

**THE ROLE OF RCLs IN THE PROMOTION OF THE  
CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**BY**

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**SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
THE PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF  
THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF EDUCATION  
IN THE DEPARTMENT  
OF  
EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND**

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**DATE SUBMITTED: FEBRUARY 2004**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to firstly acknowledge the Heavenly Father who showers us with blessings and endows us with aptitudes. The study was feasible through His eternal Love and Grace.

I acknowledge the following significant people for their varied contributions:

- Prof. R.G.P. Ngcongo and Dr M.K.K. Chetty who gave insightful professional support and guidance throughout this study.
- My wife, Thokozani who endured lonely times during my study and gave me unwavering support.
- Mr D.S. Thedi who is a trendsetter, a model, and my source of inspiration.
- The Circuit Manager in the KwaMashu Circuit and the Regional Chief Director who gave me permission to conduct the investigation.
- The respondents, RCL members for their substantial input to the study.
- My personal mentors in varied ways and in their different capacities:
  - \* Dr M.K.K. Chetty for conscientizing me and unearthing my potentials and strength.
  - \* Dr G.N. Msimango for endless support and guidance.
  - \* The staff and learners of Mlekeleli Senior Primary School.
  - \* My son, Nkululeko for typing this dissertation.


## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation : *The Role of RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools* represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to:

- My late father Rubben, Lugaga Thabethe
- My late mother Jane, Khulumile Mdimore
- My dearest wife Thokozani, Mayvis Mdimore
- My daughters Mbali and Andile for their loving support, encouragement and inspiration during the course of this study.

## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the role of RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools. In this study the researcher employed a survey to achieve the aims of the study, and a questionnaire to obtain facts and opinions about the role of the RCL members.

From the empirical study conducted in Pinetown District, the researcher found that the majority of the members of the RCLs in schools studied does contribute to the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning. However there was remarkably high percentage (65%) of respondents who were uncertain about the RCLs' role in facilitating the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Briefly data indicates that the uncertainty about the role functions of RCLs is due to the lack of training.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made recommendations directed to the principals and the department of education and culture. The key recommendations are :

- > Principals need to develop appropriate and effective capacity building programmes for RCL members.
- > RCL members should be given a platform to communicate with the general learner population to facilitate and foster discipline among learners in schools.
- > Members of the RCL should be granted their legitimate rights to participate in decisions that affect them.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 ORIENTATION

Extensive interest has been shown by the National Department of Education in the improvement of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. Many changes have been made in this regard. New structures, for example, have been mandated by national policy documents such as the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (SASA). SASA has introduced School Governing Bodies (SGB), School Management Teams (SMTs) and the Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs). These structures are meant to be functional at all schools in order to enhance the culture of teaching and learning.

The department has invested much money in workshopping management and governance structures. However the researcher feels that RCLs in particular have not been appropriately capacitated. Members of this structure are not fully aware of what is expected of them or what their responsibilities are. Musaaazi (1982: 18) is emphatic that an RCL is extremely important in the management of the learners' affairs. The researcher therefore, is of the view that if members of an RCL are not empowered, the culture of teaching and learning may be difficult to sustain.

#### 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learners have traditionally been overlooked as valuable resources in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. In this regard the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, section II was introduced to address this problem. SASA stipulates that the RCLs should be established in all secondary schools. Section 23 (1996: 2) of the same Act also provides for learners to be represented on the governing bodies of their schools. Learners belonging to an RCL are faced with a variety of challenges which, among others, are that they are not given a chance in decision making processes. Their existence is only on paper and their input in many school activities is not fully recognized. According to Sidhu (1999: 50) the principals and staff members are not prepared to part with power and authority.

She also reveals that principals and staff think that they will lose respect and prestige as soon as they share power with the learners. Even if they share power, they do so only on paper (*ibid*).

Section 32 of the South African Schools' Act, Act No. 84 (1996: 38) states that the rights and duties of the learner members of the school governing body are limited. The learners as minors, cannot conclude contracts on behalf of the school and cannot vote on decisions that force a legal obligation (liability) on the school. Learners' voices and experiences are reduced to the immediacy of its performances and exist as something to be measured, administered, registered and controlled (Giroux, 1989: 122). Learners need to have a voice in all their learning activities including the learning areas and the methods that can be used by teachers to get information across to them (learners). However, Giroux (1989: 201) argues that despite having been granted the power to voice their needs, learners often find themselves trapped in institutions that not only deny them a voice, but also deprive them of a relational or contextual understanding of how the knowledge they acquire in the classroom can be used to influence and transform the public sphere.

The researcher feels that the voices of learners are rarely heard in debates about school failures and successes. Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996: 2) point out that learners' perspectives are in the most part missing in discussions concerning strategies for confronting educational problems. If learners talk about their school, their subject teaching and their teachers, their comments are not always appreciable (Rudduck, et al, 1996: 8)

Neglecting the learner component of the school governing body adversely affects the culture of teaching and learning. Without the culture of learning a number of problems emerge. Some of these are high failure rate, early school drop-out, lack of discipline, low-morale and anti-academic attitude amongst learners and teachers. Learners arrive at school at different times, leave when they feel like it, do not bring their books to school, refuse to do homework and generally reject any kind of authority (Neale, Bailey and Ross, 1931: 186 – 187).

### 1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Prior to the Schools Act (SASA) there was a prefect system in schools. It is argued that the prefect system did not give learners recognition in matters concerning their learning. Chetty (1998: 16) reveals that the prefect system was a strategy used by management to coerce learners into conforming with the rules and regulations of the school. She cites Christie (1985) who alludes to the dissatisfaction of the prefect system as follows;

- The prefects in our school really take things too far.
- They just do the principal's dirty work - they are like his servants, if we don't come with proper school jerseys, they confiscate our jerseys.
- Sometimes, we never see them again.

It is obvious that there was a lack of learner-participation with regard to decision making about the learners' code of conduct. No meaningful dialogue or discourse between the prefects and prefect masters appear to have taken place to allow learners the opportunity to discuss school attire, curricular activities, etc (Chetty, 1998: 16).

Chetty (1998: 17) furthermore argues that the non-democratic way in which prefects were elected, created a sense of injustice and despondency among the other learners. The prefect system failed to give learners the power to choose their own representatives. Chetty (*ibid*) confirms that members of the prefect system were selected by virtue of their academic achievements rather than by their leadership potential. The prefect system differs from the representative council of learners in the sense that duties were performed in the interests of the teachers and the principal and not for the interest of the school as a whole. Learners were not given a platform from which educational issues, involving the learners directly or indirectly, could be discussed. The transition from a prefect system to RCLs is mandated in SASA (1996: 34).

The new RCLs are representative bodies that have a more definite and meaningful function, because they have a greater say in fundamental policy matters. An RCL will, for example participate in developing a code of conduct for learners (Guides for RCL, 1998 : 11).

In this study, the role of RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning, is investigated.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aims of this study are as follows:

- To conduct a literature review on the role of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) in enhancing the culture of teaching and learning.
- To investigate whether RCLs are effective in their mandatory role to promote the culture of teaching and learning.
- To provide recommendations, based on the findings of the research.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following are the research questions:

- What is the role of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) in current educational institution?
- How does RCL influence learners to learn?
- How can the factors that hamper the effective functioning of an RCL be minimized?

#### **1.6 ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE STUDY**

- Learners serving in an RCL are not given an opportunity to participate in policy decisions that affect them.
- Co-operation between an RCL and School Management Team (SMT) is essential for improving culture of teaching and learning.
- Learners serving in an RCL are not sufficiently workshopped on their responsibilities.

## **1.7 VALUES OF THE RESEARCH**

Through the findings from the literature reviews and interviews, recommendations will be developed which will be of value to assist and motivate RCLs to play a meaningful role in the promotion of a culture of learning in secondary schools.

This research will also provide information to the education department on how RCLs, SMTs and SGBs should work co-operatively.

The research findings will be made available in journals as articles and recommendations will be submitted to the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and Culture for possible implementation.

## **1.8 ELUCIDATION OF THE OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

The terms that will be used in this study are defined as follows:

### **1.8.1 Representative Council of Learners (RCL)**

In this study, 'Representative Council of Learners' refers to learners elected to the position of leading other learners in secondary schools. It is normally abbreviated as RCL. It is also known as student council (Sidhu, 1996: 48). This body is an elaborate form of student government. An RCL is the link between the learners, the school management and teachers. The existence of the RCL is in line with the South African Schools Act, 84 (1996: 43) which states that each and every school offering grade eight (8) upwards should have an RCL. In establishing this body each grade selects two members to serve in the RCL (*ibid*).

### **1.8.2 Role**

Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995: 52) state that the 'role' is the responsibility given to a person (member of the representative council of learners) to provide guidance in a particular field. 'Roles' are also referred to as tasks undertaken by groups or individual on behalf of others (John, 1980: 45). 'Role' in this study refers to the activities that should be performed by the RCL in order to make the process of teaching and learning meaningful and successful.

### **1.8.3 Culture of teaching and learning**

A 'culture of teaching and learning' refers to the attitude of teachers and learners towards teaching and learning, the spirit of dedication and commitment in a school which arises through the effect of school management, the input of teachers, the personal characteristics of students, factors in the family life of students, school-related and society factors (Calitz, Fuglested and Lillejord, 2002: 239). However, 'role' in this study focuses specifically to the legitimate tasks assigned to the RCL as mandated by SASA. It also includes incidental responsibilities performed by RCL members to support and promote the culture of teaching and learning.

### **1.8.4 Promote**

The term 'promote' means to help to grow or develop towards a desired end. Sykes (1986: 824) refers to the term 'promote' as 'to advance, help forward, encourage or support the passing of something'. In the light of this study promoting the culture of teaching and learning refers to the positive contributions made by RCL members to actively support teaching and learning.

### **1.8.5 Communication**

'Communication' is the act of communicating, exchange of ideas, conveyance of information. Seiler (1996: 11-13) suggests that 'communication' is the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions or information by speech and writing. 'Communication' is considered as a process because it is an active and changing event or set of behaviours. In this study 'communication' refers to the act of transmitting information, ideas and attitude from one person to another (Dalin, 1993: 110).

### **1.8.6 Attitude towards learning**

‘Attitude towards learning’ refers to the learners’ attitude or interests towards their learning. ‘Attitude towards learning’ is also connected with the mood, tendency, feeling and atmosphere regarding the learning task at school. The attitude towards learning can be judged by the spirit of dedication and commitment of learners. The spirit of dedication and commitment also refers to a personal pledge, engagement and undertaking to the task of learning, that is to devote their time and energy to their school work (Musaazi, 1982: 24).

### **1.8.7 Power-sharing**

‘Power-sharing’ is the distribution of power or responsibilities amongst the stakeholders in an organisation such as a school. Musaazi (1982: 100) states that ‘power’ is sought to control decision-making process in organisations. ‘Power sharing’ should not be perceived as a sort of transfer of power from the school authorities into the hands of the learners. Therefore ‘power-sharing’ is not a transfer of power but a device for distributing responsibility between the authorities and the learners.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.9.1 Research methods**

Research in regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- A literature study of available and relevant literature on the role of an RCL will be undertaken.
- A survey whereby a questionnaire will form the basis for discussion between the researcher and respondents will be conducted.

## **1.10 PARAMETERS OF STUDY**

This study will focus to members of the representative councils of learners (RCLs) in secondary schools. The respondents will be selected randomly and required to answer questions on the role of the RCL members. The aim then is to test the respondents against the role of RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools.

