



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**TOPIC**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AT  
TWO SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE KGALAGADI AND SOUTHERN  
REGIONS OF BOTSWANA

BY

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**APPROVAL**

This research essay has been examined and approved as meeting the required standard of the scholarship for partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The research essay was typed, compiled and completed by the researcher at the University of Botswana, School of Graduate Studies in June 2015. I therefore declare that the work is original except where references are made and neither has it been nor will it be submitted for award to any University.

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Title: The extent to which students participate in school governance at two senior secondary schools in Kgalagadi and Southern regions.

Degree: Master of Education (Educational Management)

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## DEDICATION

To my family, my beloved wife Lebang Metlha and our children Nako Boleng and Ano Malepa. It was through your inspiration that I managed to pull through. There were times when I felt so discouraged but your prayers were always my pillar and strength.

Finally, to all my friends and colleagues who gave me the support and encouragement during my study, I thank you.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BGCSE – Botswana General Certificate in Secondary education

DSE – Department of Secondary Education

HOD – Head Of Department

HOH – Head Of House

NCE – National Commission on Education

PTA – Parents and Teachers Association

RCL – Representative Council of Learners

SGB – School Governing Body

SRC – Student Representative Council

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the extent to which students participate in school governance at two senior secondary schools in Kgalagadi and Southern regions. The study was intended to establish the different areas where students' participation is encouraged to ensure a good governance of the school and how students' representatives are selected and appointed to participate in these areas of school governance.

The study adopted a qualitative approach which is based on interpretive epistemology. Data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire and an in-depth interview. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 24 students and 16 students from the two senior secondary schools, that is, Seepapitso School and Matsha College. The findings reveal that although there is student representative council and prefects in the two schools, students' participation in the school committees is insignificant. Students are involved only in supervisory duties which are ensuring that school rules and regulations are observed. It was then concluded that schools need to improve their internal processes to expand student participation in decision-making in issues affecting them.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Involving students in school governance is a problem faced by various countries around the world (Gambule, 2010; Matsepe, 2014). Educators have for quite a long time worked tirelessly to improve schools and ensure school effectiveness, with the consideration for the input that learners might have in the running of schools (Duma, 2011). Student involvement in decision-making in developed countries has taken a step further and it seems to bring with it positive results which include improvement of academic performance (Fletcher, 2003). However, in Africa, the various countries are still grappling with problems of involving students in school governance for a variety of reasons (Gambule, 2010). In Botswana, recent developments that came with the implementation of the pastoral policy in 2007 saw all secondary schools being compelled to involve students in school governance (Pastoral Policy, 2007).

This chapter will therefore provide the background to the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions meant to guide the study, significance of the study, the limitations as well as delimitations of the study.

#### **1.2 Background to the problem**

Participation and democracy in education are not a new phenomenon, and they have been highlighted from different perspectives and with a focus on varying aims and supposed effects (Mager and Nowak, 2012). Increasingly, teachers are recognising the power of listening to students (de Fur and Korinek, 2010). It is believed that schools should create

systems and structures in which all students and community can have a voice and contribute to the school governance of secondary education (de Fur and Korinek, 2010).

The extent of student involvement in school governance is debatable with often conflicting viewpoints propagated by differing stakeholders depending on their background and the world view (Fletcher, 2003; Jeruto and Kiprop, 2011). In the past, the school heads or principals throughout the world have been the main decision-makers in the schools (Blasé and Blasé, 1999; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Mager and Nowak, 2012; Mncube, 2012). Now there is a considerable shift towards involving students in decision-making in schools. There is now a considerable amount of international and comparable literature on involvement of students in matters that affect their education which include many arguments supporting it. In this literature, there is evidence that strongly suggests that listening to students, encouraging their participation, empowering them and giving them more responsibility, can enhance school effectiveness and facilitate school improvement as well as contributing to the development of more democratic values (de Fur and Korinek, 2010; Morapedi and Jotia, 2011; Mncube, 2012).

Research by de Fur and Korinek (2010) has shown that all students, regardless of their age or ability, when given an opportunity to participate in school governance, can have their voices used as a powerful tool for school improvement. This is supported by the results of another research from the Irish schools which suggested that participation by students in school was significantly associated with liking school and higher perceived academic performance, better self-rated health, higher life satisfaction and greater reported happiness (De Roiste, Kelly, Molcho, Gavin and Gabhainn, 2012).

Fletcher (2005), observed that students in schools in the United States of America (USA), are engaged as full voting members of the school boards, in district-wide evaluation of teachers, curriculum, facilities, and students' performance. In Washington, the students are

used to teach younger ones and their peers as well as adults in most grades across the state. These activities (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Steve, 2002; Czerniawski, 2012) form the basis for meaningful students participation in school governance and as Chemutai and Chumba (2014) argue, it evolves from the growing awareness among students and teachers that students can and should play a crucial role in the success of school improvement.

The rapid expansion of the student enrolment in most African countries since the attainment of political independence coupled with inadequate resources to cope with the ever increasing demand for educational provisions has made school management a much more complex and difficult enterprise (Chemutai and Chumba, 2014). Fletcher (2005) suggests that to ensure effective and successful management of schools, the school head must not only be innovative, resourceful and dynamic, but also be able to interact well with people both within and outside the school. The school heads had to bring on board all stakeholders in some way or the other into the decision-making processes. Students being the key customers have that right to be included in the decision-making.

However, the participation of students in school governance is often viewed as problematic to school management, parents and the society at large (Jeruto and Kiprop, 2011; Mokoena, 2011; Morapedi and Jotia, 2011; Matsepe, 2014). This comes from the fact that students are usually seen as minors, immature and lacking the expertise and the technical knowledge needed in the running of the school (Gambule, 2010; Jeruto and Kiprop, 2011; Ngomezulu, Wamba and Shawa, 2013; Chemutai and Chumba, 2014). Hence student participation in decision-making is often limited to issues concerned with student welfare and not in the core issues of school governance. A study (Jeruto and Kiprop, 2011) to find out the extent of student participation in decision-making in secondary schools in Kenya revealed that though there were attempts to include views of students in school policy, such attempts were merely tokenistic and did not extend to core issues of school management. These results

confirm that students are deemed immature and therefore could not be allowed to take part either in administrative issues such as managing funds and budgets nor in curriculum issues such as teaching methods or number of examinations. Another study conducted by Chemutai and Chumba (2014) investigating the student council participation in decision-making in schools in Kenya, also found out that inclusion of student council views in secondary schools were mainly tokenistic and could not extend to core management issues. These exclusions of students in participating in school governance has, as observed by Muli (2011), resulted in secondary schools in Africa having to experience violent student disturbances because students were not consulted whenever important decisions are made , hence they resort to violence to vent their frustrations and disagreement.

