role of giving students an opportunity to make their voices heard at the faculty level*". Similarly, SL 3 said that "*students would be stranded without our assistance; we assisted with academic and*

financial appeals, we ensured that our students received academic, mental and health support”. He continued by saying that “as we serve students, we are also the protection layer of the management because we also alert them about what is happening in the ground so they are able to prevent some of the problems before they even arise”. SL2 mentioned that “even though being a student leader at the faculty level does not come with bigger responsibilities although it afforded us opportunities to grow personally and professionally”. She continued by saying, “we received a stipend for our contributions, and it was really a great sign that the role that we played was important”.

On the other hand, SL1 said “*student leadership is not what I thought it was, and I only realised that when we went to training upon my appointment; the training did not equip us with any skills to lead and represent the students who elected us.*” Fear was instilled in us as we were cooked and told not to this and that, that if we do, we will be suspended from our duties”. Echoing the above (SL 3) stated that “*after the training camp most student leaders just made it difficult for us to come with solutions that assist the students; because it was against the management and forgetting that we are serving the students not the management*”. Student leader SL 5 expressed the following, “*I think there are still issues of trust when it comes to management allowing student leaders to take part in the decision-making. The reason might be the fact that decisions require accountability and students might not be able to account for some of the decisions they make and, because of that, I think training needs to focus on preparing us to contribute to and improve the decision-making processes.*

The above accounts of their experiences presented by the student leaders from both SA and SB highlighted that the student leaders described themselves as ***student representatives*** who were democratically elected to be ***the voice of the student body***. Their roles and contributions included communicating with the management on behalf of the students and *vice versa*. Although the participating student leaders described that they were not participating in any decision-making process; their roles and contributions seemed to indicate that they were also ***playing a significant part in the functionality of the university***. While some student leaders were adamant about the benefits of ***student leadership training***, both personally and professionally, citing that they had been empowered by the training they had attended upon their appointments, others felt that the *training had been basic* and a complete waste of time as they were not taught anything related to being leader but just how they had to carry out duties. Finally, having presented the participants’ perceptions of the student leaders’ roles in and

contributions to a transforming university, the extent to which they participated in the decision-making processes are discussed next.

4.7. The extent to which student leaders participate in the decision-making processes

The student leaders were requested to share the extent to which they participated in the governance of transforming university. What they had to say was based on what they had experienced while serving in their respective portfolios. In responding to this question; participant SL 4 said *“according to my understanding of a transforming university; the participation of student leaders in decision-making means management engages with us so we can engage the whole student body – which way students are aware of what is happening”*. He further added that *“as a chairperson of a student structure, I need to be consulted and informed about the decisions that affect the students I represent and I should not be told what the final decision is without prior interaction”*. Similarly, SL 2 from SA commented that *“in my experience; there was no engagement between student leaders and management, we came with problems, management gave us solutions without even consulting us and the decision was final”*.

SL 1 from SA narrated that *“the management controlled everything, meetings where we were supposed to engage with management, decisions were ready made before we even met. We did not actively participate in a lot of things; we just received final decisions from management and then we took them to the students so, basically, we were the messengers*. Participant SL 4 expressed that *“we did not have much power and the biggest issue about being the messengers is that students think we do not want to help them, not knowing that our hands are tied”*. In illustration of the extent of their participation, student leader SL 5 said *“my role as chairperson was to attend meetings and forward student cases to the relevant committees. In meetings where students were supposed to be afforded opportunities to share views; we were either underrepresented or we were observers, so I suppose our participation was observation”*.

In a different vein, participant SL 6 commented “as student leaders we were included at a number of levels in both formal and informal decision-making while our contributions to the decision making varied with the context; I think some decisions required top management”. She continued by saying that *“when the management see the need to include students, it is brought down to us, as student leaders, to contribute a little to the final decision-making”*. SL 8 from SB mentioned that *“the management seemed to control everything because it is their job, it is what they do on a daily basis and, as student leaders, we only make time in our busy*

studying schedules, and some decisions were urgent". He further added that *"we cannot expect to be involved in the daily operations; our role is to assist students"*.

Participant SL 5 said *"during my term, we suggested several things in respect of which we saw change, meaning we were heard to some degree"*. Similarly, SL 4 also mentioned that *"the university does include student leaders in some extent, for example, the SRCs' views seem to be taken into consideration, but, however, I cannot fully attest to that because there is a lack of communication between the faculty house student leaders and the SRCs. I only met with the SRCs once when I was a chairperson and I cannot remember what it was about"*. SL 6 expressed the view that *"there are, in fact, a number of things the SRCs and the management can learn from faculty student leaders through different platforms and that is something I realised when I was serving as a chairperson"*.

The responses cited above indicates that, at the faculty level, student leaders ***participated to some extent*** as they were afforded opportunities to attend meeting and platforms where decision were made. As mentioned above, such decisions varied, in some decisions, ***the management controlled everything*** while *some decisions were urgent and could be not made according to the student leaders' timetables*, which may suggest that the ***participating student leaders were not part of the university daily operations and functions***. Instead, their role was to contribute marginally to decisions which had already been made and support students academically. However, the student leaders were adamant that *they needed to be consulted and informed about decisions*, which may suggest that, as student representatives, they felt the need to communicate the voices of the student body.

4.8. Challenges that student leaders encountered serving in their respective portfolios

After exploring the extent to which the student leaders participated in the governance of a transforming university, it was also significant to the study to investigate the challenges they encountered while participating in their student structures and respective portfolios. Accordingly, the following question was posed, *"What challenges do student leaders encounter in participating in the university's decision-making processes?"*

In responding to this question, SL 6 from SA stated, *"one of the biggest challenges was that we did not have a voice as student leaders, our role was to facilitate student issues and grievances"*. SL 10 from SB mentioned that it was even more serious that *"there are no platforms where student leaders of the university meet to discuss issues that we faced in the*

process of serving the students and finding various solutions. Instead, we fought with each other". SL 2 from SA revealed that "as leaders in a structure of 12 people with different opinions, we failed to find consensus and there was no way we could come up with solid decisions and agreements when there were already conflicts between us". SL 1 from SA responded to the question by saying "management makes things worse by putting us in the back seats yet they want us to portray a united front with them". He added that "they do not engage us in decision-making, everything they suggest is final". SL 4 from SA commented that "our challenge is we are told, we are basically voiceless, how can we give a voice to the students whom we serve when we do not have a voice?" He went on to say, "although we attend meetings, everything suggested by the management is final and, when we complain, they say 'we said this, we had a meeting', so we contributed nothing".