## **1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The chapters in this study will be structured as follows:

### **Chapter 2**

In this chapter a literature review on the role of an RCL in promoting the culture of teaching and learning will be conducted.

### **Chapter 3**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the research methodology will be discussed.

### **Chapter 4**

In this chapter, an analysis and interpretation of data collected in the previous chapter will be done.

### **Chapter 5**

In this chapter the study will be concluded by offering findings and recommendations.

## **1.12 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provides an orientation view of the study. It includes an introduction, statement of the problem, background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, assumptions underlying the study and value thereof. Operational terms are also defined. The research methodology is given and the structure of the study provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: THE ROLE OF RCLs IN THE PROMOTION OF THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

A good representative council of learners (RCL) is a sound, functioning body which is expected to respect educators, learners, parents, the school governing body (SGB) and non-educators. Representative council of learners is required to serve the school willingly and encourage co-operation of the learners. It is important for the RCL to promote good relations among learners, educators, the principal and the community. It needs to develop and maintain a healthy school spirit. The RCL is expected to distinguish between right and wrong, that is, it should have a sense of responsibility (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 360).

Van der Westhuizen (1991: 360) states that the situation of the RCL is, broadly speaking, a school situation. This means that the representative council of learners should be familiar with the value system within which a school functions. The value system is usually formalised in a system of rules, which guides the everyday actions of the learners. The system of rules allocates rights and duties to learners and lay down the procedures according to which activities are carried out. The rights and privileges of the RCLs themselves, with specific reference to their decision-making scope are all aspects which provide the framework of the situation (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 365).

The researcher disagrees with Sidhu (1999: 48) when she says that there is no hard and fast line that can be drawn between the area of activities of the representative council of learners and those of the other administrative authorities. The researcher is mindful that the RCL is made up of the minors (learners) and cannot have the same authority as other senior personal such as principal and educators. The representative council of learners is in a position of a person who helps a group to formulate goals, programmes and policies relative to their constituent interests.

The representative council of learners has been granted a legitimate voice, via the South African Schools Act (1996: 34 [11]) to participate in promoting the culture of learning. This will be discussed in terms of the following headings:

- Representative Council of Learners as a policy imperative in Secondary schools;
- Enhancement of learning competencies among RCL-members;
- Interrelationship between RCL and other education stakeholders; and
- Factors that hinder the role of RCL in promoting the culture of teaching and learning.

## **2.2 AN RCL AS A POLICY IMPERATIVE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 (1996: 20) states that co-operative governance is essential for the successful functioning of the school. This means that all the stakeholders, namely parents, educators, learners as well as national and provincial legislators need to co-operate and accept responsibility to ensure that a culture of teaching and learning is fostered in every school. According to SASA (1996: 20) it is evident that whatever is done by stakeholders is meant to respect and protect the right of learners.

As defined in the previous chapter under sub-section 1.7.1, section 11 of the South African Schools Act mandates that an RCL should be established at every public school enrolling learners from the eighth grade and higher. It is necessary that the new RCLs, as representative bodies, need to have a more defined function and a greater say in fundamental policy matters like that of promoting the culture of learning. Hopkins (1987: 40) discusses an RCL as an official body as follows:

An RCL is an official body representing all learners in secondary schools. It should become the most prestigious official representative structure for learners in the entire organisation

(school). This representative body is made up of learners elected by their fellow learners to represent them (Gorton, 1993: 18). The learners are, therefore, covertly encouraged to respect members of the representative council of learners since they (members) are elected by them (learners). An RCL is constituted in accordance with the South African Schools Act (SASA).

## **2.2.1 Composition, election and induction of the RCL**

To be respected and have their voice heard by other learners, the RCL members should be democratically elected. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 360) concurs with this statement when he says that the selection of the RCL members is an activity in which observers observe with a view to selecting potential leaders. The newly elected members of an RCL are to undergo an induction so that they can develop skills that will make them effective in promoting culture of learning. An induction of the RCL members at school cannot be separated from their identification (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 363).

### **2.2.1.1 Composition of the RCL**

An RCL comprises of representatives who are registered learners and who are elected to lead other learners. There is no fixed rule or definite prescription for the number of RCL-members to be elected. Variations are dependent upon each school (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 362). For example, some schools elect RCL members according to the ages of the learners, other elect according to gender, that is, the RCL may be formed mostly of gender of the majority of learners enrolled in the school.

As leaders, RCL members are formally elected to the position by members of a group. Musaaazi (1982: 56) identifies three types of leaders:

- The emergent leader: In the event of the emergence of a leader a learner is raised to a position of an RCL with no formal authority. In this case, members of a group have recognised and accepted the RCL member's influence in promoting culture of learning.

- The appointed leader: This is a learner who has been identified by educational managers and who is appointed to positions of the RCL. He or she is then exposed to a clearly-defined sphere of authority. Such authority will enable him or her to influence other learners to take part in activities that promote culture of teaching and learning.
- The elected leader: The elected leader is the RCL member who is formally elected by a group of learners.

In most cases the appointed leader and elected leader are prominent in RCLs (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 355).

In support of the SASA (section 11 [2]) Van der Westhuizen (1991: 360) asserts that the educational managers have the task of managing the process of appointing and election of the RCL members. Schmuck, Runkel and Arends (1977: 19) emphasize that every school should try to elect RCL members who are appropriately equipped to meet the purpose of promoting culture of teaching and learning. Tsipane (1997: 3) states that the success of an RCL member is dependent upon his or her particular skills or abilities. These skills can be acquired through being exposed to workshops or symposia where they can be taught.

While the policy states that RCL is made up of learners elected by their fellow learners, Musaazi (1982: 57) proposes an idea that principals should identify among others, the following characteristics among potential learners who may serve in the representative council of learners (RCL):

- Personal neatness and neatness of work. RCL members need to be neat so that they would be in a position to claim neatness from other learners.
- Friendliness towards teachers and fellow-learners. This would encourage co-operation between the RCL, teachers and learners.
- Should be able to distinguish between right and wrong. RCL members need to have a sense of responsibility.

- Should be aware of evil deeds and be able to report them.
  
- Should be hard working. In this case, RCL-members need to be exemplary by working hard to achieve his personal goals and those of a school.

Proper identification of the RCL member is the criterion for the effective role of the RCL in promoting culture of learning in schools.

#### 2.2.1.2 *Election of the RCL*

The election of the RCL members is regarded by Cawood (1989: 119) as a valuable experience to learners only when the process is accurately planned and executed in terms of proven scientific methods. Consideration of the various aspects of the democratic election process is important, that is, the criteria for candidature, participation of all learners, correct procedure, the role played by staff be defined and election of the executive body of learners be explicitly tabulated. Once elected, RCL members are capable of developing a high group morale and can create good spirit among followers. This cannot be established by RCL members who are appointed by the principal and his management team, but only by members of the RCL who are voted into office by their fellow-learners (Tsipane, 1997: 5)

Dalin (1993: 43) argues that the whole system of teacher involvement in the learner election process, need to be disqualified as undemocratic. The participation of teachers in the election of the RCL members is objectionable to some learners. Teachers may be expected to provide guidelines enabling learners to identify and elect excellent learners to serve in the RCL. Teacher participation in learner election process may imply that those elected are learners who will solely carry out the edicts of the school principal and the staff, instead of the wishes of the electorate, that is, the learners. On the other hand, Cawood (1989: 123) advocates the idea that teachers are to be empowered with veto rights. This implies that teachers should have the power to vote the election of any doubtful candidature (Cawood, 1989: 123).

The electoral officer is either the principal, the deputy principal or any officer appointed by the principal in collaboration with the outgoing RCL members. The executive of the RCL is formed by a chairperson, a deputy chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer (Guides for RCLs, 1998: 16).

Guides for RCL (1998 : 30[6]) grants every learner with an opportunity to nominate an RCL member. It is important that all learners be prepared to participate in leadership activities in the school. To ensure participation by all members of the RCL in promoting a culture of learning, some members may be elected to serve in the executive body. Some may also be elected to become leaders of sub-committees or portfolio committees. The following sub-committees where learners are included may exist in the school (Van der Westhuizen, 1991: 354):

- Academic sub-committee
- Entertainment sub-committee
- Cultural sub-committee
- Sports sub-committee
- Disciplinary sub-committee

Guides for the RCLs (1998: 31[A]) assures that the RCL may appoint one or more committees to perform certain functions to keep the culture of learning maintained in schools. Each standing committee should work collectively with a specific management team of educators to promote a culture of teaching and learning of the school.

*(a) Nomination*

Various procedures are employed for the nomination of candidates to stand for election as members of the representative council of learners. Learners may nominate candidates in writing (Guides for RCLs, 1998: 30[6]). At times no formal nomination is conducted, but all learners in Grade 11 may form a list of candidates (Tsipane, 1997: 4). A short list is compiled by the retiring RCL members (Cawood, 1989: 119).

*(b) Voting*

Hopkins (1987: 120) asserts that the following procedure is adopted in voting RCL members into office:

The retiring RCL members are accorded the same voting rights as the rest of the learners of the school. The system in which the value of votes differs, is utilized in the election of the RCL members. The grade 11 vote is the deciding factor in the election of the RCL-members. The school decides on the allocation of the value of votes (Cawood, 1989: 121).

Cawood (1989 : 124) adopts the following procedure through which the members of the executive body of the RCL are voted into office:

- By means of an evaluation form with specific criteria whereby the newly elected RCL members are assessed.
- On the basis of the highest number of votes.
- By the newly elected RCL members themselves.

*(c) Term of office for RCL-members*

According to Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995: 52) RCL members in the executive position is mostly grade 12 learners. These members have a limited stay at school. Their period of stay is affected by their preparation for the final year examination. During this time they cannot concentrate on their leadership duties. That is the period when the leadership vacuum develops within the ranks of learners. According to Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995: 53) the solution to this problem is to create a fixed period of changing leadership. Leadership can last either from August or September of the following year (Cawood, 1989: 127). This period gives opportunity to retiring executive RCL members to contribute in counselling new members. Retiring RCL members appear to the new representative council of learners as role models and they help in giving new members techniques of avoiding problems during their term of office (John, 1980: 16). The techniques given by out going members will help new

members of the RCL in their term to face any problem that might distract the process of promoting culture of learning.

### 2.2.1.3 *Induction of new RCL members*

The status of the new RCL is enhanced through an elaborate induction ceremony. This kind of function can exhibit to all learners the extent of esteem accorded to the new council by the staff and parents. Before induction the new RCL members need to be subjected to a symposium or workshop as mentioned in sub-section 2.2.1 where they are educated about the skills of leadership. These workshops and symposia will expose them to decision making, delegation, conducting meetings, planning, time-management and problem-solving skills (Hopkins, 1987 : 71). Leadership training is conducted by individuals who have expertise in particular relevant fields. Once RCL-members are trained, they sign a declaration to uphold the rules and regulations of the school.

The induction of new RCL members takes place at a formal function which is organised strictly for this purpose. RCL members are expected to read the code of conduct. The steps to be taken for any infringement of the code of conduct is clearly spelt out in the presence of the learner's parents. It needs to be explicitly stated that dealing with infringement will be informed by the fundamental principles of the following nature (Hopkins, 1987: 72-73):

- The disciplinary process will be fair, corrective and educative.
- Punishment will fit the offence.
- Avoidance of public humiliation.
- The parent / guardian of the learner will be informed and involved in the process of correcting behaviour.