Another strand of discussion places student participation in the core of citizenship education, whose purpose is to provide opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable students to take an informed and active role in a democratic society (Mokoena, 2011; Morapedi and Jotia, 2011; Mncube, 2012).

In South Africa, in 1996 the newly democratic state of South Africa published a white paper on institutional governance and funding of schools which became operative in 1997 (Duma, 2011; Mokoena, 2011; Mncube, 2012), from which emanated the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 (SASA). The reform mandated that all public state secondary schools in South Africa must have a democratically elected school governing body (SGB) composed of principals, educators, non-teaching staff, parents and students ( Naidoo, 2005; Duma, 2011; Mokoena, 2011; Mncube, 2012). The functions of the SGB were clearly stated and included recommendations of the appointment of both teachers and non-teaching staff, deciding on the language policy of the school, control and maintenance of the school property, and determining school fees (Naidoo, 2005; Mncube, 2012). Students as members of the SGB take part actively in the execution of these functions, and they participate through

a student body, Representative Council of Learners (RCL) mandated by SASA. This reform was aimed at redressing the past exclusion and facilitation of the necessary transformation to support the ideals of good representation and participation in the schools. According to Mncube (2012) the reform introduced a school governance structure that was meant to involve all stakeholders in the education system and promote issues of democracy, hence reduce the unrest that was commonly experienced in South African schools. Despite all this, Mncube (2012) in the study that was to explore the actual involvement of learners in SGB, discovered that although learners were afforded the full role in school governance by the education policy, they do not always play their part in school decision-making. Although the student participation in SGB offers a considerable potential for both the school improvement and making a contribution in the deepening and consolidation of democracy, there is still much to be done in order to see real student participation in decision-making. Duma (2011) in his study which was to establish the perception of the role of student leadership in rural schools, made a recommendation that rural schools should establish student leadership structures and with the necessary training they can have a working knowledge of school governance since their participation involves among other things planning, organising, leading, supervising, decision-making and controlling, which are some of the management duties of school governance structures.

The Report of the National Commission on Education (NCE) 1977, makes a reference to the fact that “the social life of secondary school students appears to be limited and artificial (p.119)”. The report continues to indicate that there is little interactions amongst the various stakeholders in schools. This basically suggests that students still remain passive, hence there is need to involve students in some school activities. The NCE (1977) notes that “what appears to be missing are opportunities for students to engage in informal discussion, sports and hobbies, group work, expeditions and visits to places of interests (p. 119).” Despite what

these observations, the tone of the excerpt 5.91 in the NCE (1977) seems to be more focussed on the supervision of the students and very little on empowerment of students, which suggests that it might still be the case in schools to date.

The Report of the National Commission on Education (1993) on the other hand emphasises more of the parental involvement in their children's education and fails to make mention of the student participation in school governance. This situation has resulted in student participation in school governance in Botswana, being minimal and students continued to receive instructions from parents and the school management. Gambule (2010) adds that there were no meetings with students, from the 70s through the 90s, not even any structures in place that ensured there was communication from school management to the students and from student to the school management, except during assembly time. During those years the assemblies were the only fora where students would be told what is taking place in the school. This has since increased the call for increasing the extent of inclusion of students in school governance in schools in Botswana owing to the student indiscipline and unrests that were frequently experienced in secondary schools. These unrests that occurred in schools (Gambule, 2010), have resulted in some students not writing the final Botswana General Certificate in Secondary Education (BGCSE) examinations and government property being vandalised.

In order to enhance student participation in school governance and thus minimise the students' dissatisfaction, the Department of Secondary Education (DSE) in the Ministry of Education introduced the pastoral policy in all secondary schools in Botswana in 2007 (Pastoral Policy on Education, 2007). The ministry had felt that it was time for shared governance, that school managers should plan everything in the schools with the involvement of all stakeholders. The understanding, according to Matsepe (2014), is that secondary students are stakeholders in their own right and as such entitled to participate in school



governance and not to be represented by adults. The Pastoral Policy (2007) asserts that “in many cases some students do not appreciate their contribution in caring for school property, since they play a minimum role in school governance (p.2).” Matsepe (2014) concurs when he observes that if students are involved in school governance, they would be part of the decisions made to run the school hence would have ownership of such decisions and stand a better chance to convince fellow students about the good intentions of the decisions made by the school.

The pastoral policy (2007) advocates for involvement of students in 70% of the school committees because the DSE believes that student participation in school governance is an integral part of an effective pastoral programme since the schools exist for students.

The issue of students’ involvement in school governance is recognised as being a problem in the educational circle all over the world. In Botswana the Department of Secondary Education introduced the pastoral policy in all secondary schools in 2007. According to the policy, students being the key customers are expected to be involved in school governance and schools expected to give reports of progress to their respective regions. These reports were hopefully a way of ensuring that schools stick to the stipulated pastoral policy. However, a study conducted by Gambule (2010), which investigated the involvement of students in school governance in senior secondary schools in Botswana, revealed that the trend of school management and teachers making decisions without student input is still rife and schools still rely heavily on the prefect system for maintenance of law and order, with more emphasis on student supervision than empowerment. Morapedi and Jotia (2011) conducted a study where they investigated the extent to which the prefectship system in Botswana secondary schools develops and nurtures students democratically. The study indicated that students are not given an opportunity to fully participate, represent and serve

the interests of the students; instead the school management used the prefect system to their benefit.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The participation of students in governance of schools is essential as most decisions made in the school affects them in one way or another. When students are encouraged to participate in the governance of their schools, they develop the right attitude towards their academic work as well as a sense of belonging to both the school and the society. The students learn to be responsible, law abiding and self-directing individuals. Good school governance stresses participation of students in decision-making through their representatives, but what is found on the ground is that students are not involved in making decisions on what directly affects them. Thus the study sought to establish the different areas where students' participation is encouraged to ensure a good governance of the school and how the student representatives are selected and appointed to participate in these areas of school governance.

### **1.4 Purpose of study**

The purpose of the study is to determine the level of student participation in school governance as stated by the Pastoral Policy. It will further try to establish the roles played by students' representatives in school governance making.

### **1.5 Research questions**

1. What procedures are put in place to allow student participation in school governance?
2. How does the pastoral policy enhance student participation in school governance?
3. Are there any specific roles played by the students' representatives in decision-making?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The study should sensitise school management and other stakeholders on the importance of addressing the issues of student participation in school governance. By addressing these issues it will in turn improve discipline and academic performance. It will help the schools to reflect on their working relations with the students and in the long run help improve the leadership approach for a better future. The decision makers will be informed and hopefully provide training for the prospective school managers who have to work with students as partners in schools under the new dispensation of the pastoral policy.