In addition to the challenges cited above, SL 3 from SA mentioned that *"there are budget constraints, which make it difficult for us to fulfil our action plans for the term. I ended up not doing everything I had planned to do in my portfolio because the house guardian, the treasurer and, sometimes, the chairperson would say that something is irrelevant, they cut the budget and then you end up not having enough money to continue with the event you had initially planned"*. SL 8 from SB replied to question by saying *"the challenging thing was balancing my time for studies and serving the students, it was really hard"*. SL 5 from SB commented *"it was also challenging dealing with sensitive cases involving students and sometimes doing more than was expected of you, just to make sure that students' issues were addressed"*.

In referring to the challenges they encountered in their respective portfolio while participating in a transforming university, SL 9 from SB revealed that *"We have no challenges in my structure, things are running smoothly because we assist each other with duties when someone struggles and behind with his/her academic work"*. SL 10 from SB went to mention the measures that helped the structure with the challenges it faced, saying *"although challenges risen in my journey as a leader; there were a number of support structures in the university that assisted us"*.

The responses from the participants from both SA and SB cited above indicate the various challenges they have encountered in their respective portfolios and structures. One of the common challenged revealed by the participants was **management's lack of engagement**, as a result of which the student leaders felt like they did not have a voice on the issues that affected them. A further contributory factor to the student leaders' challenges was the issue of **conflict**

between them. As group of 12 members, all with different opinions, they tended to fail to agree on one solution that worked for all of them. Other challenges cited related to *balancing their leader roles and academics, dealing with sensitive student affairs* and not being to fulfil their plans of action because of *student leader budgetary constraints.* However, although some of the participants from both SA and SB seemed to have encountered several challenges, some participants from SB stated that they had encountered *no challenges.* After exploring the challenges encountered, the next question sought to ascertain: “What strategies does the university have a place to overcome the above challenges?”

4.9. Strategies that the university has in place overcome the abovementioned challenges

Finally, as the last sub-research question, I wanted to establish, based on the student leaders’ experiences, the strategies the university had in place to overcome the challenges they encountered in their participation in their respective portfolios from their experiences.

In responding to this question, participant SL 6 from SA expressed that “*the university has a number of platforms that support students. However, in terms of the challenges I have encountered as a leader I went to our faculty house guardian and he always came up with the best solutions*”. SL 9 from SB said that “*we supported each other in times of need and, when issues were more pressing, we communicated with our house guardian and sometimes the issues were taken to the relevant offices and people, such a student support and academic support.*” In responding to this question SL 1 commented that “*I have never received or felt any support from the university, I always had issues with our chairperson for not dealing with problems as they arose, so I ended up resigning*”. SL 10 from SB revealed that “*there were challenges but the university has a number of support structures that assist student leader, we have a guardian who guides us and student affairs are always willing to assist us in our tasks as student leaders*”. Participant SL 5 commented that “*the university supports students in general, hence our role is to also support and guide students with their academics, financial affairs and residence*”. He went on to say, “*the problem only arises when we want to contribute to decisions, they do not trust our inputs*”.

According to the responses of the participants from both SA and SB, *the university had measures in place to overcome their challenges* in the form of different support structures that assisted them, for example, each student structure has a guardian who guides the student leaders in carrying out heir duties. However, despite the fact that some of the participants felt supported and assisted, other participants felt that it was difficult and *there was no support from the*

university. On the other hand, some student leaders felt that they did not even need support because *they had not experienced challenges* because they *supported each other in their duties*. After the interviews had been conducted I carried out a review of university and DHET documents that I deemed pertinent to the study in order to corroborate the participants' responses to the questions on transformation, their participation in the decision-making processes and the strategies the university had in place to involve them in the university decisions.

4.10. Document analysis

Documents were important sources of evidence which I used for addition information and to corroborate the evidence gleaned from the data which had been collected (Delpont, 2005; Maree, 2012; Creswell, 2014). I analysed both written documents from the Department of Higher Education (DHET) on the transformation of higher education institutions and policies on student leader participation from the university I investigated. The analysed documents included the following:

- White Paper 3 (Act 101 of 1997)
- Strategic Plan of the University
- University Constitution for Student Governance
- University policy on Faculty House Participation
- University policy on Day House Participation

As mentioned in chapter 3 of this study, documents are a rich source of data in an interpretative, case study research study. The university strategic plan together with White Paper 3 (Act of 1997) provided an understanding of, as well the reasoning behind and the implementation of transformation. The University Constitution for Student Governance as well as the policies on faculty house participation and day house participation shed light on the student leaders' participation and roles in and contributions to a transforming university. In order to establish the meaning and relevance of the above-mentioned documents, I critically perused these documents in an effort to acquire an in depth understanding of their contents. In addition, I also used both my field notes and the reflective diary from the interviews.

In terms of university transformation, I analysed documents that focused on the themes mentioned by the participants. Firstly, the theme referring to *the process of change* that seeks to redress the past exclusions which included the following, namely, *(a) changing institutional*

culture (b) curriculum and (c) language of instruction, secondly, accessibility (a) diversity and inclusivity and, thirdly, I also explored whether, as was the case with most other South African universities, the university in question regarded the (3) call for transformation as the status quo.

I also analysed policy documents relating to student leaders' participation in the governance of a transforming university in order to understand the (1) *involvement of and representation of students* in the university decision-making processes and (2) the *strategies the university had in place to involve these student leaders*. The policies of the respective student structures intended to understand the roles and responsibilities of student leaders in a transforming university.

4.10.1 Transformation: the process of change

The purpose of perusing the relevant was to determine, firstly, whether the student leaders' understanding of a transforming university and their perceptions of the concept were in line with what was contained in the documents. The transformation of higher learning institutions was, indeed, in line with the White Paper 3 of 1997 (Act 101 of 1997) (DoE, 1997). According to this document, the university system had to be transformed to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs and to respond to new realities and opportunities while, in addition, "the framework for change, that is, the higher education system, must be planned, governed and funded as a single national co-ordinated system. This will enable us to overcome the fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency which are the legacy of the past" (DoE, 1997).