Induction of new members of the RCL contributes to the enhancement of learners' self esteem and leadership skills which invariably provide the psychological motivation to make meaningful input relative to the culture of teaching and learning. The following section will discuss the RCL constitution.

Chetty (1998: 106) states that once the RCL has been established, it becomes a national requirement for it to develop its constitution. She further emphasizes that in order to develop a constitution effectively, all members should be sufficiently informed about and be familiar with the technical aspect of drawing up a constitution together with the current state of organisation's system, the individuals who interact there and the objectives of the RCL. John (1980: 19) clarifies a constitution as a basic document which contains the legal rules and principles according to which an RCL should function. The constitution sets the framework for activities and participation of stakeholders (Chetty, 1998: 106).

According to Knott (1992: 20) the basic principles of a constitution are much the same for all schools. A constitution generally states the name of the organisation, outlines the general purpose of the organisation and lists the membership qualifications and election procedures. It therefore, will be a document with a specific design to shape the idiosyncrasies of a specific organisation (Chetty, 1998: 107).

The constitution will help an RCL not to overstep its authority. It will do this by giving an outline of the RCL's aims, that is, to build unity among learners in the school, to address the needs of all learners in the school and to keep learners informed about events in the school and in the school community. Having a clear knowledge of aims provides direction for the RCL in promoting culture of teaching and learning.

### **2.3 THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEARNERS SERVING ON THE RCL**

In this section the researcher will review literature on the roles / responsibilities of RCLs in promoting a culture of teaching and learning with reference to the following headings:

- Supporting the school management team (SMT)
- Ensuring discipline at school
- Maintenance of cleanliness and order

### **2.3.1 Supporting the school management team (SMT)**

The role of an RCL is important as far as the management of the school is concerned. As stated by Knott (1992: 25), an RCL is in partnership with its school management team (SMT). The school management team consisting of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments, is responsible for the management of the school. An RCL member, as the chosen leader of the learners, plays an important role in supporting the SMT (Dalin, 1993: 121).

According to Dalin (1993: 82) the support will start with the determination of both groups (SMT and RCL) to achieve the common aims and objectives of the school. An RCL needs to be part of the development of these aims and objectives to take ownership of them. An RCL develops action plans for itself and all the learners to work towards achieving the aims and objectives. Neale, Bailey and Ross (1993: 63-65) argue that action plans differ from school to school, but they provide steps and activities to improve the culture of learning, teaching and service, which is the ultimate goal of the school.

Aspain, Chapman and Wilkinson (1994: 67) suggest that some management activities an RCL may participate in, or contribute to are promoting a culture of learning, teaching and service; looking after the school property and promoting the interests of learners.

### **2.3.2 Ensuring discipline at school**

Discipline, according to Musaaazi (1982: 179), does not merely imply punishment, but it also refers to leading, influencing for the better, censuring, reporting and exercising that which is good and right. To facilitate and maintain discipline, school rules are formulated (Gorton, 1993 : 180). Discipline is maintained in order to enhance an orderly environment that is required for effective teaching and learning. Rules concerning the following may be addressed by the RCL:

- Prescribed uniform.
- Timeous arrival of learners.
- Fighting and fooling around at school.
- Smoking and use of drugs

- Vandalism
- Interference with teaching and learning by learners.

Musaazi (1982: 180) confirms that discipline connotes orderliness and therefore is essential for good learning in schools. A disciplined person is orderly, responsible, diligent, sympathetic, co-operative, honest, considerate and always tries to do what is right and good.

Effective communication among staff and learners is essential for good discipline in school. RCL members are extremely important in the management of learners' affairs. They help teachers and principals in matters of discipline. Since the authorities cannot be with the learners all the time, the RCL members can assist in controlling the learners in such areas as keeping the school premises clean reporting undesirable situations in the school (Musaazi, 1982 : 181-182).

Van der Westhuizen (1991: 365) concurs with Musaazi and Gorton when he maintains that the RCL members should be familiar with the value system within which a school functions. This serves to guide every action of learners. The system of rules allocates rights and duties to learners and lays down the procedures according to which activities are carried out by the RCL members in promoting a culture of teaching and learning.

### **2.3.3 Maintenance of cleanliness and order**

According to Neale, et al. (1931: 187) an RCL facilitates cleanliness and order at school. An RCL supports and takes a lead in encouraging both cleanliness and order. To meet healthy requirements within school premises, an RCL assists in formulating and applying classroom rules that are developed to control cleanliness and order in the classrooms. An RCL also compiles a list of duties for learners to promote cleanliness and order in their classrooms. Once the duties have been given and explained to the learners, an RCL should supervise and make sure that these duties are performed.

An RCL also has a responsibility of decorating the classrooms and the school premises (Sidhu, 1999: 48). A clean and orderly environment is conducive to learning and teaching.

## **2.4 ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNING COMPETENCIES AMONG RCL MEMBERS**

Musaazi (1982: 53) asserts that leadership is the ability of influencing the activities and behaviour of an individual or a group in efforts towards goal achievement in a given situation. Schools serve as the appropriate area where leadership abilities can be developed. Skills of leadership in the RCL are acquired at workshops and symposia, organized by the school to tap potential leaders. Cawood (1989: 53) cites the following skills that are developed in the RCL members:

- Decision – making skills.
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Conflict – management skills.

### **2.4.1 Decision-making skills**

Decision-making is defined by Leithwood, Begley and Cousins, (1992: 57) as a process influenced by information and values, whereby a perceived problem is explicitly defined, alternative solutions are posed and weighed, and a choice made, then subsequently is implemented and evaluated. Although Leithwood, et al. (1992: 57) view this skill from the administrator's perspective, the researcher perceives it as a valuable skill that RCL members should acquire and make use of it in their deliberations at school. The involvement of the RCL members in decision-making processes empowers them in performing their role. Aspin, et al. (1994: 68-70) assert that to empower is to provide the stakeholder with a share in the movement and direction of the enterprise.

According to Musaazi (1982: 77-79) the determinant factors of the type and method of decision making are the situation and circumstances. There are circumstances that warrant that the leaders use autocratic methods instead of democratic ones in decision making. The ideal method is the democratic approach to decision making. Decisions can be taken through

consultation and consensus resolution of issues. The majority of vote is to be made use of. The principal in certain circumstances is accorded with veto power, which affords him the authority to break down deadlocks or to regulate members of the RCLs' decisions (Neale, et al., 1981: 34-35).

Once the RCL members' decision making skills are improved, they (RCL members) will be able to make sound decisions that will cause other learners decide on joint activities that will improve a culture of teaching and learning.

#### **2.4.2 Communication skills**

Communication is of vital significance in any organisational interaction. According to Leithwood, et al. (1992: 142) successful leaders are, in most cases effective communicators. The leader has the ability to communicate effectively, that is, he has the ability to transmit the message to followers and to hear and comprehend what they say in return (Dalin, 1993: 49). It is essential for the RCL to be able to formulate aims and objectives, to make decisions, to solve problems, to propagate organisational values and to effect all the aspects of the leadership communication. In this respect Dalin (1993: 110) presents 'communication' as a process by which people attempt to share meanings. Schmuck, et al. (1977: 134) concur with Dalin when they say that communication is when the message is sent, perceived, understood and the desired response provoked. A two-way process is part of communication. Communication takes place horizontally and vertically.

According to Van der Westhuizen (1991: 206) good communication avoids ambiguity and misinterpretation. As communicators members of the RCL use effective methods of communication, that is, the information is recorded in a particular medium either spoken or written and it is sent to the receiver. Dalin (1993: 110) agrees with Van der Westhuizen (1991: 206) by stating that good leadership helps groups to be more sensitive to messages, to listen carefully and to make perception checks, to paraphrase and to observe non-verbal behaviour. The content is relevant and authentic. Feedback is expected after the message has been communicated. If an RCL, the staff and the principal fail to communicate properly, school programmes will be impaired. Communication becomes successful once members of

the sub-committees and other groups receive the views stated in a positive manner (Epstein, 1981: 32-34). Van der Westhuizen (1991: 433) identifies verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Non-verbal communication entails memos, notices, reports, newsletters and other forms of written transmission of messages. To be effective, the RCL members ensure that written information is comprehensible and is responded to if there is a need, meanings are not obscured and tasks are clearly defined and communicated (Gorton, 1993: 35).

Schmuck, et al. (1977: 113) assert that communication has problems resulting in differences in age, gender, education, cultural background and other factors. They further argue that the root of communication problems is a failure to communicate in a common language. If an RCL member recognises those differences, he or she develops a communication style that will help him or her to reach every person. Leithwood, et al. (1992: 59) aver that in any society or school words and gestures often mean different things to different people. Understanding and respecting those differences are valuable skills for each RCL member.

An RCL is the communicative link between the learners and educators. Badenhorst, et al. (1995: 56) state that RCL members have an official responsibility to be receptive to the concerns raised by the general learner population, school management team and school governing body. According to Aspin, et al. (1994: 68), an RCL is a useful medium of communication, as its members can tell principals and teachers what learners think about what is taught and their feelings about programmes offered, in an impersonal and non-threatening way.

### **2.4.3 Problem-solving skills**

The RCL members in their activities at school expect that they are confronted by a series of challenges or problems. Schmuck, et al. (1989: 294) assert that there are problems that can be handled with ease, where others are complex and might have easy solutions. Problem-solving skills enable members of the RCL to handle problems with ease, and as such, facilitate the realisation of institutional goals. Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck (1994: 21) define a problem as a discrepancy between a present situation and a more preferred state of affairs. This definition tends to suggest that there is an obstacle or restriction which serves as an

obstruction between the present and the ideal situation. Neale, et al. (1931: 208) present three basic questions that can be deduced in problem-solving. These are:

- What is the present situation or position?  
(Situation). To find answers to this question, the RCL member studies the state or situation in which the problem occurs.
- What is the ideal situation or position?  
(Aim or objective). Here the RCL member foresees the outcomes that would be reached after the problem has been solved.
- How can we move from the present situation to the ideal situation? (Solution or plan of action). At this stage RCL members plan ways and means of resolving the problematic situation.

In the problem solving process, RCL members need to note that solutions are reached at scientifically by gathering facts and ensuring the participation of all members of the group. Successful problem solving is seldom easy. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 160) states that before a problem can be solved, the RCL members take a number of steps, that is; identifying and diagnosing the problem, setting objectives and making decisions.

In each of the above steps of solving a problem the researcher notices that identifying a problem helps to focus attention of the RCL members on the existence of the problem; diagnosing the problem is when the RCL members bring in other views to ensure that the problem is correctly diagnosed; setting objectives helps the RCL members to set short and long term goals, that is, what they want to achieve at short period of time and after a long period of time; and making decisions succeeds when the members of the RCL feel that their ideas are listened to. All members feel that they are equal (Musaazi. 1982: 88-89).

It is important that the RCL discusses the problem with the general learner population to ensure that all the learners are aware of the problem and that a decision about the problem is to be made. Musaazi (1982: 95) confirms that when all learners have ability to solve problems, the problems that hinder culture of teaching and learning would be eliminated.