### **1.7 Limitations**

Time and finance restricted the study to only two public senior secondary schools in the Southern and Kgalagadi regions. This study used only an open-ended questionnaire (See Appendix A, p58) and in-depth interview to collect data from the two schools. However, the researcher had to ensure that quality work was done. The results may not be generalised to all schools since only two schools were used.

### **1.8 Delimitations**

The study was confined to two senior secondary schools. The study sample included only Heads of Houses, teachers, prefects and students who were considered particularly because the research revolved around the issue of student leaders which in one way or another touched on all of them by focussing on aspects of school governance. Therefore it will be difficult on a research platform to generalise the findings.

### **1.9 Summary**

The chapter indicates the roadmap for the predicted study. In trying to address the research problem, the attention has to be paid to the forces driving the need for student participation in

school governance in senior secondary schools in Botswana. The chapter also mentions the general introduction to the topic under investigation, the background to the problem, the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions which guided the study as well as the limitations of the study.

The next chapter provides an in-depth literature review on student participation in school governance.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents relevant literature review on student participation in school governance. The chapter discusses school governance; procedures put in place to allow student participation in school governance; the pastoral policy, student participation; and the role of students in decision- making.

#### **2.1 What is school Governance?**

A School Head today operates in a climate of school restructuring and reform wherein bureaucratic structures are in fact giving way to collaborative endeavours among groups of education professionals (Blasé and Blasé, 1999).

Governance is characterised by predictable, open and enlightened policy making, a bureaucracy infused with professional ethos acting in furtherance of public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and strong civil society participating in public affairs (World Bank, 2008). Good governance therefore requires the roles and responsibilities at different levels to be aligned or at least coordinated and communicated to avoid overlaps or gaps in responsibility and maximise consistency within organisations.

Backman and Trafford (2007), on the other hand, define school governance as ‘a wide definition of school leadership, including both instrumental and ideological aspects (p.9).’ They argue that school governance encompasses democracy, transparency and accountability of which democracy shows that school governance is based on human rights values, empowerment and involvement of the students, staff and other stakeholders in all important

decisions in the school. However, it seems a big challenge (Gambule, 2010; Matsepe, 2014) for schools to actually ensure that everyone is a contributor and a beneficiary and is involved in all important decisions.

Backman and Trafford (2007) identified the difference between the two terms, 'governance and management' in schools. The writer contends that 'governance' is used to emphasise the openness of the school and educational systems, while the term 'management' is used rather in order to underline the technical and instrumental dimensions governing. This translates to the understanding that governance is about schools being open and thus allowing all stakeholders to actively participate in making important decisions in the running of the schools. The students as one of the important stakeholders in schools (Matsepe, 2014), are to enjoy the 'openness of schools and educational systems' and thus expected to have a role to play in the running of the school. According to Gambule (2010), school governance has transformed over the years from what is used to be in the past to what it is presently since it seems there is interest in taking students on board as part of the schools' decision-making process.

Mitra (2009) on the other hand argues that students' involvement in school governance offers a practical agenda for change in schools and provides an important shift in the status of students in schools from 'passive objects to active players' and in the teacher relationship from one that is strictly hierarchical to the one that is more collaborative.

Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) observed that student participation in decision-making refers to the work of student representative bodies such as school councils, student parliaments and the prefectorial body. It is also a term used to encompass all aspects of school life and decision-making where students may make a contribution, informally through individual negotiations as well as formally through purposely-created structures and mechanisms. Student

participation also refers to participation of students in collective decision-making at school or class level and the dialogue between students and other decision-makers, not only in consultation or survey among students (p.92). In their definition Mager and Nowak (2012) use the term 'participation' to mean 'taking part' or 'being present' but also suggest that students have some influence over the decisions made and the actions to be taken.

Fletcher (2005) emphasises meaningful student involvement as “the process of engaging students as partners in every facet of school change for the purpose of strengthening their commitment to education, community and democracy.” Fletcher continues to mention patterns of student involvement as meaningful activities and issues that students are addressing that fully involve them and are relevant to them and play a crucial role in their success and improvement.

Mngomezulu (2004) in Gambule (2010) observed that the espousing of democracy in many countries, including Botswana, has an influence in the way in which the schools are managed. In a democracy, all stakeholders are supposed to be included in governance since managing is observed to be based on human rights, values, empowerment and involvement of students, staff and stakeholders in all important decisions in the school is vital (Backman and Trafford, 2007).

Botswana, like the rest of the world, has had to keep up with the global standards and trends (Gambule, 2010) hence the introduction of the pastoral policy in secondary schools. The pastoral policy emphasises stakeholder involvement which stands out to be directly dealing with the efficient and effective management of any school or its governance. This study therefore attempted to find structures in place that encourage student participation in school governance in the selected senior secondary schools in Botswana. In particular the first research question specifically addresses this issue.

## **2.2. Procedures put in place to allow student participation in school governance**

Research on procedures that schools have in place to encourage participation in school governance seemed to be limited. However, literature shows that there are some structures in place such as prefects, student councils, class monitors just to mention a few. Student councils and other student governing structures are not an entirely new phenomenon in schools around the world (Chemutai and Chumba, 2014). These writers also observe that there are active student councils at high school level in US, the UK, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Singapore and South Africa just to mention a few. For instance Whitty and Wisby (2007) in a paper which discussed the sociological issues raised by a study on school councils in England, revealed that there is lack of clarity among policy-makers and schools regarding the purpose of the provision for a “pupil voice.” The paper further outlines the potential for the learner voice to support neo-liberal as well as progressive ends.

Yuen and Leung (2010) conducted a research which was aimed at finding out the impact and the complexities encountered as a senior secondary school in Hong Kong made an attempt to enlist students into its governance. The two phased research used a case study to collect data. In the first phase, interviews were used to collect data from the school supervisor, director, principal, vice principal, counselling teacher, subject teachers, and teachers of civic education, whilst focus-group interviews and a survey questionnaire were used to collect data from the students. In the second phase of the study only interviews were used to collect data. Interviews were conducted with the supervisor, principal, vice principal and teachers. Focus-group interviews were conducted with the students. The findings suggest that initial success was achieved in terms of both quality of governance and of democratic education for students. It was also found out that the initial success with democratic governance may be difficult to sustain unless effective measures can be devised to prepare and maintain the support of the students and teachers, and achieving this is by no means easy



and will require careful planning. Data from the second phase seemed to suggest that institutionalisation had a depressing effect on student participation as it contracted the room for decision-making. The results also suggest that the school actually faced not a problem of institutionalisation but a lack of institutionalisation in terms of student participation. Therefore the writers recommended the formation of a student council so that students' voices can find ways to enter the decision-making process. It is good to find that the study was done in two phases and the data was collected from a wide range of stakeholders. The study did not use observations. This study on the other hand did not use two phase strategies but used a single phase.