4.10.2 University policies on student roles and responsibilities

The university policies on student involvement and the participation of student leaders at the faculty level were reviewed. According to the guideline for student representatives at both the faculty and day house, they engaged with the management through their positions and responsibilities and they represented the students at meetings, but they were not involved in the decision-making processes. Their participation and representation were to support the students with their academics, social needs and student appeals. The student leaders worked to help other students, but they were concerned about the overall lack of participation of mainstream students

4.10.3 Policies on the nature of student participation of governance in the university

The purpose of examining the documents was to establish the nature of the student leaders' participation and the extent to which they participated in the university. The study revealed that the student leaders at faculty level were not involved in the decision-making processes in the university governance. The extent of participation was to facilitate the voices of the students and provide feedback to the students on the decisions that were made and *vice versa* to management. They attended formal meetings but did not contribute on the final decisions. In cases where the student leaders needed to vote, they were outnumbered. The guideline on the involvement university student in governance activities indicated the following, namely, the Board of Governors had two student representatives out of its 25 members and the Senate had 13 undergraduate student members among its 107 members. Thus, despite their representation on these university bodies, the students deemed it to be insignificant given the percentage of students serving on these bodies in comparison to the overall number of faculty and support staff representatives.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter presented the profiles of both the participants and their respective student structures. The study findings emerged from the data generated from interviews and from the documents that were deemed significant to the purpose of the study. The findings were interpreted, and conclusions drawn in order to answer the research questions. The next chapter focuses on a discussion of the findings as they related to the literature review and the conceptual framework which guided the study. In addition, the chapter also presents recommendations arising from the study findings and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 of the study presented the findings both from the interviews which I conducted with the student leaders and from the document analysis. This chapter presents a brief discussion of the data analysis and the understandings extracted from the literature review in relation to the research questions. The findings from the empirical research which was conducted helped to discover answers to the research questions on the nature and extent of the student leaders' participation in the governance of their respective transforming university. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research on the research topic.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the main findings which were reported in chapter 4 and to present this findings in line with the interview questions which were aligned with the secondary research questions, which supported the primary research question; "*How student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university*"?. This question was critical as it elicited responses related to the aim of the study, namely, to explore how student leaders give meaning to the concept of a transforming university and how they experienced participation in the university's decision-making processes. The main findings that arose from participants' responses included the following:

- The student leaders' understanding of the concept of transformation included the process of change in respect of institutional culture, curricula and language of instruction as a way of promoting diversity, inclusivity and accessibility regardless of ethnicity, race, religion and colour.
- The student leaders' expectations of participation included equal representation in meetings where decisions that affected them are made and receiving proper leadership training that would empower them to contribute in the functionality of the university.
- The student leaders felt that, as a result of the basic training they had received, they were limited to playing a role in the students' academic and social life only while their contribution to the ready-made decisions was marginal as they were not trusted to play any role in decision-making processes.
- The challenges encountered experienced by the student leaders included a lack of consultation and engagement with management, budgetary constraints, academic

workload, conflict between them and dealing with sensitive student matters for which they were not prepared.

- The student leaders did receive support from the faculty house guardian and the university support structures while some of them supported each other in the performance of their duties when their workloads were heavy. On the other hand, some of them did not receive any support from the university.

5.2. Discussion

The main objective of this study was to explore the extent to which student leaders participate in governance of a transforming university. Chapter 4 of the study detailed the experiences of student leaders in relation to the research topic. Using the ladder of citizenship participation framework, the study established the extent/level to which the student leaders participated in their respective structures and in the governance of the university. In this chapter I compare their discussions and the findings from recent available literature on the research topic. Finally, based on what emerged from the conceptual framework that underpinned this study and the university policies that were reviewed; I present recommendations in relation to student leaders' participation in the governance of a transforming university and the benefits of such participation to a university that is transforming.

5.2.1. Student leaders' understanding of the concept of a transforming university

The student leaders from both the student structures, namely, SA and SB, ascribed several meanings to and voiced various understandings to the concept of a transforming university. The student leaders who participated in this study related a transforming university a public institution that is undergoing the following processes of change, namely, promotion of diversity and inclusivity and making the university space accessible to everyone regardless of race, socio-economic background and gender by changing the institutional culture, curricula and medium of instruction. It was clear from the opinions expressed by the participants that transforming a university is an ongoing process to transition from past practices. Informed by the documents pertinent to this study, such as the university's strategic plan (vision and mission) and the White Paper of 1997 (Act 101 of 1997), it was clear transformation was taking place at the university I investigated.

5.2.1.1. Diversity and inclusivity

It emerged from the data collected from the empirical investigation that the definitions of a transforming university proffered by the majority of the participants were based on diversity and inclusivity with their understandings and interpretations of the concept being informed by their experiences both as students and as leaders in a transforming university. Participant SL 6 stated that “*transformation has to do with the process of change, and, in that process, there are policies, rules and regulations put in as measures to correct the wrongs of the past systems and injustices*”. In line with the above participant’s view; Malabou (2008, in Du Preez et al., 2016) comments that “to transform is essentially about change and evolution”. According to Norris (2001), transformation is a form of enacted change that is planned and is intended to bring about significant changes in the way in which an institution is managed. The transformation of universities in South Africa is based on Education White Paper 3 of 1997, which emphasises that transformation must be seen as including diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, epistemology, curricula, equality, institutional and management structures, teaching and learning (DHET, 2013; Du Preez et al., 2016). According to Norris (2001) and Mzangwa (2019), this suggests that “a university that is transforming manages the diversity which is created by affirmative action interventions to change organisational culture; reconceptualising appropriate leadership styles; restructuring organisations; reformulating what constitutes good teaching; and developing staff and students to work in an organisation that is very different from what it used to be”.

The analysis of relevant documents of the university under investigation highlight *the importance of students and staff in different departments, faculties and structures* while the policies support and encourage the *promotion of diversity and inclusion* in all areas. Firstly, they refer to structural diversity as the *numerical and proportional representation of students from different racial/ethnic groups in the student body while their goal is to ensure student diversity (black, white, female, international and Afrikaans students)*. Secondly, the documents mention *the access of students from different socio-economic backgrounds with their mission being to recruit students across the spectrum of urban and rural areas*. Thirdly, the documents state the need for a *diversity of academic staff that engages diverse students*. This aligns with the view that interaction between diverse people impacts on diverse information and ideas, thus enabling a university to prepare its students to become active participants in a society that is becoming diverse (DoE, 1997; DHET, 2016).

However, despite the documented policies of the university in question, recent studies by Albertus (2019) revealed the data from 2018 indicated that, at that time, the majority of institutional hierarchies at South African universities were dominated by white academics, while non-whites in the university system were still being made to feel and think that they were “not good enough” because they were constantly undermined and undervalued. In contrast, Nordling (2019) is of the opinion that the racial transformation of historically white dominated universities ended in the early 1990s, but that the implementation of policies, which are in place, to increase the proportion of black staff has been slow.

The data from the interviews revealed that “*there is still much that needs to be done about diversity and inclusion*” (SL 4) while, according to SL 1, “*the university has a long way to go in changing its systems because there is still quite a number of things within the university that reflect the past injustices*”. Student leader SL 3 also mentioned “*that policies are just there, for the university to look like they are transforming. As Black students we are subjected to racism, and I know that it is difficult to prove but it is still happening* (SL1). For SL 3, the policies look good on paper but what students experience on a daily basis is different”. Participant SL 1 echoed this view by saying “*policies are just there; for the university to look like they are transforming on the outside but, in the inside, there are systems and institutional cultures that exclude blacks, international and non-Afrikaans white students and this is what I have personally experienced at the university as a student*”. In support of SL 1’s view, participant SL 5 added that “*I experienced exclusion in the classroom where a white student asked a question in Afrikaans, irrespective of the changed language policy, which states English is the only medium instruction of the university*”. Participant SL 5 commented that “*I could have benefited from the question that was asked in Afrikaans, but I could not hear a word and it frustrated me. If I had posed a question in Isizulu to a black, Zulu speaking lecture, it would have been said that I am racist as some groups of students would have been excluded from the lesson*”.