#### **2.4.4 Conflict management skills**

The RCL members should take cognisance of the fact that interpersonal and intergroup conflict occurs to a certain extent in all organisations, and that this is a natural part of a social relationship (Neale, et al. 1981: 174). If learners work or play together, the probability of differences and problems arising from that interaction is high. The lowest level of intensity as ideas are exchanged, is referred to as the differences of opinion (Cawood, 1989: 96). When the RCL members are confronted with this challenge, their role is not to eliminate conflict, but to reduce its destructive force and make it a positive drive in the organisation (Gorton, 1993: 87).

The RCL members need to be exposed to programmes which will help them acquire conflict management skills. Such exposure helps the RCL members with what Schmuck, et al. (1977: 199) call advantages of conflict.

- Conflict generates creative and innovative forces among group members. Here, by being exposed to numerous conflicts the RCL member's creativity is enhanced.
- Exposure to conflicts increases motivation and enthusiasm in the RCL-members. The members of the RCL develop a positive way of seeing things.
- Self awareness in the RCL-members is promoted by being exposed to conflict.

The RCL members need to be trained by the school to understand that conflict can be resolved. When conflict management skills have been enhanced in the RCL members, it will reduce unnecessary tension, personal sanctions and guilt feelings that result in poor self-assertiveness, feelings of inadequacy and incapacity which lead to a lack of ambition, poor self-image and self confidence in the RCL members as promoters of the culture of teaching and learning (Van der Westhuizen, 1991 : 302).

## **2.5 INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RCL AND OTHER EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS**

According to Kotze (1987: 26) an RCL should try to improve the interrelationships between learners, teachers and parents. This is done by giving recognition to everybody, creating opportunities for the different groups to interact socially and willing to give and take in these relationships. Musaazi (1982 : 20) argues that if people know each other, they will be more willing to devote more of their time and energy to make their relationship work to achieve the objectives of the groups, that is, of sustaining the culture of learning and teaching. This interrelationship will be discussed below:

### **2.5.1 RCLs in relation to teachers**

Galego (1994: 76) asserts that personality of a teacher and his attitude towards understanding the RCL members are of significance for the total social and emotional growth of RCL members. The exposure to school expands the psychological experiences available to the RCL-members and extends their environment to include teachers and a new learning environment (Galego, 1994: 74). A true teacher approaches and deals with learners in a manner that can be referred to as nurturing, caring, inspiring and loving (Dreyer, 1994: 73). In this way the teacher assumes the role of being a mentor. According to Dreyer (*ibid*) the ideal teacher – RCL relationship is that of a mentor – protégé relationship. The mentor assists the protégé to explore their potential and to see beyond themselves. It is motivational to the members of the RCL to utilise their potential that the teacher often experiences great. According to Tsipane (1997: 5) teacher considers members of the RCL as people who also care about their future. This means that RCL members endeavour to make a meaningful contribution towards the constitution of the school.

Interpersonal relations that develop between the RCL members and teachers are positive (Sidhu, 1999: 27). A teacher creates a conducive atmosphere, whereby members of the RCL can take initiative and be self-reliant in matters affecting them. In this regard a teacher's resourcefulness correlates significantly and positively with acceptable behaviour of RCL members, whereas a teacher's dictatorialness and punitiveness significantly and negatively correlate with the RCL's performance (Van den Aardweg, 1987 : 177). According to Van

den Aardweg (1987 : 140), teachers who respond to RCL members with authoritarian and coercive behaviours, accompanied by manipulation and persuasion, reduce the self-esteem of the RCL members and thus the outcome of their behaviour is persistent disruption of school activities. The interaction between the RCL and teachers can be healthy if members of the RCL themselves display co-operation with teachers by accepting their (teachers) views. In this way RCL members can be able to cope with their role functions in promoting the culture of learning.

Positive interrelationships between RCL members and teachers enable teachers to create an atmosphere which assists RCL develop various capacities of the mind such as intelligence, love of knowledge, aesthetic skills to appreciate beauty and nature, their spiritual nature by which they will move nearer to the divine and live a Godly, religious and moral life (Komote and Calitz, 1992: 67). The positive interrelationship between RCL members and teachers enables an RCL to work closely and co-operatively with the teachers to promote a sound culture of teaching and learning.

### **2.5.2 RCLs in relation to other learners (followers)**

The most important communication is that which takes place between an RCL and the other learners. Peer acceptance has a great influence on the life world of the RCL members. The peer group spends a lot of time together talking, watching television, studying and even vandalising (Ferreira and Mathibe, 1993: 5). It is during this period when the leaders of an RCL get to know the learners (peers) well. The leader will be able to establish good relationships between himself or herself and other learners. When relationships are improved, the RCL member will know what the learners' needs are and be able to motivate them to work together to achieve the objectives of the partnerships necessary for the promotion of the culture of learning in school (Van der Westhuizen, 1991 : 406).

According to Leithwood, et al. (1992: 32) a major portion of culture of learning takes place within the parameters of the peer group. The peer group dictates one's allegiance and the individual finds that within the peer groups there is a home which is meaningful to him or her. According to Van den Aardweg (1987: 197) peer group norms and values are critical to the shaping of perception, cognition and action of the individual. Peer group can become the

breeding ground of all forms of action. To have significant influence, an RCL member needs to be totally accepted by his peers. In this manner a mutual interdependence between the RCL and its followers (peers) develops. A capable RCL leads and inspires its peers to great feats (Tamprecht and Botha, 1996: 3). A successful RCL member is able to motivate and provide guidance to his peers. An RCL-member also assists his peers to realise their full potential. An RCL member also has the task to inspire his peers to be actively involved in the school activities be they academic, cultural, sports or just as a spectator (Vorster, 1995: 2-3). It often happens that RCL members are rejected by peers because they are responsible for policy implementation. This is because policies usually possess restrictions in some activities especially those that destroy the culture of teaching and learning.

According to Cawood (1989: 148), to be an RCL member entails leading or directing one's fellow learners or peers in a definite direction. This direction may be called an aim, objective or goal. A true RCL member will have to know where he is leading his fellow learners to. RCL members should constantly remind themselves about where the school wishes to go, how it plans to get there, and how it has progressed in getting there (Knott, 1992 : 12). The joint formulation of goals between the members of RCL and their peers will help to establish a unique culture of learning in a school.

An RCL member is expected to remind his peers that the school milieu is an educational institution which exists to provide the right atmosphere and proper direction for the growth of the individual to enlarge his personality by increasing his knowledge, to cultivate his aesthetic taste, to frame his character and to equip him with suitable skills (Komote, et al., 1992: 67).

Members of an RCL also face the challenge of promoting among their followers, school community, learning and leadership which, according to Cawood (1989: 149) entails:

- helping learners cultivate school pride.
- involving learners in meaningful undertakings by introducing a process that will allow learners some participation in policy-making and problem solving.
- cultivating and understanding of school rules.
- encouraging a forum for learners opinion and contributions.

### **2.5.3 RCLs in relation to parents**

The members of an RCL are expected to create a climate of emotional stability among learners in school to enable parents to be effective participants in school deliberations. RCL members and their followers can take heed of the fact raised by Bredenkamp (1990: 7) that parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children. Parents should assume great responsibility for making their children feel safe and at home in this world and within the learning and teaching situation. Parents have a right to participate in the education of their children at school. Therefore, Musaazi (1982: 238) asserts that parents co-participate with RCL members in decision-making and problem solving processes in the school.

Parents who have a healthy relationship with the members of the RCL and other stakeholders in school will be inclined to involve themselves in other school activities, for example extra-curricula level, where they (parents) may be able to make a positive contribution. A sound relationship between parents, learners and teachers will have to feature prominently within the school situation. Bredenkamp (1990: 8) emphasises that what is important is not the general interest of the child, but joining forces for the basis of a common goal and mission, which impacts on the learner personally. During collaborative encounters between learners and parents, the RCL will benefit from those parents who have special skills and experiences or even qualifications in certain fields.

Members of the RCL may benefit from their partnership with parents in school governance. Kotze (1987: 14-16) identifies some of the contributions that parents may make in such partnership:

- promote a healthy balance between academic and leisure activities.
- afford increasing opportunity for responsibility
- accept that learners are becoming more critical and help them try to see other points of view.
- take interest in their school activities including school work, sports and other activities

By offering the above contribution parents can help the RCL members to work towards achieving the goals of a school thereby promoting a culture of teaching and learning.

## **2.6 FACTORS THAT HINDER THE ROLE OF AN RCL IN PROMOTING THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Collectively, authors such as Sidhu (1999: 262), Dedman (1993: 80) and Van Schalkwyk (1994: 14 ) indicate that the following, are some of the factors which hinder the role of RCLs in promoting the culture of teaching and learning.

- corporal punishment
- alcohol abuse
- drug abuse
- poor school management

The above factors are given emphasis below.

### **2.6.1 Corporal punishment**

Sidhu (1999: 262-266) maintains that learners at adolescent age cannot accept physical punishment and manhandling as well as humiliation without resentment. This implies that an RCL should know that a tension ridden atmosphere is not conducive to learning. The learner's self-concept is the most essential determinant of behaviour. Cherian (1990: 99) asserts that growth in self concept occurs in an accepting, warm empathic, open and non-judgemental environment which allows students the freedom to explore their thoughts and feelings in order to solve their own problem. The RCL organises workshops which will enhance positive self-esteem for both learners and teachers. Workshops on alternative measures to corporal punishment are organized and run by the RCL-members (Musaaazi, 1982: 183).

### **2.6.2 Alcohol abuse**

According to Dedman (1993: 80) an alarming rate of alcohol abuse among secondary school learners is taking place in South Africa. Alcohol abuse results not only in detrimental physical effects but it also increases teenagers' readiness to experiment with drugs. The outcome of alcohol abuse has psychological and social problem as well as problematic

interpersonal relationships. Members of an RCL ought to understand that alcohol abuse contributes towards the charges in a child's normal pattern of behaviour (Dedman, 1993: 81). It is the responsibility of the RCL, teachers, principals and parents to appreciate the enormity and benefits of curbing this problem among learners.

### **2.6.3 Drug abuse**

Drugs such as dagga or marijuana lead an individual to focus only on the present. The ability to conceptualise future consequences is markedly impaired and the person cannot see beyond the immediacy of present stress (Van den Aardweg, 1987: 178). The learner who uses drugs will tend to increasingly focus on current frustrations and he will lose his mental grasp on future consequences and thus even go to the extent of extending goals. Drug abuse, school vandalism and violence go hand in hand (Van den Aardweg, 1987: 179). If an RCL does not act quickly upon these practices, the process of promoting culture of teaching and learning would be hindered.

### **2.6.4 Poor school management**

According to Mona (1997: 5) one of the contributing factors in hindering the culture of learning and teaching in most schools is the poor management which can be attributed to the way provincial education departments are arranged. Van Schalkwyk (1994 : 14) states that schools cannot perform their functional tasks (teaching and learning) effectively if they are poorly managed, in which case have a negative impact on the overall education of the community.

Poor school administration, from the organisation of timetables to the review and promotion of teachers, is the single most cause of inferior in South Africa (Aschroft, 1994: 170). Rural and township schools are unlikely to have adequately functioning school governing bodies, and principals often carry substantial teaching loads in addition to a range of bureaucratic functions while departmental support amounts to no more than cursory annual inspections (NECC, 1992: 25).

According to Smith (1996: 9) effective school management is undermined by:

- marginalisation of authority of the principal
- over accentualizing of responsibilities and obligations.
- hesitancy on the part of the principals and management team to discipline learners.
- inability on the part of principals and teachers to discipline learners.