In Kenya, Chemutai and Chumba (2014) carried out a study on student council's participation in decision-making in public secondary schools in Kericho West Sub County. The study used a survey questionnaire to collect data from students and teachers and used interviews for deputy school heads.

In another related study in Kenya, Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) investigated the extent of student participation in decision-making in secondary schools although there is minimal mention of school councils. Data was collected from students and teachers through a questionnaire. The results from both studies demonstrated that inclusion of student council's views in secondary schools were mainly tokenistic and did not extend to the core management issues since student councils were only allowed to participate in student welfare issues. Students were allowed to participate in student welfare issues but were deemed to be immature and therefore unable to take part in neither administrative issues such as managing funds and budgeting nor in curriculum issues such as teaching methods or deciding on the number of examinations to be written. The two studies used a survey research design to collect and gather information. Chemutai and Chumba (2014) used both questionnaires and interviews as their data collection instruments whilst Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) used only the

questionnaire. For this study the researcher decided to adopt a case study, and used both questionnaires and interviews for data collection from students, teachers and Heads of Houses through a case study which according to Creswell (2003) allows the researcher to gather detailed data using multiple data gathering procedures over a sustained period of time.

Mncube (2008) in South Africa carried out a research aimed at exploring the participation of learners in school governance by means of a literature review and empirical investigation using a qualitative approach. He used a case study which employed a variety of data collection methods, such as observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to understand the internal dynamics of the functioning of a small sample of school governing bodies (SGB) in secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The findings indicated that learners are often not afforded a full opportunity to participate in crucial decisions by the adult members of the SGB.

Lebuso (2003) on the same note did a study to find out what barriers in school governance existed in Lesotho secondary and high schools for the involvement of students. In his study, the qualitative feature was dominant over the quantitative feature. A descriptive case study research method was used. To collect data, focus-group interviews were conducted on student leaders while independent interviews were held for principals and educational secretary, and questionnaires were conducted for students. The findings show that electoral procedures used to choose student leaders make them un-popular to students who view them as serving teachers' not students' interests. Student leaders in all schools were not involved in decision-making because staff perceived them as not mature to participate. There are barely any support mechanisms to help student leaders to be effective in carrying out their duties. The two studies by Mncube (2008) and Lebuso (2003) adopted a case study research method. Mncube (2008) used observations, in-depth interviews and document analysis while Lebuso (2003) used focus-group interviews, independent interviews and questionnaires. They

collected data from all stakeholders that were deemed to be experienced in areas of supervision or governance of schools. For this study the instruments adopted for data collection were the in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

In Botswana the two opposite views on non-involvement and meaningful involvement discussed above is apparent. For instance, Morapedi and Jotia (2011) carried out a study to investigate the extent to which the prefectship system in Botswana secondary schools develop and nurture students democratically. The approach used was qualitative and used the case study research method. The research collected data through interview as well as participant observation and data was collected from heads of houses, teachers, students, prefects and school heads. The findings from the study revealed that student leadership in secondary schools to some degree does exist, however the student leaders are not accorded the opportunity to fully participate, represent and serve the interests of the student body.

Another related local study by Ngomezulu, Wamba and Shawa (2013), investigated the extent to which the school management train learner-leaders and examined selected management aspects that could be included in a training program. The research used a quantitative approach. A questionnaire was used to collect data from students (prefects and non-prefects). The findings indicated that the training of learner-leaders was inadequate in providing leadership management skills. The research did not involve members of staff. The findings from these two studies are similar to the findings from other studies since most studies indicate that learners are not involved in decision-making. The current study adopted a qualitative approach and used both interviews and questionnaires as the instruments for data collection. Through the use of the qualitative approach, the researcher was able to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain an in-depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them (Creswell, 2003).

In addressing Research Question one which is ‘what are the procedures put in place to allow student participation in school governance?’, the literature has revealed that different countries have structures in place. It has shown that developed countries use student councils whilst most developing countries still use the prefects system as students’ leadership representative structures.

It seems there is a false impression that students’ views are considered when in actual fact they are not listened to (Ngomezulu et al., 2013). It becomes relevant therefore to establish the kind of student involvement that is practiced by senior secondary schools in Botswana since it might be that students are said to be participating by the mere fact that they are found in school committees as recommended by the pastoral policy.

### **2.3 The pastoral policy and student participation in school governance**

Even though there is not much research on how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in school governance, Raywid (1996) argues that many educators see school downsizing efforts as the cornerstone of school restructuring. In his study, Raywid (1996) reviewed literature and documentation, evaluated, and studied policies of 22 schools-within-schools and small schools which was conducted over the past fifteen years. Experiences in three cities, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, suggest that there are multiple reasons for downsizing notably the enhancement of commitment and performance and the development of teachers and students. The research also revealed that a number of sub-units, sub-schools and, small schools have been quite successful in achieving better attendance, more positive attitudes, and greater achievement. It was noted that schools which have been designed and operated as distinctive and autonomous entities have had a better chance of success. The findings suggest that while downsizing is clearly no magic bullet, it can increase student participation, reduce drop-outs, improve achievement, and enhance teacher effectiveness.

A study by Smyth and Fasoli (2007) was conducted to examine what the teachers and students had to say about the efficacy of a high school that embarked upon a process of reinventing itself in respect of the importance of relationships and 'relational power' for students over their learning. The study was an ethnographic case study carried over a five-week continuous period. To collect data the study involved observations and interviews with a small sample of stakeholders and a focus-group interview with students. The findings revealed that positive outcomes emerged from an extent where fair boundaries were established and which students could see the school as a place where they could experience fun in their learning. The school seemed to have created the conditions necessary for its young people to construct viable identities for themselves as students who can belong to the school community. Even though the research does not state the composition of the stakeholders involved, it has covered all participants in the school governance. The researchers used observation, independent interview and focus-group interviews as instruments for data collection. This research adopted the case study and used in-depth interviews and questionnaire as tools for gathering of information.