The responses and data above are supported by Soudien (2010, cited in Du Preez et al., 2016) who argued that “racism continues to be deeply present within the system, structurally and ideologically” and that universities “harbour, nurture and reproduce particular notions of society, the institution, the self and the other”. In addition, studies by Suransky and Van der Merwe (2016) and Albertus (2019) indicate that many non-white members of the university community feel invisible and marginalised and suffer silently, fearing reproach from their white colleagues, in the way in which students feel silenced by institutional structures which

are dominated by whites. Zondi (2017) is of the opinion that the institutional hierarchy of colonialism and apartheid has positioned white academics at the apex of academia and the non-whites at the bottom. In this vein, Albertus (2019) argued that “the institutionalisation of racist cultural practices will require longer and more extensive interventions to transform South African institutions and to resocialise racists into new ways of thinking and acting”.

The interviews revealed that some of the student leaders were aware of the role an individual may play in the process of transforming a university. For example, SL 10 stated that *“for me, irrespective of colour, race or language, we all have a role to play in transforming our institutions through interacting with diverse groups”*. According to the DHET (2016), diverse interactions help students to hone their critical thinking and prepare them to succeed in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world and, in this way help them to break down stereotypes, reduce bias and enable universities to fulfil their role of opening doors for all students. However, although some most participants agreed that there were platforms for discussions, SL1 commented *“there is no use of engaging and sharing ideas because, after that, nothing happens, you go back to the classrooms that are supposed to be diverse and find students who are still free to use the language of the minority, thus what is the point of talking? Most of the things we have suggested on those platforms have not, up until today, been implemented, For example, let us look at how far we have travelled and the things the university has done to change thus far (SL 1). SL 4 further added that “the university tends to change the names of buildings and residence from Afrikaans to English/African names, then say, “they have transformed”*.

Suransky and van der Merwe (2016) caution that the transformation of universities is aimed at equity and that transition in respect of significant aspects such as the access of students from different socio-economic backgrounds and changing the curriculum to accommodate all university students, irrespective of race, religion and ethnicity, is a necessity and not an option.

5.2. Access of students from different socio-economic backgrounds

The important key of public higher learning institutions (HEIs) is to ensure a diversity of students with respect to race, ethnicity and socioeconomic backgrounds (DHET, 2016). The Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997), also gives expression to diversity as a supporting transformation principle by committing to “create an enabling institutional environment and culture that is sensitive to, affirms diversity and promotes reconciliation” (DoE, 1997). This is a result of the past injustices of racism and

exclusivity in relation to educational opportunities and perpetrated by the previously white only universities (DHE, 2016). However, institutions differ in terms of the way in which they define and promote diversity. In most cases, such this aligns with their educational mission and goals (DHET, 2016).

The goal of the university investigated in this study was to recruit students across a spectrum of urban and rural areas, thus suggesting access both for students from different socio-economic backgrounds and for historically disadvantaged students. The participants in this study revealed that, at the time of the study, the number of black students, irrespective of whether they could afford the fees or not had increased markedly. Participant SL 5 revealed that *“almost all students who cannot afford to pay university fees are given government grant which, in most instances, cover their fees, residences and books”*. Furthermore in line with this view, student leader SL 6 indicated that *“there are a number of structures that support students with the various challenges they encounter on their journey within the university and there are quite a number of changes that makes us feel that we are, indeed, in a public institution that is working towards transforming”*.

SL 3 commented that *“universities that are said to be transforming are accessible to students from different backgrounds but, then again, access in some ways does exclude students from poor backgrounds and students who are disadvantaged because of inequalities in the learning environment, such as the use of Afrikaans in some teaching spaces”*. Venter (2015) argued that a public transforming university denotes an affordable institution for students who are from different background, thus implying fees should be payable and, most importantly, those fees should accommodate students who are funded by government grants such as NSFAS.

However, Albertus (2019) expressed the view that there are disparities in access to funding and quality such as the inequalities that are prevalent in the higher education system in South Africa. She further argued that the *#FeesMustFall* movement provided evidence of a lack of financial aid for higher education which is compounded by the economic exclusion of non-whites by restricting them to working class jobs. In a similar vein, participant SL 3 stated that *“the number of access and enrolment of black people within the university should not be a true reflection of what is really happening; what one needs to do is to look at is the number of students completing degrees”*. In support of this view SL 1 further stated that *“in many ways, access excludes many students from poor backgrounds as there are a number of challenges that those students face in their journey at the university”*. In a way it may even be said that

access to university makes it difficult for students who are from poor backgrounds because they often accumulate debt in relation to the fees for degrees they may not even have even completed or, if they did complete their degrees, they spent the early part of their careers paying back such debt (Albertus, 2019).

Participant SL 1 expressed the view that *“access should mean that students who are afforded the opportunity to study should be supported in various ways. At the end of the day students should be put first as we are the ones who bring business in this university, we are the clients and we should be afforded an opportunity to have a say about the services offered because, these services affect us”*. On the other hand, some participants argued that the *“universities should offer free education to those who qualify to enrol”* (SL 3). Maringira and Gukurume (2017) mentioned the resistance movement, #FEESMUSTFALL, in 2016 was intended both to fight against high fees and also to force that Minister of Higher Education to ensure reasonable fees for students. Participant SL 5 revealed that *“the fees are still a bit steep at this university, it’s about time that it changed”*, while others argued that the universities cannot offer free education. For example, SL 10 stated that *“it is just not possible for fees to be free and that is why there are grants that help those who cannot afford to pay the fees”*.

The problem is that the apartheid legacy has imposed real limitations on the ability of some families to fund an education for the younger generations in the face of economic inequality (Soudien, 2010). However, it would appear that the higher learning sector is aware of the issue as a large proportion of students from both poor families and middle class families are now registered at universities because the DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training) has provided funds through NSFAS to ensure that capable students are not excluded from higher education because of poverty (DoE, 1997, 2001; DHET, 2016). The transformation of higher learning involves not only abolishing all existing forms of unjust differentiation but also putting in place empowerment measures including financial support to bring about equal opportunities for both individuals and institutions (DoE, 2001). Thus, higher education seems to be ready to redress the past inequalities and, hence, the White Paper 3 (1997), the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) and a transformation briefing (2010). However, there remains much still to be done in terms of implementing the policies (DoE, 2001), and transforming institutions to align with their mission as stipulated in the national framework (DoE, 1997).