Coporal punishment, although abolished by the SASA (1996: 65[10]), is still practised in some schools. This disturbs RCL members in instilling the culture of teaching and learning because psychologically the learners are affected by this situation, thus do not cope in contributing to a good culture of teaching and learning. Alcohol abuse and drug abuse also contribute to disturbing the RCL members in doing its functions. Poor management will always distract the input made by the RCL towards maintaining a good culture in schools (Musaazi, 1982: 19).

It is necessary that the above factors be eradicated urgently in all schools to stabilize the culture of teaching and learning (*ibid*).

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the RCL related factors which promote the culture of teaching and learning. This included: the RCL as a policy imperative in secondary schools, enhancement of learning competencies among RCL-members, interrelationship between an RCL and significant others including learners, teachers and parents. Lastly the researchers discussed factors that hinder the role of the RCL in promoting the culture of teaching and learning. This included coporal punishment; alcohol abuse; drug abuse and poor school management. In the next chapter the researcher will discuss the methods employed to obtain data from respondents.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a literature review on the role of RCLs in promotion culture of teaching and learning was conducted. In this chapter a survey that was used by the researcher to obtain data from the respondents is discussed. An account of how the study was designed and conducted is also discussed.

#### 3.2 PREPARATION FOR THE RESEARCH

##### 3.2.1 Permission

Van Dalen (1979 : 154) emphasizes that before sending out the questionnaire, the researcher should obtain permission from the highest authority in each unity to contact respondents. In line with this the researcher sent letters requesting permission from the principals of schools (Appendix B), letter to the circuit manager (Appendix C) and Ethekwini regional manager (Appendix D) to conduct a research. The researcher mentioned in the letters the importance of the study, the purpose of the study, time envisaged to complete the study, guarantee for confidentiality and guarantee for strict anonymity of respondents. Letters granting permission were received from the principals of schools (Appendix E), circuit manager (Appendix F) and Ethekwini regional manager (Appendix G). The arrangements to administer the questionnaires were made.

##### 3.2.2 Selection of Respondents

The researcher decided to conduct his study in KwaMashu area because he lives there and so he has accessibility to all the schools in KwaMashu. Thus, the researcher wasted little time and money on his study since the questionnaires were hand delivered. The researcher was able to avoid the disadvantage of mailed-questionnaires as stated by Bailey (1987: 150). He states that a lack of control over time of response can damage a study greatly.

Furthermore, the researcher felt that findings on KwaMashu circuit would be applicable to other circuits and therefore were generalisable in terms of the nature of the problem of the study.

### *3.2.2.1 Population and Sample*

According to an annual statistics report produced by the KwaMashu circuit office based on October-Newsletter (2003: 3) the KwaMashu circuit has 58 secondary schools. Because of the new demarcations these schools are scattered over a large area as former Inanda and KwaMashu circuits have merged to form one big circuit. This merge makes the KwaMashu circuit to be large enough to produce a population which represented the whole of South Africa. In agreement with this, Bailey (1987: 88) concurs that the sample should be relatively large in order to be representative of the population. The researcher ensured that this was observed as possible.

A randomly chosen sample of 29 members of the Representative Council of Learners which together equals to 50% of the population was used. The researcher decided to use 50% of the population because the total number of 58 RCL members would be too far to reach, and expensive on the part of the researcher. Sax (1979: 197) concedes that it might not be possible to sample as many persons as one might prefer. Much effort and time might be expended, thus making the cost per sample unit high.

Of the 29 questionnaires handed out, 27 questionnaires were completed and returned. This amount constitutes 93.1% response rate which was considered reasonable. It is suggested that one should select 10% - 20% of the accessible population for the representative sample (Gay, 1976: 77). Since many researchers believe that small population and big population have different interpretation to different people, the researcher focused on the minimum of 40%. The response rate for the study of 27 respondents constituted 46.5% of the population. This is above the minimum requirement of 20% as

recommended by Gay (*ibid*), thus the researcher is convinced that data that was collected here is sufficient.

### **3.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

In this study the researcher decided to use a survey in order to achieve the aim of the study. Grimm and Wozniak (1990: 29) point out that survey involves asking questions or obtaining information from a carefully chosen sample of people with an intention of describing the nature of existing conditions. Bailey (1987: 35) concurs with Grimm when he states that the survey attempts to measure what exists without questioning the cause and questions asked in the survey are information gathering questions. He further emphasizes that surveys often take the form of questionnaires which, because of their usefulness as a technique, are often used. With an understanding of a survey, the researcher used the questionnaire to obtain data regarding the existing condition concerning the nature of promoting the culture of teaching and learning in schools.

#### **3.3.1 The Questionnaire**

As stated above, the researcher decided to use the questionnaire as his research instrument because it best fitted to serve the needs the study. The questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information. It is essentially a scientific instrument for measurement and collection of particular kinds of data (Behr, 1983: 155). The researcher used the questionnaire method to collect data because, if properly constructed and administered, it is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widely spread course.

The rationale of using questionnaire in this study was to obtain facts and opinions about the role of the representative council of learners in the promotion of culture of teaching and learning from the members of the same body (RCL). This gives members of the RCLs a chance to comment confidentially on their experiences as leaders in their role of promoting the culture of teaching and learning. Verma and Beard (1981: 113) support this idea by stating that the questionnaire serves to translate the research objectives into specific questions, the answers to which will provide the data necessary to test or to explore the area set by the research objectives. Mahlangu (1997: 82) concurs with this by pointing out that

questionnaires are used by researchers to convert the information directly given by people into data by providing access to what is inside somebody's mind.

Questionnaire motivates the respondents to communicate the required information. By using questionnaire, the researcher could measure what the persons know, what they like or dislike and what they think. This information is converted into quantitative data by counting the number of respondents who give a particular response, in this way generating frequency data. So, the questionnaire as a research instrument affords a good measure of objectivity in soliciting and coding the responses of the population sample.

### **3.3.2 Construction of Questionnaire**

Bailey (1987: 106) and Van Dalen (1979: 156) both agree that constructing a questionnaire that will be utilized to obtain precise data is important but is no easy task. If questionnaire is drawn haphazardly, respondents may draw different meanings which are sometimes not expected by the researcher. Grimm and Wozniak (1990: 238-239) also suggest that considerable care and attention need to be devoted to the construction and revision of a questionnaire. The well-worded questions not only obtain the information sought but also enable the respondent to complete the research experience in a straightforward and satisfying manner.

The researcher used two types of questions, that is; structured or closed-ended questions and unstructured or open-ended questions as suggested by Grimm and Wozniak (1990: 236). A distinction is generally made between open-ended questions, or questions in which response categories are not specified, and fixed-alternative or closed-ended questions in which the respondent selects one or more of the specific categories provided by the researcher.

#### **3.3.2.1 *Closed-ended questions (structured questions)***

The researcher used 20 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. Van Dalen (1978: 154) advises that researchers must aim at using many closed questions as possible, although there will always be information which is difficult to generate by closed question, thus open-ended questions are unavoidable in those cases.

Structured questions gave the respondents a statement that states certain positions. The respondents were given five alternatives to choose from and gave their responses by putting a cross (X).

*Strongly agree* : was crossed when the respondent felt that, such statement happens always.

*Agree* : was crossed when the respondent felt that, such statement happens often.

*Disagree* : was crossed if respondent felt that such statement happens seldom.

*Strongly disagree*: was crossed if the respondent felt that, such statement is inapplicable.

*Uncertain* : was crossed when the respondent is unsure of the right answer.

The researcher included this option with the aim of limiting chances of guessing by the respondent. Thus the respondent actually supplied feeling about the role of the RCL without being forced to choose from the expected alternatives.

Structured questions would be easier for the respondents to fill. Therefore questionnaire would not discourage them (respondents) from completing it (the questionnaire) as it would take not much of their time. Options were in coding only, and in this way the researcher managed to minimize semantic and synthetic misinterpretation. Hence it would be easy to analyze the questionnaire as these could be fed into a statistical analysis system. Closed-ended questions however, never gave an opportunity for the respondents to express the situations in their own words and therefore limited the scope for the researcher to know more about the topic at hand, either than the statements he gave. To avoid this the researcher included both close and open-ended questions.

### 3.3.2.2 *Open-ended (unstructured) questions*

The researcher employed an open-ended question because he aimed at exploring variables that were unknown to him. Bailey (1987: 120) argues that the open-ended question has advantages when a variable is relatively unexplored or unknown to the researcher. In such a case the open-ended questions would enable the researcher to explore the variable better and obtain some idea of the spectrum of possible responses.

For the open-ended question, the respondent had to freely express his feelings by explaining and giving examples of his experiences. The open-ended question was included in order to give a respondent an opportunity to express himself about what he wishes to be done about the role of the RCL in the promotion of a culture of teaching and learning in his school.

Open-ended questions sometimes take too long to respond to and might cause delays in return of questionnaire. When misinterpreted by the respondent, he might give answers which are not relevant to the topic and its aims, thus not be useful in the analysis of the problem. To minimize this problem the researcher decided to include only one open-ended question.

### *3.3.2.3 Disadvantages of questionnaire as a method and how these were overcome.*

Both Bailey (1987: 149-150) and Sax (1979: 245-246) concur that a written questionnaire has the following disadvantages:

- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions. To minimize this situation, the researcher made sure that questions were simple and short.
- Answers to mail questionnaires must be seen as final. Rechecking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. To overcome this shortcoming of a questionnaire, the researcher avoided ambiguous statements as possible.
- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews. In this case, the researcher included open-ended question in order to give the respondents a free expression and all the questions were understandable.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that the respondents may have. Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all out of confusion or misinterpretation. The researcher conducted a pilot study to overcome this shortcoming.

### 3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Bailey (1987: 107) validity and reliability are concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in research. Validity and reliability are very important to the effectiveness of any data collecting means (Grimm, et al., 1990: 165). Validity and reliability are two different concepts that are interrelated. Sax (1979: 220) concurs to Grimm by saying that the validity of measurements is not entirely independent of its reliability.

Validity refers to the degree to which it actually measures the concept it is supposed to measure. Sax (1979: 220) agrees that validity is the extent to which a test correlates with some criterion external to the test itself. In this study questions were structured and organized in such a way that the members of the RCL would give information required without misunderstanding, as they (questions) asked about their (RCL members) day to day activities. The issue of validity is particularly important for research design (Bailey, 1987: 282).

Reliability is defined by Sax (1979: 206) as the extent to which measurements reflect true individual differences among respondents. Grimm, et al. (1990: 166) agree with Sax when they point out that reliability refers to the degree to which a measure is consistent in producing the same reading when measuring the same things. A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid (Van Dalen, 1978: 325). In this study the questions were formulated in such a way that they would be analyzed by means of frequency distribution which complies with what Grimm and Sax mention above.

Reliability refers to the extent to which measurement results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. It is difficult for the researcher to guarantee reliability as this will be affected by the following factors suggested by (Bailey, 1987: 73-74):

- Fluctuation in the mood or alertness of respondents because of illness, fatigue, recent good or bad experiences, and differences amongst group members.
- Differences in scoring and interpretation of results and problem of respondents who give answer to questions without thoroughly considering their measuring.

- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

### **3.5 THE PILOT STUDY**

The researcher conducted a pilot study before the questionnaire was finalized. This was done in order to establish whether the interpretation of questions was consistent with the researcher's intention. Marshall and Rossman (1994: 42-43) state that the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved and to identify flaws in the measuring instrument. The pilot group is excluded from the sample when the full scale investigation is administered (Tuckman, 1978: 225).