Gambule (2010) explored student involvement in school governance in senior secondary schools in Botswana in order to find out how the pastoral care policy that was introduced in all secondary schools in 2007 had enhanced student involvement in decision-making. A qualitative study of two senior secondary schools was used to find out how students were involved in school governance. Data was collected through interviews of heads of house, administering questionnaires to teachers and students, analysis of school records as well as non-participant observation. The findings indicated that heads of houses and teachers contend that students were actively involved in school governance, whereas the students themselves argued that they were partially involved. It was also clear that the pastoral policy had significantly enhanced student involvement in school activities. There was also an indication

that the trend of school management and teacher making decisions without students' input was still rife and that schools still rely heavily on the prefect system for maintenance of law and order, with emphasis on supervision of students than empowerment. The research used a wide range of data collection methods which is quite good and which included; interviews, questionnaires, non-participant observation and analysis of school records. The study by Gambule (2010) was conducted five years back and only three years after the introduction of the pastoral policy, therefore the current study will wish to make a follow up to find out if the situation has improved. The current study focused on an open-ended questionnaire with heads of houses and teachers and used questionnaire with students.

From the literature review it has emerged that not much research was done on the second research question which seeks to establish how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in school governance. However, the literature has indicated that pastoral policy enhances students' participation in school activities and hence students develop a sense of belonging to the school community.

Gambule (2010) contends that it is obvious that the introduction of the pastoral policy has significantly enhanced the involvement of students in school activities. It is therefore important to establish the roles played by students in school governance in senior secondary schools in Botswana because it may be said that learners' participation has improved whilst what is on the ground is that they do not play any role instead they just sit in school committees as prescribed by the pastoral policy.

#### **2.4 The role of students in decision-making**

Research on the role of student participation in decision-making seems to be limited. Salvioni, Gandini, Franzoni and Gennari (2012) posit that the greater awareness of the role of key participants in school governance processes and the need to expect a 'new leader' in the

increasing school complexity are crucial conditions to reform schools from within, so as to provide them with skills connected to globalisation, improvement in educational quality, strengthening of positive relationship with the territory, and the development of an effective learning community.

The study by Salvioni et al., (2012) was directed at checking the quality of Italian school governance and the changes necessary to achieve school governance oriented towards the continuous improvement of performances for the benefit of stakeholders and for building a learning community. The study used a survey based on focus groups. Interviews were used to collect data from principals, teachers, students, parents and other among different actors and the lack of useful tools for stabilising relations. The results indicate that there is lack of an effective decision-making power by the relevant actors and that the actors are not aware of their own role in the decision-making process. It is interesting to find that the research involved all stakeholders. The researchers used a survey research design method in their study and adopted a focus-group interview as data collection tool. For this study the research used the case study; questionnaire and in-depth interviews as data collection tools.

Muli (2011) argues that the role of student leaders in school governance in Kenya and the rest of the world is becoming more complex because of the changes observed in technology, societies, culture, encroachment of democracy as well as emerging issues such as children's rights, human rights, HIV/AIDS and drugs. Muli (2011) conducted a research aimed at determining the role of prefects in the governance of public secondary schools in Machakos central division in Kenya. The research used a descriptive study adopting a survey research design. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data from principals, deputy principals, teachers, prefects and the students.

Musyoka (2011)'s study was to establish the influence of secondary school prefects' involvement in management on students' discipline in Kitui central district in Kenya. The study used questionnaires to gather data from principals, senior teachers and senior prefects. It was discovered that the prefects are appointed by the administrators, teachers and students jointly. The findings revealed that the prefects are chosen basing on certain attributes which include: academic performance, good behaviour, discipline, leadership qualities, communication skills or combination of the above. The results indicated that prefects played important roles in the administration of public schools in the two districts, and these roles include supervising students, giving punishment, mediating between students and teachers and ensuring that school rules and regulations were followed. The two researches used a single instrument to gather data. Muli (2011) used the questionnaire to collect data from principals, deputy principals, teachers, prefects and students whilst Musyoka (2011) collected data from principals, senior teachers and senior prefects. Muli used a survey research method. As for this study the method used was the case study, and the instruments are open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interview.

Duma (2011) explored views held by educators on the role of student leadership in the governance of rural secondary schools in South Africa. A survey to gather questionnaire-based data on quantitative research paradigm was used to collect data from educators.

In another related study Mncube (2012) investigated the views of various stakeholders of school governing bodies of different focus groups at schools in two provinces of South Africa. It explored the actual or theoretical involvement of learners in School Governing Bodies (SGB); what barriers exist for learner participation; the key issue of training for learners' involvement and whether SGBs have contributed to the development of democracy in South African schools. The study was qualitative in nature and used focus-group interviews. Data was collected from the principal and three focus groups drawn from each



school. The findings of the two studies reveal that despite the seventeen years of constitutional democracy in South Africa, and the fact that representative council for learners are the only legal structures representatives of the students in schools, some schools still experience the presence of prefects. The results also demonstrated that there are different perceptions of the role that the students should play in school leadership. The study by Duma (2011) was quantitative in nature and used a questionnaire as the tool for data collection whilst Mncube (2012) adopted a qualitative approach and used a focus-group interview as the data collection instrument. Although the two studies adopted different approaches, the findings were much similar. This study adopted a qualitative approach and used questionnaire and in-depth interview as the data collection tools.

The third research question tries to determine specific roles played by students in decision-making. Literature has revealed that students' representatives lack effective decision-making power and they are usually engaged in supervisory roles in the schools.

Not much research has been done on the role of students in decision-making in Botswana therefore it will be worth carrying out a research in that area. This research will therefore attempt to establish the roles played by students in decision-making in senior secondary schools in Botswana.

## **2.5 Summary**

The literature revealed that student participation in school governance is an important part of teaching and learning. There is a significant trend towards student involvement in decision-making among many developed countries. However, it was noted that in most developing countries student participation in school governance was not achieved. The chapter also discussed generally student participation and the school governance.

The literature shows that there are structures put in place to enhance student participation in school governance. Thus developed countries use student councils and most developing countries, especially Africa, still use prefects who are mostly handpicked by teachers. From the literature it has come out that not much research has been done on how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in school governance. However, the research by Gambule (2010) has revealed that the pastoral policy has enhanced student involvement in school activities. As for the roles played by student representatives in decision-making, it has come out that there is lack of effective decision-making power by students and they are mostly used in supervisory roles in the schools.