A second aim of the National Plan for Higher Education is to give effect to achieving the vision and mission of the White Paper 3 as it was found that institutional cultures were ignoring the need to bring about change in the historically whites only universities with evidence suggesting the need for change that would accommodate both black staff and students (DoE, 2001). This view was echoed by participant SL1 when he stated that *“there is a need to change to a curriculum that is more relevant to the African context”*. According to Soudien (2001), who investigated discrimination in public higher institutions, *the transformation in HEIs is “moving slowly”, because of the disjunction between policy and the real-life experiences of both students and staff in teaching and learning, languages and curriculum* (DoE, 2008; HESA, 2010).

5.3. Curriculum needs to change

Student leader SL1 voiced that *“our faculty has a curriculum transformation committee, so I would like to see the curriculum change because, for mem there is still much that needs to be done in this area”*. According participant SL4, *a transforming university should offer more decolonised education; as in teaching us more Afro-centric theories that we can use in the real situations, unlike teaching us the Euro-centric theories that we cannot apply in our own context*. Furthermore, for SL5, *“a transforming university is more identifying of works for students and what is not; I am currently doing my practicals in a township school and I tried to apply the methods they taught me at the university, and it does not work because it is not for that context”*. SL2 commented that *“in the teaching and learning spaces we are doing what we are supposed to do – to pass the course and not necessarily to apply what we have learnt in our real-life situations. I think the only major step this university has taken, which seems to be transforming, is the change to English as the only medium of instruction because it accommodates black, Afrikaans, white and international students”* (SL6). Participant SL2 expressed the view that *“there are a number of platforms that seek to change the curriculum, but nothing has changed”*.

Many of the study findings were related to policy issues, which could, both directly and indirectly, be linked to the initial policy changes suggested in the White Paper of 1997 and also the Report of the MCTHE of 2008 which suggest that policy changes are concerned with curricula, language, access as well as institutional culture (Du Preez et al., 2016). For Albertus (2019), *the call for the decolonisation of education and institutional structures by South African university students is rooted in the struggle for social justice, equity and equality*.

According to Elgot (2016), The rationale behind this call is that the conditions of inequality continue to exist while the promises relating to the *'transformation of the unequal society are empty and have pushed another generation of South African youth into struggle and advocacy for dialogue with the formerly white controlled universities which appear to be slow or resistant to change'*. As a result, university students embark on strikes and protests that see to speak to change. For example, participant SL4 stated that *"the only language the management understands is protest and revolt, for example, let us look at the 2015 #FEESMUSTFALL"*.

The significant findings from the participants' responses suggested three important aspects: (1) change in institutional cultures to break through the historical processes of racism and discrimination (2) change in the existing curricula which are perceived as denying Africanism and (3) the removal of financial barriers which systematically exclude students from poor backgrounds and allow a small number of affluent students access to higher education. The studies by Albertus (2019) concurred with the statements above when he asserted that "policies are there and need implementation, but all that requires sustained student activism and public political action, same as the actions that were taken prior to 1994".

5.4. Participation and involvement in the university's decisions

The views and perceptions of the respondents in relation to their participation in the decision-making spaces of the university governance suggest that the student leaders were not satisfied with the roles they played. They indicated that they were merely the facilitators of information, from students to management and then from management back to students. Although the role of student leaders is to represent the student body, student leaders in this study revealed that they were just messengers and they did not really have a voice. *"In the institutional autonomy student leaders represent the views of other students but they are sometimes regarded as minors or junior members"* (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015). This statement coincides with the findings of Lizzio and Wilson (2009) that "student leaders felt that, in some decisions, they were just like rubber stamps to indicate they were part of the decision". For example, they assisted in the academics, but they did not represent students in academic decision-making with their representation contribution to the university being minimal. They also acknowledged that they played a role in the functionality of the university by supporting the students but not by having an impact on the decisions that were made.

As cited in the university policies, *'the major role of the student leaders is that of the representative as they represent the voice of the student body before the university administrators'*. Universities are sites of democratic citizenship and, hence, "student representation is a means by which to inculcate democratic values and exercise democratic practices" (Kouba, 2017; Luescher-Mamashela, 2015; Tamrat, 2016). The role of the student leaders in the university governance is that of a stakeholder and they should, therefore, have a say in university matters which have a bearing on their lives (Tamrat, 2016). *The interests of all the participants within the decision platforms should be given equal consideration* (Kouba, 2017).

The study revealed that the student leaders felt that management controlled everything. They expressed the need for transparency and for being informed and consulted when decisions that affect them are taken. Furthermore, they indicated that they wanted equal representation in meetings and on committees. When decisions are made through voting it is difficult for the students to be treated fairly in the decision spaces because there is no equal representation (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015).

The student leaders quoted to the variations in the effectiveness of their representation in the different departments. It was found that *the student leaders were more effective in the less important matters with major decisions being made by senior management*. This was the situation because the university management was clearly of the opinion that *involving students in issues such as curriculum transformation would be inefficient and because students are not professional curriculum creators and, hence, their possible inefficiency*. However, by voicing of their demands the university management could be made aware of gaps in their administration (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015).

In conclusion, student leaders' expectations in relation to their participation in the university's decision-making processes included equal representation at meetings where decisions that affects them are made and proper leadership training that would empower them to contribute to the functionality of the university.

5.5. The importance and benefits of involving student leaders in the university's governance

There is definite value in involving the students in the governance of a university and it has been found that this is of benefit to both the institution and the individual student leader. In the ladder of community participation as per the conceptual framework that guided this study,

student leaders are members of the university community. The findings indicated that ‘the students felt that they were practically the university and so, without them, there would be no university’. As indicated in this research, it is therefore, important that students are included in the governance of the university because they are the link between the management/administrators and the student body.

The fundamental role of a university is to transmit knowledge to the students. A working relationship develops between the students and the faculty senior management through engagement and interaction (Klemenčič, 2012). The student leaders also felt that their involvement in the governance of the university resulted in their becoming more responsible and more confident. This is in line with the study by Lizzio and Wilson (2009), which revealed that *‘involving student leaders in activities such as first year seminars, internships and mentoring enabled them to succeed in relation to both academic and social integration’.*

In addition, the participants in this study felt that their involvement in the affairs of the university reduced the confrontations between the student body and the university management as it ensures stability and continuity in the university leadership. The student leaders maintained that they were the protection layer of the management, and that ensured that the university’s day-to-day operations could proceed peacefully. As stakeholders involved in the decision-making processes, the students welcomed policy changes which happened without their having to confront the university. In line with the participants’ responses, Luescher-Mamashela (2015) states that “having students as partners helped the management to prevent chaos from happening”.