Many researchers agree that piloting a questionnaire is a prerequisite. Kish (1965: 258) confirms that if questions are to be used to measure variables in an investigation, they must be pretested, refined and subjected to the same criteria of validity, reliability and objectivity.

- Pilot study helps to improve the quality of the final study by rectifying weakness in format, eliminating irrelevant or sensitive items, standardizing the scoring method and thereby increasing clear results.

It permits a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data. With the permission of the circuit manager and principals of secondary schools, the researcher conducted a pilot study on five members of RCLs of five different secondary schools. All these respondents were not going to be part of the final sample as mentioned earlier on.

The pilot study is administered in the presence of an investigator and encountered problems are discussed. Such problems may be related to wording, sequence, misconceptions, ambiguities etc. During his pilot study the researcher was made aware that the majority of his respondents were not familiar with the term "Learner-Leadership". The concept appeared to be interpreted broadly and resulted in misinterpretations. The researcher thus opted for a more commonly known concept used in current policy documents, namely a representative Council of Learners (RCL) instead of Learner-Leadership.

### **3.6 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Both Bailey (1987: 155) and Sax (1979: 258) point out that the questionnaire must be accompanied by a cover letter explaining the nature and the purpose of the research project and enlisting the respondent's co-operation. The cover-letter should also highlight the name of the investigator, his signature, the level of the study as well as an opportunity for debriefing.

As stated on 3.2.1 after permission had been granted, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the members of RCLs of the targeted schools. All the questionnaires had cover-letters which asked for their (the respondents) co-operation in participating by way of responding to the questionnaires. After the respondents had completed answering the questionnaires, the researcher returned after a week to collect them for analyzing and interpreting the responses.

When the researcher finished collecting data he moved on to the step of processing it.

### **3.7 PROCESSING OF DATA**

The researcher processed the data, that had been collected from the respondents, by compiling frequency tables. In this regard the frequency tables contain level of continuum scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree categories. All the scores were totalled in their respective categories and worked out into percentages.

This is in accordance with Sax (1979: 352) who says that the frequency table is the attitude rating scale in continuum ranging from the lowest extreme to the highest extreme related to the attitudes being measured. He also adds that frequency table provide information as to:

- How many times the response occurs
- What is the percentage of that response to total responses.

The responses from the members of the RCLs were analyzed and interpreted simultaneously in order to highlight the similarities and differences. An open-ended question was also analysed manually. The researcher recorded assigned themes to different responses and calculated the frequency of similar responses to get exact figure of each theme.

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The factors that constrained the investigation are as follows:

The timing of this investigation was problematic because the approval of the questionnaire was done very late in October. The study had to be conducted during November which was the time of writing examinations. The target group of this study comprised of the learners (members of RCLs) who were fully engaged in examination writing.

Another limitation was that of the language as noted by Chetty (1998: 144) when she states that a shortcoming of the research design is that, it overlooked the fact that a large number of respondents were English second language speakers. The questionnaire was monolingual and therefore, did not cater for the Zulu speaking respondents - especially in this study the respondents are still learners and their level of English competency is still weak.

To overcome these challenges the researcher used after-school hours and week-ends and traced his respondents in their study groups. This gave him time to hand the questionnaires to the respondents, and where required, the respondents translated the questions verbally in Zulu.

Despite the above limitations, the researcher found that the advantages of the questionnaire far outweighed the disadvantages.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Ethical considerations require respecting the anonymity of respondents. Bailey (1987: 407) states that different researchers have written about codes of ethics outlining the behavioural standards that the researchers must follow as they conduct research. The codes of ethics relate to the following basic principle as suggested by Bailey (*ibid*), namely:

- Maintenance of privacy.
- Use of samples rather than complete populations so that fewer persons are inconvenienced.
- Informing respondents of the possible negative effects and securing their permission (informed consent).
- Objectivity and honest in reporting.
- Promise of confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

In conducting the study, the researcher complied with the codes of ethics enumerated above.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher discussed the research methods he employed were discussed. The preparation and design of the research which included permission and selection of respondents were highlighted. The questionnaire as a research instrument, the pilot study and the processing of data were also discussed. An overview of the limitations of the study was also outlined. Lastly ethical consideration was highlighted.

The next chapter will deal with the analysis and interpretation of data.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter analyses and interprets data gathered from the members of the Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of twenty closed-ended items and one open-ended item.

#### **4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

##### **4.2.1 Items analysis and interpretation of closed-ended items**

The following are the items with frequency tables. The representation is shown by means of symbols "P" and "F" which mean the following:

Item's responses: P = percentages and  
F = frequencies

The summary of the presentation of data is shown on the table 4.1

TABLE 4.1

ITEM	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL Percentage (P) Frequency (F)
1.1 RCL-members of our school are given enough opportunity in decision-making.	25% 7	33% 9	1% 1	16% 4	25% 6	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.2 Our RCL is given just as much authority as is necessary to carry out its responsibilities.	6% 2	13% 4	11% 3	35% 9	35% 9	100 (P) 27(F)
1.3 Our RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance.	11% 3	36% 10	14% 4	12% 3	27% 7	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.4 An RCL of our school promotes discipline in the school	13% 3	62% 17	10% 3	19% 3	5% 1	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.5 An RCL enables learners to contribute towards the improvement of culture of learning, teaching and service in our school.	5% 1	41% 11	11% 3	37% 10	6% 2	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.6 RCL of our school creates a sense of co-responsibility in learners.	20% 5	50% 13	10% 3	10% 3	10% 3	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.7 RCL of our school creates an opportunity to identify future leaders.	10% 3	22% 6	2% 1	39% 10	27% 7	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.8 Our RCL creates the opportunity to train future leaders.	10% 3	20% 5	5% 1	48% 13	17% 5	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.9 An RCL attempts to create a sound and healthy relationship in our school.	11% 3	14% 4	12% 3	36% 10	27% 7	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.10 RCL of our school fosters a spirit of mutual respect among the learners.	22% 6	35% 9	5% 1	28% 8	10% 3	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.11 RCL of our school fosters morality among learners.	18% 5	47% 13	16% 4	2% 1	17% 4	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.12 An RCL of our school attends workshops organised by the department of education.	28% 8	40% 11	— —	17% 4	15% 4	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.13 An RCL of our school understands the vision of the school.	38% 10	35% 10	20% 5	5% 1	2% 1	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.14 An RCL of our school encourages learners to be committed to their code of conduct.	34% 9	32% 9	10% 3	17% 4	7% 2	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.15 In planning, an RCL of our school allows the learners to make their contributions according to their abilities and knowledge.	8% 2	30% 8	8% 2	40% 11	14% 4	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.16 An RCL of our school considers all the resources and influence the planning process.	6% 2	12% 3	12% 3	35% 10	35% 9	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.17 An RCL functions within the framework of the policies and rules of the school.	8% 2	40% 11	20% 5	15% 4	17% 5	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.18 An RCL of our school takes the criticism of other stakeholders.	11% 3	35% 10	15% 4	12% 3	27% 7	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.19 An RCL of our school gives other people the opportunity to say what they want to say without joining in with own thoughts / experiences.	10% 3	28% 8	22% 6	35% 9	5% 1	100 (P) 27 (F)
1.20 An RCL of our school usually ignores the conflict.	12% 3	60% 16	15% 4	11% 3	2% 1	100 (P) 27 (F)

#### **4.2.2 Responses of closed-ended questions were analysed as follows:**

*ITEM 1.1: RCL members of our school are given enough opportunity in decision-making.*

Fifty eight percent of the respondents agreed that they are given an opportunity to participate in decision-making; forty one percent (41%) disagreed whilst 1% were uncertain.

The 1% may be an inference that some RCL members are not sure about the extent or scope of power they have in decision making. The non-participation of the RCL members in decision making indicates that RCL members do not fully enhance the culture of teaching and learning. Musaaazi (1982: 77) asserts that decision can be taken through consultation and consensus resolution of issues.

*ITEM 1.2: Our RCL is given just as much authority as is necessary to carry out its responsibilities.*

Only 19% of the respondents indicated that an RCL is given as much authority as necessary to carry out its responsibilities. The 70% of the respondents indicated that they are not given such authority and eleven percent of the respondents are not certain. The eleven percent is an inference that some RCL members are not aware of authority they are supposed to have in order to carry out their responsibilities. This means that the majority of the RCL members does not have authority to exercise its powers.

It is evident that in most schools the authority granted to the RCLs by the SASA is not understood by most school authorities. Guides for RCLs (1998: 13) suggests that an amount of authority that is shared with an RCL must be understood by all stakeholders in the school. It is highlighted that although in most cases learners have no authority, there are some areas where learners, educators and management share authority.

*ITEM 1.3: Our RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance*

Forty seven percent (47%) of the members of the RCLs indicated that the representative council of learners provides learners with an opportunity to take part in school governance. The 39% of the respondents do not agree that members of the RCL provide learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance, while 14% of the respondents is uncertain. The 14% indicates that some members of the RCL are not sure about an extent of participating in school governance. It is discouraging to note that most secondary schools are operating with school governing bodies without accessing input from RCLs. This is a violation of SASA which states that an RCL should elect two learners to serve in the governing body.

*ITEM 1.4: The RCL of our school promotes discipline in the school*

Data from item 1.4 above shows that 75% of the respondents agreed that RCL members promote discipline in schools. Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents who did not agree with the statement, and 10% of the respondents was uncertain whether the RCL does promote discipline or not. It is evident that learners are disciplined in schools. If this is the case they (learners) can learn well and the teachers can property teach the disciplined learners.

*ITEM 1.5: The RCL enables learners to contribute towards the improvement of the culture of learning, teaching and service in our school*

According item 1.5, 46% of the respondents indicated that the representative council of learners enables learners to contribute towards the improvement of culture of learning, teaching and service in schools. The 43% of the respondents did not agree with the statement above, and 11% of the respondents was uncertain. This suggests that the majority of the learners does not contribute to the improvement of culture of learning and teaching. It is therefore, evident that most schools do not have good culture of learning and teaching and thus have poor results or poor quality of education. It is concluded that an RCL does not fully influence learners to learn (cf.1.5).

*ITEM 1.6: RCL of our school creates a sense of co-responsibility in learners*

Item 1.6 above shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that RCLs in schools do create a sense of co-responsibility in learners. Only 20% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 10% of the respondents was uncertain.

The 10% may be an inference that some RCL members are not sure about the scope of co-responsibility they should create in learners. Seventy percent (70%) is quite big and it proves that a sense of co-responsibility in learners is created. This means that RCLs are effective in their role to promote the culture of teaching and learning. Members of an RCL face the challenge of promoting among their followers, school community, learning and leadership (cf.2.5.2).

*ITEM 1.7: An RCL of our school creates the opportunity to identify future leaders*

It is only 32% of the respondents who agreed that the RCL members create the opportunity to identify future leaders, while two percent of the respondents was not certain whether the opportunity to identify future leaders is created or not. Sixty six percent of the respondents disagreed and this means that the majority of the RCL members do not create the opportunity to identify future leaders.

It is Stated in chapter 2 that the election of the new members of an RCL is conducted in September / October to give an opportunity for outgoing members to brief an incoming members who have been identified to take their leadership positions. It is also noted in above response that some of the RCL members are not aware they are expected to identify future leaders among the learners to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning is promoted.