The next chapter will then look at the research methodology and the research design to be used in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology used, which is a blueprint of the research activities that the research has to carry out. The chapter provides an explanation and discussion of the research design, the research method, target population, sampling procedure, data collection tools, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design is considered to be a research plan that reveals the strategies used in conducting a research (Creswell, 2003). The choice of a research design and methods are mainly influenced by the desired end-product and the best way to answer research questions (Anderson, 2002). There are three research paradigms that are considered dominant in educational research. These are positivist, interpretive and transformative paradigms (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). The positivist paradigm holds that the scientific method is the only way to establish the truth and objective reality (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Chilisa, 2012). According to Anderson (2002) the positivist paradigm asserts that things make meaning when they are observable and verifiable. The transformative paradigm represents a family of research designs influenced by various philosophies and theories which have a common theme of emancipating and transforming communities through action that has been marginalised (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Chilisa, 2012). That is to say that reality is constructed based on social location and that different forms of reality are controlled by those in power. The

methodological approaches usually employed in data collection include quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

Creswell (2003) contends that a research makes claims about knowledge (ontology), how it is understood (epistemology), what value is attached to it (axiology) and the kind of processes that are available to study it (methodology). In the current research the researcher had to visit the schools' natural setting in order to get an in-depth understanding of the extent to which students participate in school governance at senior secondary schools in Botswana. The researcher therefore in this regard adopted an interpretive approach for the study because the paradigm expresses the assumption that there are various realities that are socially defined. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) contend that the central undertaking of the interpretive approach is to understand the subjective world of human experience. The researcher had to construct meaning out of the participants' perspectives in the social and cultural context through listening and speaking to the participants.

### **3.1.1 Interpretive approach**

In the interpretive approach, new knowledge is established through meaning attached to the phenomena studied (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Chilisa, 2012). The interpretation is that researchers are engaged in the setting, participating in the act of being with the participants in their natural setting to generate meaning out of them.

### **3.2 Research method**

The study had to adopt a qualitative approach which is based on interpretive epistemology. The reason for conducting a qualitative study is that the researcher had to listen to respondents and build an understanding based on their ideas (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative method accords the researcher an opportunity to interact with the participants and in that way

enables the researcher to get first-hand information about their opinions and feelings about the problem at hand and this will bring the researcher closer to reality. Creswell (2003) posits that the qualitative approach generates rich, detailed data and it processes data that can contribute to the understanding of the problem at hand since the approach requires the researcher to be physically present with the people in order to observe their behaviour in their natural setting. In the current study the qualitative approach enabled the researcher to have a face-to-face interrogation with the different stakeholders to try and understand the past and present trend of student participation in decision-making through interviews. This study was aimed at depth not quantity; the qualitative approach was preferred.

The intention of the current study was not necessarily to generalise the outcomes but rather to have a deep understanding of the extent to which student participation in decision-making at the senior secondary schools under study is evident. Student participation in school governance at senior secondary schools needed an in-depth study in order to find a lasting solution to it, hence the use of qualitative approach together with the case study as the data collection tool.

### **3.2.1 Case Study**

A case study is a comprehensive way of organising social data for the purpose of viewing the social reality (Bell, 2002; Best and Khan, 2006). In qualitative research, the case study is used to concentrate on a single phenomenon, individual community or constitution in order to understand the life cycle or an important life of the unit (Best and Khan, 2006).

The case study uses multiple data gathering techniques to study a single phenomenon (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). It is exploratory and descriptive therefore providing chronological narrative events relevant to the problem under study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) prefer a case study method because it can penetrate situations in a way that is not susceptible

to numerical analysis. In this study the researcher wanted a deep and better understanding of student participation in school governance in the two senior secondary schools therefore the current study used an intrinsic case study because of its inherent value to the researcher. The strength of the case study lies in the fact that it is very strong in reality because it studies situations in their natural settings (Bell, 2002).

### **3.3 Target Population**

Yin (2003) posits that, researchers are normally not able to study the population that interests them and as such select a sample population. Sampling is therefore a process that is used to select a portion of the population (Best and Khan, 2006). Polit and Beck (2012) explain that in a qualitative case study, a sample is determined by the use of the researcher's decision and thoughtful efforts to obtain samples of places, groups or individuals.

Identifying a research site is viewed as an important exercise, as the basic consideration in selecting such a location is its appropriateness (Best and Khan, 2006; Polit and Beck, 2012). Polit and Beck further contend that a researcher needs to know whether the research location has individuals with the type of experience, characteristics or behaviours which are required for their study. There is need therefore to select a location where there are people who experience the problem of exclusion of learners in decision-making. The researcher for this study selected two senior secondary schools in order to get an in-depth understanding of the student participation in school governance. The two schools are Matsha Community College (a senior secondary school) and Seepapitso Senior Secondary School.

Matsha College is in Kang village and the only senior school in Kgalagadi region and about 90% of its students are boarding. Kang is the researcher's home village. For purposes of comparison of findings Seepapitso Senior Secondary School, a day school in Kanye village was selected. Seepapitso Senior Secondary School is one of the six senior secondary

schools in the Southern region which is qualified for inclusion in this study because it is situated near the place where the researcher was staying to conduct the study. In selecting these two schools, the researcher took into consideration the proximity of the schools, the low transport costs and the availability of potential participants. In this study the target population was Head of Houses, teachers and students. The researcher used Form Five students since they have been in the schools for two years, therefore better placed to understand and have experience in student participation in school governance in their respective schools. The teachers selected were those who have been with the school for at least two years, the assumption being that they are better placed to understand the situation with regard to student involvement in school governance. The Heads of Houses (HOHs) were those currently at the selected schools irrespective of their length of study at school. The HOHs are currently the heads of the mini schools called houses, therefore have a rich understanding of how students participate in school governance.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

In carrying out this study, the researcher had to use purposive sampling to select the schools, the HOHs, teachers and students as research participants. Polit and Beck (2012) define purposive sampling as “a non-probability method in which the researcher selects participants based on personal judgement about which ones will be more informative and as such, it is sometimes called judgemental sampling (p.739)”. The researcher used his experience of supervision in the school structure to select subjects to represent the population.

In the qualitative research, small samples are often used to carry out an in-depth study of an issue / phenomenon (Anderson, 2002; Yin, 2003). Although there are 98 teachers in Matsha College and 110 teachers in Seepapitso Senior Secondary School, only five Heads of Houses were selected from the two schools for the study; 11 teachers from the two schools

were selected for the study and 12 students from each school, including the student leaders in their respective houses, from the one thousand three hundred (1300) students in Matsha College and the one thousand six hundred (1600) students enrolled in Seepapitso Senior Secondary School. Thus, a total of forty (40) participants were selected for the study. As observed by Creswell (2003) the purposive selection of respondents represents an important decision point in a qualitative research and knowledge of the participant is considered very important to the study since they are likely to provide rich information which is vital for the research.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

An important attribute of a qualitative research is its various data collection strategies which allow the researcher to gather a variety of information from different perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2003). The use of various data collection strategies complements each other in order to overcome the challenges of a single method (Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997; Creswell, 2002). In this research, data was collected through an open-ended questionnaire for teachers and HOHs (See Appendix A, p58), whilst an in-depth focus-group interview was conducted for the Form Five students. The Heads of Houses were included by virtue of their position in the pastoral policy programme.