The interview finding revealed that the student leaders had managed to convince the management to launch a teaching practice clothes drive which helped students who could not afford to buy clothing required for practicals. In addition, through negotiations they had been able to convince the faculty management to extend library hours during examinations. The student leaders had not been forced to accept the above as they had participated as an internal constituency ((Luescher-Mamashela, 2008). Some student leaders were, however, fulfilled with the roles they played. They did, however, also suggest that they would like to be able to communicate their needs through proposals and to see policies being implemented.

The study indicated the benefits of involving students in decision-making as this made them feel important and encouraged them to seek solutions that contributed to improving the university and leading to peace at the university (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015; Tamrat, 2016).

The students' participation in the university's governance empowered them and, as a result, prepared them to play a significant role in a broader society.

As Lizzio and Wilson (2009) rightly point out, '*students are similar to consumers who are concerned about the products with which they are provided and, hence, the university is forced to come up with innovations to ensure the satisfaction of its customers*'. The involvement of student leaders facilitates the evaluation of the curricula and the teaching process, thus providing direct feedback from the consumers who pay for the services to those providing the service (Klemenčič, 2012). In addition, it leads to creation of university alumni who will be its representatives in society. It is through a shared involvement at every level of the university structures that students are given the opportunity to identify themselves with their institution and attain the highest possible levels of academic and personal development (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011; Klemenčič, 2012; Kouba, 2017).

5.6. Student leaders' challenges in participating in the university governance

The challenges experienced by the student leaders in their participation in the university's governance a lack of consultation and engagement with management, budgetary constraints, academic workload, conflict between themselves and dealing with sensitive student matters for which they were not prepared.

The students perceived the university's governance structure as constraining because they felt they did not have any voice in the governance structure with respect to making decisions and/or policies. *I assume that the SRCs participate in the decision-making of the university governance structure, but it is conservative. Apparently at the faculty level students have not so much voice in the governance as we are not involved in meetings or the taking of any decisions. They do not have much impact on the outcome. Only the chairperson attends and just give us feedback. Again, the senate comprises professors and other people, academic and non-academic, and there are other executives and we are not at that level* (SL1 from SB).

It was possible to conclude from the students' responses that the university and the student bodies did, in fact, adhere to the rules of conduct outlined for the various governing bodies but which students regarded as too formal, inaccessible, unwelcome and with a "*lack consultation and transparency*" (SL 1). Thus, the students were not in favour of such rules of conduct.

The students demonstrated that they had only a partial understanding of the university management organisational chart. However, from their point of view, it was too complicated. Moreover, with respect to the student governing bodies, they considered the way in which the central student association operated as complicated as the university organisation. They also thought that student leaders at faculty levels, in both the faculty and day houses, should work with the SRCs to inform them about what is happening at the ground level. There were other aspects of university governance of which the students were either not fully aware or did not consider. For example, they were not aware of the examinations policy as it is essential that students focus on their examinations but, on the other hand, decisions on the university's day to day operations cannot wait until the student leaders finish their examinations as the majority of such decisions are often urgent.

It was apparent from the data that students did not seem to be concerned about the roles the university was performing but, instead, they were concerned about the way in which the university was carrying out the duties where they were involved. As discussed above, the students complained about the slow pace of the university's transformation, the number of policies that seemed to require urgent implementation, the complex communication channels and having to deal with students although they were not trained to do so.

It was clear from the policies which were reviewed that the university had in place all the mechanisms required to involve students in its governance activities. As mentioned earlier, of the 25 members of the board of governors, two were student representatives while, of the 107 members of the senate, 13 were undergraduate student members. Thus, despite the fact that there were student representatives on these university bodies had, the students considered this to be insignificant given the percentages in comparison to the overall number of faculty and support staff representatives (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). In addition, they were of the opinion that the students involved in these bodies did not have any voice because they assumed that, when decisions were made on any issue (e.g. any academic matter or service), the students members were either not consulted or, if they were consulted, the decisions that were made that did not reflect their wishes with both the faculty and day house student leaders expressing the same opinions.

5.7. The findings according to the conceptual framework

- According to the ladder of community participation, the lens that guided this study, student leaders are considered as the university members of the university community. However, their contribution to the decision-making appeared to be minimal.
- *‘Management had the final say in decisions about both learning and teaching with the student leaders considered to be inefficient in matters relating to the curriculum’*. However, as members of the university, their contribution should be considered significant because they play a role in supporting students with their academics, thus suggesting that the student leaders are involved to some extent. The ladder of community participation conceptual framework proved to be relevant in understand “student leaders’ participation in the university’s decision-making processes”.
- The ladder of community participation conceptual framework helped me to gauge the level of student participation and, therefore, the conceptual framework was clearly relevant in the understanding of *‘the nature and extent of student leaders’ participation in the governance of a transforming university’*. Student leaders as legitimate stakeholders of a university and they are elected to their positions. Accordingly, they have the opportunity to be members’ various university committees where they represent the student needs. It is however significant to mention that, *‘the demands of the students are implemented only if they are in line with university policy’* (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). As indicated by the collected data; *the management of the university relies on the student leaders for information from the student body and to pass on information to the students*. As a space for the learning and change of the student leaders’ participation, the university’s implementation of a single, coordinate governance appeared to be somewhat slow. The conceptual framework revealed that all the power rested with the university senate and management.
- As Lizzio and Wilson (2009) pointed it; “students, as the consumers of education, have a say in the university as a market enterprise”. In contrast, the data revealed that the student leaders were the facilitators and messengers of communication between the student body and the management.
- The student leaders highlighted that, *‘as they are paying for the services they receive, they have a right to know how their funds are being utilised through their participation and involvement in the governance of the university’*. As important stakeholders they require power to influence decision; Luescher-Mamashela, (2013) also added that it is

vital that the university takes into account the voices of the student leaders in matters that affect them.

5.8. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to “explore the extent to which student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university”. I conducted interviews with the participants in order to investigate their experiences of participation in; their roles and their contributions to the university’s decision-making processes. The key findings indicated that the role of the student leaders appeared to be merely to facilitate the voices of the student body and to pass on to management information they received from the students. According to the ladder of citizenship, the nature of the student leaders’ participation was on the “*tokenism level*”; (3) informing and (4) consultation, thus implying that the participants were allowed “*to hear, and they were heard*” in the decision-making processes as they represented the student body but they lacked power to ensure that the views of the students were taken into account in the final decision-making.

Based on the above findings and the university policies that were reviewed, the study proposed recommendations based on the ladder of citizenship participation conceptual framework. Rung 5, placation, higher level of tokenism and rung 6, partnership, which enables student leaders to negotiate and engage with management in the decision-making processes relevant for the policies and practice of a university that is seeking to transform from the inequalities of the past (DoE, 1997). In line with the frameworks and policies of a transforming university, students are the most important members of the university community and, hence, their participation in the governance of the institution is significant. The relevant literature, policies reviewed, and findings of this study suggest the value and benefits of the involvement of students in the governance of a transforming university.