*ITEM 1.8: An RCL of our school creates the opportunity to train future leaders*

This item shows that thirty percent (30%) of the respondents agreed with this statement. Five percent (5%) was not aware if RCL creates the opportunity to identify future leaders or not. The majority of 65% of the respondents did not agree with the statement. If this is the case there is a limited chance of well prepared learners who would serve in the RCL to promote culture of learning and teaching in schools. Van der Westhuizen (1991: 302) suggests that

new RCL members need to be trained so that they will acquire decision-making skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills and conflict management skills.

*ITEM 1.9: An RCL attempts to create a sound and healthy relationship in our school*

Item 1.9 above reveals that only 25% of the respondents indicated that the representative council of learners creates a sound and healthy relationship between learners, educators, non-educators and parents in schools. The majority of respondents forming about 63% did not agree with the statement and 12% was not certain. This shows that RCL do not sufficiently create sound relationship between stakeholders in schools. Poor relationships hinder communication and thus the aim of promoting culture of teaching and learning cannot be achieved.

*ITEM 1.10: An RCL of our school fosters a spirit of mutual respect among the learners*

The item 1.10 above reveals that 57% of the respondents agreed that RCLs of schools foster a spirit of mutual respect among the learners. There is however 38% who did not agree and 5% was uncertain. Thirty eight percent (38%) is quite a big number of respondents who do not agree that RCLs foster a spirit of mutual respect among the learners. The 5% may be an inference that some members of the RCLs are not sure about the extent of influence they have in fostering a spirit a of mutual respect among the learners. It is evident that RCL members do not perform their role of promoting culture of teaching and learning sufficiently.

*ITEM 1.11: An RCL of our school fosters morality among learners*

Sixty five percent (65%) of respondents agreed that RCL members of schools foster morality among learners and only 19% disagreed with this statement. Sixteen percent (16%) was unsure whether the representative council of learners does foster morality among learners or not. This reveals that learners' morals are considered in their learning. It is encouraging to note that the members of RCLs are building morality among learners in secondary schools. It is therefore evident that RCLs are effective their role to promote the culture of teaching and learning.

*ITEM 1.12: An RCL of our school attends workshops organised by the department of education*

Data from item 1.12 above shows that sixty eight percent (68%) of respondents agreed that RCL members attend workshops organised by the department of education. Thirty two percent (32%) did not agree with this statement. It is evident that the members of the RCL are capacitated on their roles and responsibilities by the department of education. Musaaazi (1982: 53) asserts that skills of leadership in the RCL are acquired at workshops and symposia, organised by the department to tap potential leaders.

*ITEM 1.13: An RCL of our school understands the vision of school*

On the item above 73% of the respondents felt that RCLs of schools understand the vision of their schools. However 20% of the respondents could neither agree nor disagree. Only 7% of respondents disagreed. This is encouraging because it is clear that the school vision is shared with all the stakeholders including the RCL members. An understanding of the school vision by the RCL members will enable them to perform their role of promoting culture of teaching and learning successfully.

*ITEM 1.14: An RCL of our school encourages learners to be committed to their code of conduct*

On this item 66% of the respondents agree that RCLs encourage commitment of learners to their code of conduct. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents was uncertain whether the RCLs encourage learners to commit themselves in their code of conduct or not. Only 24% disagreed on the above item. It thus, appears that the behaviour of learners in schools is under control and therefore the RCLs do perform their role in promoting culture of teaching and learning in schools.

*ITEM 1.15: In planning, an RCL of our school allows the learners to make their contributions according to their abilities and knowledge*

Only 38% of respondents on this item indicated that learners are allowed to contribute according to their abilities, the majority of the respondents forming 62% did not agree and 8% of them was uncertain. Since planning is important for any team in order to achieve best results, it is therefore discouraging that the majority of the respondents reveal that learners are not encouraged to contribute to the success of most schools. This is against what is stressed by Knott (1992: 12) when he says that the joint formulation of goals between the members of RCL and their peers helps to establish a unique culture of learning in schools.

*ITEM 1.16: An RCL of our school considers all the resources and limitations which may influence the planning process*

Eighteen percent (18%) forms a very low percentage of the respondents agreeing that RCLs of schools consider all the resources and limitations which may influence the planning process. The majority of the respondents forming 70% indicated that the RCL members do not consider all the resources and limitations which may influence the planning process, while 12% of the respondents is uncertain.

The 12% may be an inference that some RCL members are not sure about the resources and limitations they should consider to be influential in the planning process.

It is evident that resources and limitations that influence the planning process is not considered and therefore planning is not correctly and properly done. This situation would contribute to the hampering of the culture of teaching and learning.

*ITEM 1.17: An RCL functions within the framework of the policies and rules of the school*

Data collected from item 1.17 shows that forty eight percent (48%) of the respondents felt that the RCLs function within the framework of the policies and rules of the institutions. Thirty two percent (32%) of the respondents disagreed with this item, while 20% was uncertain

whether the RCLs function within the framework of the policies and rules of their schools or not. It is clear that the RCLs of most schools can not achieve their objectives of promoting the culture of teaching and learning because they violate the rules of their institutions.

*ITEM 1.18: An RCL of our school takes the criticism of other stakeholders*

This item indicates that 46% of the respondents agreed that RCL members take the criticism of other stakeholders. Thirty nine percent (39%) of the respondents disagreed with this statement, whereas 15% was uncertain whether RCL members do take the criticism of other stakeholders or not.

This means that the big number of RCL members does not accept criticism from other stakeholders. Therefore an RCL cannot work co-operatively with other stakeholders, such as the school management teams, school governing bodies, parents etc. This is against what Kotze (1987: 26) emphasizes when he says that an RCL should try and improve the interrelationships between learners, teachers and parents.

*ITEM 1.19: An RCL of our school give other people the opportunity to say what they want to say without joining in with own thoughts / experiences*

Data collected from item 1.19 above shows that only 38% of the respondents indicated that RCLs give opportunity to other learners to say what they want to say without distributing them. Twenty two percent (22%) was neutral and 40% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Twenty two (22%) of neutral respondents and 40% of the respondents who disagreed from a high percentage (62%) of the RCLs who do not give an opportunity to other learners to share their thoughts and experiences. Therefore learners do not participate fully in discussions with their RCLs. It is clear that the RCLs are not effective in their role to promote the culture of teaching and learning when they exclude or limit other learners in discussions.

*ITEM 1.20: An RCL of our school usually ignores the conflict*

Seventy two percent (72%) of the respondents agrees that the RCL members in schools usually ignore the conflict. Thirteen percent (13%) of the respondents disagree with the above statement, while fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents is uncertain whether the RCL members usually ignore the conflict or not. This thus means that the RCL members are not capacitated on conflict management. Gorton (1993: 87) stresses that when the RCL members are confronted with conflict, their role is not eliminate it, but to reduce its destructive force and make it a positive drive in the organisation.

In the next section, the researcher discusses the responses based on the open-ended item.

**4.2.3 Responses to an open-ended question**

This section consisted of open-ended question which was aimed at giving respondents an opportunity to express their views on the role of the RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in schools. There is one question in this section. The following table 4.2 represents frequency distribution according to the role of RCL in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools.

**TABLE 4.2**

<b>Theme / Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.1 Involvement of teachers in the identification of learners to serve in the RCL.	8	32%
1.2 An interrelationship between RCL members and teachers.	6	24%
1.3 An inability to deal with difficult situations.	6	24%
1.4 Communication between the RCL members and other stakeholders in the school.	5	20%

*1.1 Involvement of teachers in the identification of learners to serve in the RCL.*

Thirty two percent (32%) of the responses indicated that there is a need for teachers to be included in the identification of learners to serve in the RCL. From the observation of the members of RCLs it seems that teachers are capable to identify potential learners to serve in the RCL.

*1.2 An interrelationship between RCL members and teachers.*

Twenty four percent (24%) of responses highlighted that there is a good relationship between the RCL members and teachers. This is an encouraging input by both members of the RCL and teachers towards contributing to maintenance of culture of teaching and learning.

*1.3 An inability to deal with difficult situations*

Twenty four percent (24%) of the respondents suggested that some of the RCL members are not able to deal with difficult people. It seems that some RCL members are lacking basic management skills. This situation will hinder an RCL in performing its role.

*1.4 Communication between RCL-members and other stakeholders in schools.*

Twenty percent (20%) of responses highlighted that the RCL members communicate with other stakeholders. This ensures that in most cases RCL members are can be good communicators (cf.2.4.2). Dalin (1993: 49) confirms that in order to promote a culture of teaching and learning an RCL member needs to have the ability to communicate effectively, that is, he or she should have the ability to transmit the message to the followers and to hear and comprehend what they say in return

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

The researcher has analysed and interpreted the questionnaire items. The overall impression the investigator made out of data collected, was that the members of RCLs agree that they are not sufficiently contributing to the improvement of the culture of teaching and learning. The reason revealed is that they lack training in leadership skills. Data accessed from the research instrument supports the assumption stated in Chapter 1, namely Learners serving in the RCL are not sufficiently workshopped on their responsibilities. Specific findings relative to this study are provided in the next chapter and on the basis of these, recommendations will be made.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to determine the role of the representative councils of learners in enhancing the culture of teaching and learning. The empirical study provided insight into what the members of the RCL understood their role to be. Secondly it sought to investigate the extent to which the RCL members influence other learners to learn. Thirdly it aimed to determine factors that hamper the effective functioning of RCL members. In this chapter findings are tabled and recommendations suggested.

#### 5.2 FINDINGS

The following findings were recorded after data had been analysed.

##### 5.2.1 Findings relative to the representative council of learners in enhancing the culture of teaching and learning

###### 5.2.1.1 Members of RCL lack the capacity to play a constructive role in enhancing culture of teaching and learning.

It is evident that an assumption suggested in chapter one which says that learners serving in an RCL are not sufficiently workshopped on their responsibilities (cf.1.6) is supported.

##### 5.2.2 Findings relative to how the RCL can influence other learners to learn

###### 5.2.2.1 Discipline, sense of co-responsibility and sound relationship and learners are key components in enhancing the culture of teaching and learning.

Musaazi (1982: 57) claims that friendliness towards teachers and fellow learners is important. It is discouraging to note that the RCL members could

not create relationship between learners, educators, non-educators and parents in schools.

### **5.2.3 Findings relative to factors that hamper the effective functioning of an RCL**

#### **5.2.3.1 RCL members have not fostered a spirit of mutual respect among the learners.**

Respect is the key concept in promoting the culture of teaching and learning. It is obvious that many schools have learners who have no respect and so cannot help in building the good culture of teaching and learning.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

On the basis of the findings after data had been collected, presented and analysed, the following recommendations are suggested.

### **5.3.1 Recommendations relative to the role of the representative councils of learners in enhancing the culture of teaching and learning**

#### **5.3.1.1 Principals need to develop appropriate and effective capacity building programmes for RCL members.**

The RCL members need to be exposed to training in how they should carry out their responsibilities. The members of the representative councils of learners should not only be workshopped at venues away from their schools, these workshops should also take place within schools where problems are being experienced.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations relative to how the RCL can influence other learners to learn**

**5.3.2.1** RCL members should be given a platform to communicate with the general learner population to facilitate and foster discipline among learners in schools.