An interview is referred to as a purposeful conversation where knowledge is produced through the interaction usually between two people (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Kvale, 2007; Chilisa, 2012). According to Yin (2003) in a qualitative research, interviews constitute the major strategies used for in-depth data collection. Focus-group interviews (Mason, 2002) allow the researcher to collect rich and personalised data. In the current study, the focus-group interview allowed the researcher as the main data collection tool to interact with the participants and acquire in-depth information about the extent of student participation in



school governance in the two senior secondary schools selected in this study. Using the focus-group interview provided rich data in a relatively short time as multiple responses and perspectives of the students were obtained in a short time.

An interview guide was prepared and used for interviewing the students (See Appendix B, p62).

### **3.5.1 Piloting of Research Instruments**

The importance of a pilot study is to determine the deficiencies in the data collection instruments and possible challenges that may be encountered during information gathering (McMillan, 2002; Polit and Beck, 2012). In order to help improve the strength and reliability of the research instruments (Bryman, 2001); the questionnaire and interview guide needed to be piloted. Furthermore expert opinion was sought from the supervisors, lecturers and peers for content and format of the research instruments.

With permission from the school, for the current study the instrument was pilot-tested with participants from a school in Gaborone who have the same attributes as those who participated in the study (Kiberloe, 2003). In a pilot study, the number of participants is usually smaller than the participants scheduled to take part in the actual study (Merriam, 2001; McMillan, 2002; Kiberloe, 2003; Polit and Beck, 2012). In the pilot test session, the participants were invited to complete the questionnaire and respond to the interview questions, carefully scrutinize the questions and provide feedback on each one of the questions to ensure clarity and appropriate sequencing of the questions.

In this regard, the participants suggested that the questions should be reorganised to follow a logical sequence. The participants also recommended the re-sequencing of the questions such that related topics should follow one another. The flaws that were identified in the pilot

study were incorporated into both the questionnaire and the interview guide. As such, the pilot study opened opportunities for constructing a questionnaire and an interview guide which were simple and appropriate for the research participants (Neuman, 2006).

### **3.5.2. Data Collection**

The current qualitative case study relied on multi-sources of data and perspectives bearing in mind that the results have to be instructive and not be generalised. In a qualitative study, the researcher is usually the main data gathering instrument hence he/she determines the type of data that would contribute to the understanding and resolution of a given problem and collect the right and accessible data for the problem (Best and Khan, 2006).

In a qualitative study, the term ‘trustworthiness’ is used to address the issues of validity and reliability (Merriam, 1995; Creswell and Miller, 2010). Trustworthiness is referred to as “the degree of confidence qualitative researchers have in their data, assessed using the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity” (Polit and Beck, 2012, p.745). Credibility deals with believing in the study findings beyond reasonable doubt (Chilisa and Preece, 2005; Polit and Beck, 2012). Creswell and Miller (2010) observe that in a qualitative research, credibility is used to make sure that the research findings are realistic. This can be achieved through triangulation, member checking, peer examination, and reflexivity (Merriam, 1995; Creswell and Miller, 2010; Polit and Beck, 2012).

Triangulation is described as a method of verifying that information from various sources and to search for regularities in the research data in order to get a clear picture of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003; Chilisa and Preece, 2005). Chilisa and Preece further contend that triangulation is based on the assumption that the use of various methods can eliminate biases. Therefore triangulation was used in order to avoid biases that may result from using

only one data collection technique. In this regard, an in-depth interview and an open-ended questionnaire were used together as techniques of collecting data to complement each other.

In this study the participants were requested to indicate their responses in the open-ended questionnaire and a verbal interview was conducted to explore and probe participants in order to gather more in-depth data about their feelings as well as their experiences. The researcher constructed a list of questions which were asked each participant in the same order. To reduce the threat to data collection and reliability, the researcher used the standard method of writing field notes. The researcher requested for permission to audio-tape the interviews but the participants were not willing to be audio-taped.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Procedures**

In a qualitative research, the researchers serve as the main instrument of qualitative data collection and analysis, their ability to collect accurate data, interpret the data and present the findings clearly makes a qualitative research study useful (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003; Polit and Beck, 2012). Data analysis in a qualitative case study involves organising and reducing data to make sense for reporting purposes (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2002). In analysing the data, the researcher had to pay much interest to the patterns that emerged, such as repeating events, main phrases used by the participants to describe their perceptions and feelings. The contents were extracted from the data gathered in the field and organised into themes. The reason for this reduction and organisation of data was to include only relevant information in the research findings. Data analysis is also based on the research questions. This implies that in qualitative data analysis, the themes and contents developed from the transcripts should be relevant in answering the research questions.

To analyse data one strategy used was coding. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), generalising initial codes involves coding interesting features of the data in a systematic way

across the entire data set. This means marking or referencing units in the text with codes and labels as a way of indicating similar patterns and meaning. To analyse the data from the in-depth interviews and the open-ended questionnaire, a thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.6). This means in the thematic analysis main contents/ideas which are identified in the data are sorted into categories or themes according to their similarities and differences. The relevance of this reduction and organisation of data is to include only relevant information in the research findings. In the current study data analysis continued simultaneously with data collection as suggested by Creswell (2002) and Polit & Beck (2012). The on-going data analysis was essential since it helped in identifying the gaps in the data and ensuring that the gaps are rectified before the next data collection session.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

In research a lot more cooperation and coordination among different people in different positions and organisations, ethical considerations promote values that are essential in collaborative work (Fouka and Mantzorou, 2011; Resnik, 2011). As Pheko (2005) points out these are the rules of what is or not acceptable in conducting a research. The above arguments imply that researchers must follow certain standards of conduct in order to safeguard the safety of the research participants. Anderson (2002) observes that the qualitative research method intrudes in participants’ lives more than the quantitative research method. This is so because the researcher and the participants interact hence they have little distance between them. Ethical issues must therefore certainly accompany the collection of such data in order to ensure the research is conducted in an environment where there is minimum discomfort to the subjects.

Therefore in this study consent was sought with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development and the selected schools to get written authorisation for this study to be conducted (See Appendix C). A letter of informed consent was written to the respective regions and schools from the ministry (See Appendix D). The researcher then sought permission with the respective regions to conduct research in the two schools. One region wrote a letter of informed consent to the school head but the other region did not write. So the researcher presented the letter to the school head before the commencement of data collection, thus the researcher was allowed in both cases to collect data.