5.9. Recommendations

The ‘participation of student leaders in the governance of the university’ is crucial. It through their participation that the higher learning spaces can be peaceful, if ignored, they might engage in negative behaviour that results to disruptive situations on campuses. Empowering the student leaders will result in a positive image of the university as they are the representatives of the students. However, if student leaders are to be involved effectively in the decision-making

processes of a transforming university, it is vital that the following factors are taken into account;

- Firstly, the university management should regard the students as important members of the university community and consider using the ladder citizenship participation as a theory to guide the process of “student participation in the university’s decision-making” to enable the student leaders to negotiate and engage with management in the decision-making processes. This implies placing the student leaders on rung 5, placation; higher level of tokenism and rung 6, partnership but not granting them total power as some decisions will have to be in line with the policies before they may be implemented (Luescher-Mamashela, 2012).
- In order to ensure that student leaders attend all the meetings where students are represented, the university management should take into account the student leaders’ timetables when they organise meetings so that the students may also be part of decisions that are taken.
- In terms of sharing information, transparency and ensuring partnerships; it is vital that the university managers create platforms to engage the students about the issues that affect them directly because, when they are allowed to contribute to the decisions taken, the university itself benefits while the students are empowered to play a role in a democratic society. In this way student leaders will be viewed as contributing partners and not just as a source of information.
- The university’s Department of Student Affairs (DSA) should offer and equip student leaders with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to execute their duties and obligations. The training which student leaders receive upon appointment should prepare them for leadership roles, thus ensuring that the student leaders will be trusted to contribute in the decisions that require accountability.
- The DSA should offer support to student leaders to assist them to cope with dealing with personal issues affecting the students they serve and also to assist those student leaders who seem to be find it difficult to balance their academics with their leadership roles.
- Finally, in terms of equal representation, the guardians of the student leaders’ structures should play a role in ensuring that students are not outnumbered in meetings that require voting and in the composition of committees.

5.10. Further research

This study focused on the nature of and the extent to which student leaders participate in the governance of a transforming university. In order to do so, the study interviewed student leaders from a faculty and a day house. Further research could focus on areas such as the SRCs who represent the student body of the entire university to investigate their involvement and participation in the governance of a public, transforming university using both qualitative and quantitative research instruments. This is an extremely interesting area of research. This study discovered that student leaders are empowered by the process of participation and that positively impact student leadership and their academic performance.

5.11. Concluding statement

This chapter provided an overview of the study research and also presented the results of the data analysis. Based on the findings, the study emphasises the need for the public transforming universities to adopt the ladder of citizenship participation, in particular, rungs (5) and (6), as the theory to guide the participation of “student leaders in the decision-making processes of a transforming university” in order to create enabling environment in which the students may participate effectively and, in this way, realise the concept of co-operative governance as amended by Act 101 of 1997, and also gives details a university’s implementation of transformation policies.

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Annexures

Annexure A: Ethics Clearance Certificate



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

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EM 19/03/08**

DEGREE AND PROJECT

MEd

Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university

INVESTIGATOR

Ms Pontsho Moepya

DEPARTMENT

Education Management and Policy Studies

APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY

29 July 2019

DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

30 November 2020

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Funke Omidire

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Omidire', written over a horizontal line.

CC

Ms Bronwynne Swarts

Dr MA Nthontho

Dr TA Ogina

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 B: Letter requesting permission from the student affairs



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

538 Tuksdorp
Grosvenor & South Street
Hatfield
Pretoria
0002

23 July 2019

The Director
Student affairs
Roosmaryn Building
Lynnwood Road and Roper Street
Hatfield campus
Pretoria
0002

Dear Dr. Matete Madiba

Re: Permission to undertake research with Faculty Houses(Education and Docendo)

I, Pontsho Moepya, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a master's degree in education hereby kindly apply for permission to conduct the study titled '**participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university**'. The purpose of this study is to explore student leaders' experiences of their participation in the governance of a transforming South African university. I have selected the student leaders in the Faculty of Education (House Education and Docendo House) to be part of this study because they are serving in the governance of the South African university that is said to be transforming. In this letter, I would like to relate what may happen if such permission is granted. 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 in the faculty.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The process will be in the form of semi-structured interviews where the student leaders will be requested to spend some time sharing their experiences of participation in the governance of a transforming South African university.
- The transformation and governance policies of the university will also be analysed. It is from these policies where I expect to get the guidelines on what, why and how the university deals with the participation of student leaders in its governance processes.
- If I am granted permission, I intend to have two sessions in two days at any time convenient to student leaders in order to avoid disruption of their studies (the first day will be for research activities, which will take 45 to 60 minutes and one day for member checking which is intended to take at least 30 minutes).
- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, I will keep the names of the student leaders and that of the faculty/university and contribution to the study private except if it is their wish to be named.
- It is unlikely student leaders will be harmed; however, they may feel uncomfortable during the interviews, which may have psychological impact on them. If safety problems do arise, they can speak to me and I will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about their safety, I am required to inform the University of Pretoria.
- Student leaders will receive no incentives for participating in this study. However, I do hope their participation in the study will lead to possible reflection on their various roles in the governance of a transforming university, which should make them feel good about themselves on their contribution. Although I 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: Pontsho Moepya

Student number: 11248875

Telephone: 063 085 1129

E-mail: pontshomoepya90@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho

Telephone: 012 420 2499

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Annexure C: Approval Letter from the Department of the Student affairs



Department of
Student Affairs

Departement Studentesake
Kgoro ya Merero ya Bathuti

22 August 2019

Dear Ms Moeypa

Request for approval to conduct research

Your request to conduct research at the University of Pretoria amongst student leaders is approved for the research title below.

Research title: Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university

Approval to conduct this research is subject to the Ethics Committee ruling.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Matete Madiba'.

Dr Matete Madiba
Director: Student Affairs

Roosmaryn Building; Office 1-21
University of Pretoria
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0) 12 420 4001,
www.up.ac.za

Annexure D: Letter requesting permission from the Dean



Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

538 Tuksdorp
Grosvenor & South Street
Hatfield
Pretoria
0002

23 July 2019

The Dean
Faculty of Education
Administration Building
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Dear Professor, Schoole

Re: Permission to undertake research at University of Pretoria 's Faculty of Education

I Pontsho Moepya, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a master's degree in education hereby kindly apply for permission to conduct the study titled '**participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university**'. The purpose of this study is to explore student leaders' experiences of participation in the governance of a transforming South African university. I have selected the Faculty of Education 's student leaders to be part of this because there are serving in leadership of the South African university that is said to be transforming. In this letter, I want to tell you about what may happen if such permission is granted. 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 in the university.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The transformation and governance policies of the university will also be analysed. It is from the policies where I expect to get the guidelines on what, why and how the university handles with the participation of student leaders in its governance processes.
- If I am granted permission, I intend to have two sessions in two days at any time convenient to student leaders in order to avoid disruption of their studies (the first day will be for research activities, which will take 30 to 45 minutes and one day for member checking 30 minutes). These research activities will not take place during lecture times.
- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, I will keep the names of the student leaders and that of the university and contribution to the study anonymous except if it is their wish to be named.
- I do not think anything bad or risky will happen to the student leaders in this study. If problems do arise, they can speak to me and I will consult on the issue, and/or refer them to someone who is best able to help. If there is a serious problem about their safety, I am required to inform the University of Pretoria. I have provided the information of the campus psychologist, should they need the assistance.
- Student leaders will receive no incentives for participating in this study. However, I hope that their participation in this study will make them feel good about themselves.