The RCL members should be encouraged to know the learners and educators well. If RCL members know an individual well, they will be able to establish good relationships with him or her and this will also improve the relationships between the members of the different groups. If RCL members know the other learners well they (RCL members) will motivate them (learners) to work together to achieve the objectives of the partnership in the school. Members of RCL should be encouraged to keep the needs of the learners in mind. RCL members should also be encouraged to maintain discipline at schools (cf.2.3.2).

### **5.3.3 Recommendations relative to factors that hamper the effective functioning of an RCL**

**5.3.3.1** Members of the RCL should be granted their legitimate rights to participate in decisions that affect them.

Members of RCL should be encouraged to share responsibility for the quality of their schools. This means that they have certain roles and responsibilities to pay attention to in order to assist other stakeholders in promoting a culture of teaching and learning in their schools. RCL members need to act as role model in all their interpersonal relationships by upholding and practising the values indicated in our constitution, namely equality, human dignity, non-discrimination as well as the different fundamental rights stipulated in the Bill of Rights contained in the constitution (cf.2.2.2).

In order to support a culture of teaching and learning, a safe and secure educational environment is imperative. Issues of discipline however, present an enormous challenge to RCL members. Faced with increased numbers of learners, fewer teachers and policy guidelines that promote a culture of human

rights, RCL members need to develop creative methods of dealing with misconduct. A fair and just policy to

counter anti-social behaviour, major and minor misdemeanours, vandalism, truancy, drug abuse, carrying of weapons and so on, should be devised (Chetty, 1998 : 204).

Therefore, a code of conduct should incorporate the consequences a learner will have to endure if a code is broken. This would also ensure fairness and consistency of treatment for those who do not comply with a school's code of conduct for learners.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the role of RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools. It sought to establish the understanding that RCL members had about their roles in promoting culture of teaching and learning. One of the researchers' prime concern, was RCL members' influence on the learners to learn. The study also wanted to determine factors that hamper the effective functioning of RCL members. Before the investigation was undertaken, literature was reviewed to gain insight into diversity of views held by different authors on the role of the RCLs in promoting culture of teaching and learning. The three basic assumptions postulated in chapter one, namely learners serving in an RCL are not given an opportunity to participate in policy decisions that affect them, co-operation between an RCL and school management team is essential for improving culture of teaching and learning; and learners serving in an RCL are not sufficiently workshopped on their responsibilities were confirmed by the results presented in chapter four.

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**APPENDIX A**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

The purpose of this Questionnaire is to investigate “The Role of the Representative Councils of Learners in the Promotion of Culture of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools”. The research is part of my M.ED Degree carried out at the University of Zululand (Umlazi-Campus), under the supervision of Prof. R.P.G. Ngongo and Dr K. Chetty.

**INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS**

Following hereunder is a series of items which contain a set of five alternative answers. The answers from a continuum from one extreme at the left end to the other extreme at the right end. Kindly respond to each statement by crossing one response that reflects your view from the five possible responses.

**QUESTION / ITEM 1**

1.1 RCL members of our school are given enough opportunity in decision making.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.2 Our RCL is given just as much authority as is necessary to carry out its responsibilities.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.3 Our RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.4 An RCL of our school promotes discipline in the school.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.5 An RCL enables learners to contribute towards the improvement of culture of learning, teaching and service in our school.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.6 RCL of our school creates a sense of co-responsibility in learners.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.7 RCL of our school creates an opportunity to identify future leaders.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.8 Our RCL creates the opportunity to train future leaders.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.9 An RCL attempts to create a sound and healthy relationship in our school.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.10 RCL of our school fosters a spirit of mutual respect among the learners.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.11 RCL of our school fosters morality among learners.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.12 An RCL of our school attends workshops organized by the department of education.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.13 An RCL of our school understands the vision of the school.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.14 An RCL of our school encourages learners to be committed to their code of conduct.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1.15 In planning, an RCL of our school allows the learners to make their contributions according to their abilities and knowledge.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

**QUESTION / ITEM 2**

1.21 If you wish to add anything about your RCL's role in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in your school, please do so in not more than six lines.

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Your contribution is highly appreciated.

  
.....  
**BHEKI M. MDIMORE**

**APPENDIX B**

Mlekeleli S.P. School  
P.O. Box 27242  
**KWAMASHU**  
4360

09 October 2003

The Principal  
KWESETHU SECONDARY  
P. O. KWAMASHU  
4360

Dear Sir / Madam

I am doing M.ED. Degree on the "Role of the RCLs in the Promotion of the Culture of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools". The enclosed questionnaire is part of a survey being conducted in the above-mentioned study. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible.

I realize that I am asking you to give up some of your valuable time, nevertheless your contribution to this study is highly valued. I hope you and your colleagues will view this as an opportunity to voice out your thoughts and opinions on some vital issues on the role of the RCLs in the promotion of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools.

I wish to thank you in advance for your kind assistance.

Yours faithfully



**BHEKI M. MDIMORE**

## APPENDIX C

7 Brentwood Gardens  
Woodview  
**PHOENIX**  
4068

09 October 2003

The Circuit Manager  
KwaZulu-Natal Education and Culture  
KwaMashu Circuit  
P / Bag x 018  
KWA-MASHU  
4360

Sir

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

I kindly request your permission to conduct research in some of the secondary schools within your jurisdiction. I am investigating 'The Role of the Representative Council of Learners in the Promotion of the Culture of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools'.

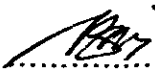
This research is in part fulfillment of my M.Ed. degree carried out at the University of Zululand (Durban-Umlazi Campus) under the supervision of Prof. R.P. Ngongo.

Information gathered during the process of this research will be treated as strictly confidential and all respondents will remain anonymous.

As the researcher, I offer to share my findings with interested parties and trust that they will find them to be useful to other end-users and prospective researchers alike.

Thank you

Yours faithfully



BHEKUMUZI, MUZINGENDODA MDIMORE (Mr)

## APPENDIX D

7 Brentwood Gardens  
Woodview  
**PHOENIX**  
4068

14 November 2003

The Regional Chief Director  
Ethekwini Region  
Truro House  
Private Bag x 54323  
DURBAN  
4000

Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently conducting a Research Project aimed at examining "The Role of the Representative Council of Learners in the Promotion of the Culture of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools". Permission is therefore requested to conduct such research in the schools under your control. This research is towards completion of my M.ED degree and is being carried under the supervision of Prof. R.P. Ngcongco at the Umlazi Campus of the University of Zululand.

For the purpose of this research a questionnaire will be developed which will be administered to chairpersons of the RCLs of Secondary schools in the KwaMashu circuit. All the information elicited in this research will be treated in strict confidentiality and anonymity.

Information gathered in the research will provide invaluable assistance to Department of Education and Culture in KwaZulu-Natal as well as in South Africa.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully



.....  
BHEKUMUZI, M MDIMORE (Mr)

# KweSethu High School

Private Bag x 04, KwaMashu, 4360

Telephone: (031) 5032502

DATE: 10/10/2004

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Dear Mr Mdimore

## RESEARCH AT OUR SCHOOL

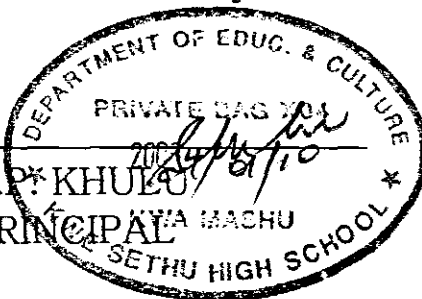
You have been afforded the permission to do your survey at the school by the Principal and Governing Body.

We do hope that this will benefit you and your project.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

DEPARTMENT OF EDUG. & CULTURE  
PRIVATE BAG 04  
2004/10/10  
S. P. KHULEU  
PRINCIPAL  
KWA MASHU  
KWESETHU HIGH SCHOOL \*



# APPENDIX F



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

**NORTH DURBAN REGION**

**ISIFUNDAZWE SENYAKATHO NETHEKU**

**NOORD DURBAN STREEK**

Address: A187-8 Musa Road  
Ikheli: KWAMASHU-J  
Adres: 4360

Private Bag:  
Isikhwama Seposi:  
Privaatsak:

KWAMASHU CIRCUIT OFFICE  
P/Bag X018  
KWAMASHU, 4360

Telephone: (031) 5031177  
Ucingo: (031) 5031195  
Telefoon:  
Fax: (031) 5031178

Enquiries:  
Imibuzo **DR G.N. MSIMANGO**  
Navrae:

Reference:  
Inkomba:  
Verwysing:

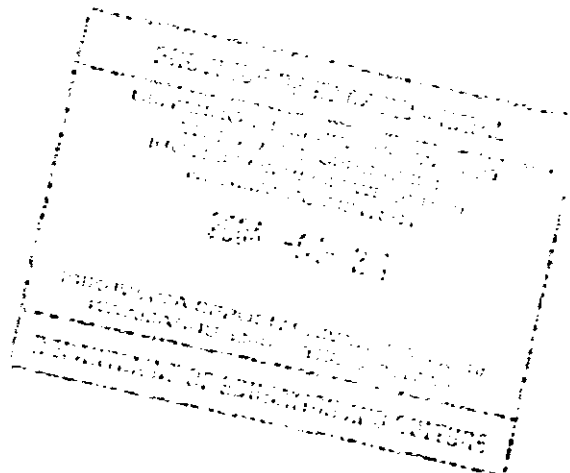
Date:  
Usuku: 21/01/2004  
Datum:

Mr B.M. Mdimore  
Mlekeleli Sen. Primary School  
KWAMASHU  
4360

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

1. You are hereby granted permission to conduct research in the KwaMashu Circuit.
2. Please note that your research must not interfere with schooling. You are to make your own arrangements with respondents.
3. We wish you well in your studies.

  
DR G.N. MSIMANGO  
CIRCUIT MANAGER



## APPENDIX 9.



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL  
PROVINSE KWAZULU-NATAL



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS EN KULTUUR

ITHAKWINI REGION		ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATAL		UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO NAMASIKO	
Address	: Tsoo House	Private Bag	: X 64323	Telephone	: (031) 3000178
Isithi	: 17 Victoria Embankment	Isikhawama Sepost	: DURBAN	Ucingo	:
Adres	: DURBAN	Privaatstak	: 4000	Telefoon	:
	: 4001			Fax	: (031) 3321123
Enquiries	: N. Bridgall	Reference	: DOCTORAL	Date	:
Imbuzo	:	Inkombi	: RESEARCH	Usuku	: 29 January 2004
Navrae	:	Verwysing	:	Datum	:

## OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CHIEF DIRECTOR

Mr M. Mdumane Bhukumuzi  
7 Brentwood Gardens  
Woodview  
Phoenix  
4068

Dear Mr Bhukumuzi

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH - "THE ROLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS IN THE PROMOTION OF THE CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS"

Your letter dated 14 November 2003 in respect of the above matter refers. Kindly be informed that permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research in the schools required in the eThekweni Region subject to the following:

1. The schools which will participate in the project would do so on a voluntary basis.
2. Access to the schools you wish to utilise in your sample is negotiated with the principal concerned by yourself.
3. The normal teaching and learning programme is not disrupted.
4. The confidentiality of the participants is ensured.
5. A copy of the thesis / research is lodged with the Office of the Regional Chief Director on completion of your studies.

I wish you every success with your research.

Thank you.

N.L. NTULI (MRS)  
REGIONAL CHIEF DIRECTOR

RESEARCH LETTERS