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

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Pontsho Moepya

Student number: 11248875

Telephone: 063 085 1129

E-mail: pontshomoepya90@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho

Telephone: 012 420 2499

E-mail: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr.Ogina

E-mail: teresa.ogina@up.ac.za

Telephone: 012 420 2445

Annexure E: Approval Letter from the Dean



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education: Office of the Dean

24 June 2019

Ms Pontsho Moepya
538 Tuksdorp
C/o Grosvenor & South Street
Hatfield

pontshomoepya90@gmail.com

Dear Ms Moepya


Request for permission to conduct research

Your request to conduct research in the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, refers.

Research title: Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university

I am pleased to inform you that permission is granted.

Kind regards


Prof Chika Schoole
Dean: Faculty of Education

cc Prof L Ebersöhn

Room 4-7, Administration Building
Groenkloof Campus, Groenkloof
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20
Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 5721
Fax +27 (0)12 420 4215
www.up.ac.za

Kantoor van die Dekaan: Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Ofisi ya Hlogo ya Lefapha: Lefapha la Thuto

Annexure F: Invitation letter to participants



Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

538 Tuksdorp
Grosvenor & South Street
Hatfield
Pretoria
0002

23 July 2019

Dear participant

Invitation to participate in research

I Pontsho Moepya, a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a master's degree in education hereby kindly invite you to participate in the study titled '**participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university**'. The purpose of this study is to explore student leaders' experiences of participation in the governance of a transforming South African university. I have identified you to participate because you are a student leader in a transforming university. In this letter I want to tell you about what may happen if you agree to participate in this study. Once you understand what the study is about, you can decide if you want to participate or not. If you agree, you will be requested to sign a consent form attached to this invitation letter.

The process of fieldwork is detailed below:

- The data collection process will be in the form of semi-structured interviews where you will be requested to spend some time-sharing your experience of participation in the governance of the university.
- If you agree to participate in this study, I intend to have two sessions in two days at any time convenient to you in order to avoid disruption of your studies (the first day will be for research activities, which will take 30 to 45 minutes and second day for member checking 30 minutes).

- Please note that these research activities will not take place during lecture times.
- Please note that even when the consent form is signed, you will still be free to withdraw from research at anytime without giving reason(s). Withdrawing from this study will not have any effect. When you decide to withdraw, I am required to delete/destroy the information you have already provided.
- In addition, you have the right to decline to answer any questions posed in interview.
- To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, I will keep your name and that of the university anonymous except if you wish to be named.
- I do not think anything bad or risky will happen to you in this study. If problems do arise, you can speak to me and I 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, I am required to inform the University of Pretoria. The details of the campus psychologist are below, should you need help after the study have been conducted.
- There will be no incentives for participating in this study. However, your participation in this study will make you feel good about yourself.

Should you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this study, you can contact Dr. Nthontho on [012 420 2499](tel:0124202499).

Yours sincerely

Researcher: Pontsho Moepya

Student number: 11248875

Telephone: 063 085 1129

E-mail: pontshomoepya90@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho

Telephone: 012 420 2499

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Dr Ogina

E-mail: teresa.ogina@up.ac.za

Telephone: 012 420 2445

Annexure G: Interview schedule



Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

The student leader (University Structure A &B member) interview schedule

Time of interview: _____ Duration: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee _____ Pseudonym: _____

Male/Female _____

Race: _____

Study title: Participation of student leaders in governance of a transforming university.

Study purpose: To explore student leaders' experiences of participation in the governance of a transforming South African university

Interview procedure: The interview will consist of 7 (seven) questions of which you are not obliged to answer all of them should you feel uncomfortable to do so.

Note: There are neither wrong nor right answers in this interview.

Remember:

1. Everything we share and discuss will be treated as confidential and will not be revealed to a third party. I am interested in your personal understanding and experiences of your participation in the governance of a transforming university, your roles and responsibilities as a student leader.
2. You are welcome to seek clarity should the need be.
3. Everything we share and discuss will be audio recorded.
4. You can stop participating at any time without giving any reason.

- a) What challenges do you encounter in playing your role?
 - I. What strategies have you used to overcome the challenges above?
 - II. Have the above strategies worked for you? Why do you say so?
 - III. What support have you got in performing your role as the student leader?
 - IV. From whom has been such support? What support has it been?
 - V. Would you like more support? What kind of support and from whom

- b) On pursuing its mandate as a higher learning institution, University of Pretoria stands on three pillars namely teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.
 - I. To which of these pillars have you been involved in the decision-making processes?
 - II. In what way have you been involved?
 - III. To those that you have not been involved, would you want to be involved in future? Why or why not?

- c) Which of these pillars do you think need to be transformed? Why and how do you want to see such transformation?
- d) If you were to run for an EC membership for a second time, which portfolio would you run for? Why?
- e) What would you do differently in assisting the university/faculty to transform the pillars you mentioned in (i)?
- f) In which areas do you find the university/faculty to be doing well in terms of transformation? Why do you say so?

Concluding remarks

- a. Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to your experiences of your participation in the governance of your university?
- b. Do you any questions for me?

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

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

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

Researcher: Pontsho Moepya

Student number: 11248875

Telephone: 063 085 1129

Supervisor: Dr Nthontho

Telephone: 012 420 2499

E-mail: pontshomoepya90@gmail.com

Email: maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Annexure H: Research Activities

Participation	Role	Research activities	Place/ venue	Duration
10 student leaders	Serving in the faculty houses of a transforming university.	One – to – one semi-structured interviews , audio taped conducted according to the interview protocol.	Place convenient for the participants	30-45 minutes
		<i>Please find the attached interview protocol.</i>	<i>This will not take place during lecture time</i>	
Participants information feedback	The researcher will share the findings with the participants involved in the study.	Member checking session.	Place convenient for the participants	20-30 minutes
		The researcher will have one-one session with the participants for confidentiality purposes.		
Document analysis schedule	Policies, legislations, and Guideline documents pertaining participation of student leaders' in governance of a transforming university will be analysed.	Document analysis	University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education	30-45 minutes

These are the research activities that will be utilised to collect data for this study.