Apart from the distribution of letters the researcher had an opportunity to thoroughly explain the purpose of the study to the school heads concerned and the benefits that they may benefit from the findings of the research. On the researcher's visit, the researcher identified potential participants and discussed the purpose of the visit as well as to build rapport with them, an important consideration suggested by Chilisa & Preece, (2005) and Stake (2005). They were informed about the nature of the study, its purpose, duration and benefits; procedures in collecting data. The researcher made conditions and guarantees that all participants would be offered the opportunity to remain anonymous, and that all the information would be treated with strict confidentiality. Participants were also informed that they had the liberty to withdraw from the study or from responding to any question at any point whenever they wished and that all promises made would be respected. The participants were also given an informed consent to complete before the commencement of data collection (See Appendix E). The two schools used in this research were named as school A and school B.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has briefly highlighted the importance of choosing the appropriate methodology that enabled the researcher to have deep insights and understanding of the issue of student participation in school governance in the two senior secondary schools chosen for the study. The researcher used the interpretive paradigm through a qualitative approach using the case study method to have a deep understanding of student participation in school governance from the participants' perspective at the two schools. This study had a sample of 40 participants selected through a purposive sampling strategy. The study focused on students, teachers and Heads of Houses; and the data collection techniques were interviews and questionnaires. The study verified dependability of the instruments through a pilot test. The chapter ends by discussing the ethical issues were considered in the research. In this respect therefore, trust and confidentiality were always at the fore.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the qualitative case study data and results from the open-ended questionnaire as well as the in-depth interviews carried out by the researcher. The findings of the study are arranged according to the emerging themes, which are also based on the research questions, which are: procedures put in place to allow student participation in school governance at schools A and B; how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in decision-making; and the roles played by student leaders in decision-making.

The participants in this study include 24 form five students, 5 Heads of Houses and 11 teachers who have been in these schools for two or more years. In each school, six students were from the student leaders whilst the other six were non student leaders. In total, the sample was 24 students, 5 HOHs and 11 teachers, giving an overall total of 40 participants. The findings of the research are presented below.

#### **4.1 Procedures put in place to allow student participation in school governance**

Research question one sought to find out what procedures are put in place to allow student participation in school governance in schools A and B.

##### **4.1.1. Criterion of selection of student leaders**

The findings reveal that both the SRC and prefects exist in the two schools. This is normal practice in other countries as well as seen from the literature reviewed. The data findings indicate that there are procedures in place in the two schools which include: criterion of selection of the student leaders and the support offered to student leaders.

#### 4.1.1.1 Election of the SRC

The findings from the data analysis indicated that SRC leaders in the two schools were elected into office by their peers. According to one Head of House in school B, *students enter an election race either as independent candidates or belonging to a lobby list for different portfolios. Those receiving the highest numerical votes make it to students' cabinet.* A student participant at school A confirmed this view by saying that *usually as soon as the form fives leave school, students usually register with the coordinating committee for the various positions in the student cabinet. The students then campaign for these positions, the election date is then set and all form fours vote for their leaders.* The comment amongst the participants was that *students engage in most of these activities without teacher interference. The prospective candidates usually organise meetings during the campaign and the elections.* All participants indicated that *the coordinating committees comprised mainly of teachers.*

#### 4.1.1.2 Election of Prefects

The findings indicate that HOHs and teachers from school A assert that prefects' selection is done by classmates with assistance and guidance of their class teachers. The teachers and HOHs stated that *the class comes up with a pool of students whose names are passed onto the prefects' coordinating committee through the HOH. The coordinating committee then screens the students through an oral interview and those who do not meet the set standards are dropped by the committee and sometimes replaced by others who are deemed to have the personal attributes required of prefects.* However, the students at the same school had a different view because one of the students from the school stated that *students register and campaign for the SRC cabinet positions, then those who lose during the elections are automatically taken in as prefects.* Whilst in school B, the findings reveal that prefects are selected by students with the help of their class teacher. One HOH had this to



*say; the prefects in this school are selected by students through the assistance and guidance of the class teacher and an agreeable process which will be undertaken to come up with a boy and a girl prefect.*

It is worth noting that the SRC in the two schools were brought to power through the ballot box. Allowing students to elect their leaders means students exercise their right to choose who they wish to represent them in decision-making in their cabinet as well as being able to change their representatives at a given interval. The students will in turn understand democracy as a value system which allows association with each other and by doing so learn to solve or confront problems together within the boundaries of solidarity. Through these democratic processes, the students develop intellectual skills and concepts of civic competence and at the end of the day will successfully assume their citizenship role in their community.

The elections of student councils are not a new thing and many countries have come up with laws that require schools to set up student councils elected by student themselves. For instance in South Africa, the schools are required to establish a RCL elected by the learners according to the provincial guidelines (Naidoo, 2005). The presence of the SRC in the two schools concurs with the findings from Morapedi and Jotia (2011) that student leadership in Botswana secondary schools to some extent does exist.

The procedures used to select prefects in the two schools differ. In school B they select boys and girls as prefects who serve or have their roles centred on their classes and their respective houses. For school B the prefects are more of class monitors but the students select them with the help of their class teachers.

In school A the HOHs and teachers seem to differ with students on the procedures put in place to select the prefects. The school is still clinging to the old practice of using prefects.

The electoral procedures used to select the prefects may be unpopular to other students, where they choose their representatives only for those to be removed and replaced by the coordinating committee through screening. The procedures used make the prefects at this school see themselves as rejects and they remain passive in the decision-making process. The students become merely the recipients of either good or bad decisions made on their behalf by the school management (Matsepe, 2014). The procedures as Lebuso (2003) observed make the students view prefects as serving the teachers' interest and not their interests because teachers influence the prefect selection by prescribing the prefect's personal attributes.

The two schools used different procedures to select their prefects which concurred with the findings of Muli (2011) that schools use different criteria in appointing the student leaders depending on the culture of the school.

#### **4.1.2 Student leader support**

The findings indicate that once elected into office, the students' leaders from the two schools are prepared for their duties. According to one teacher participant at school A, *student leaders usually attend workshops, orientation as well as guidance meetings to prepare them for their leadership role.* A student from school B corroborated this view by saying that *the student leaders are usually given duty guidelines by the coordinating committee and the student leaders usually attend workshops in the afternoon during afternoon study time.* The students further indicated that *the coordinating committee comprises entirely of teachers.* The students further indicated that *workshops usually take at most a week.*

The two schools have made an attempt to prepare the students' leaders in equipping them with leadership and management skills for their new roles. When the student leaders

understand very well what is expected of them, they can easily relate what they have learnt to experiences in their management skills and knowledge. The SRC cabinet and prefects are given the same training and this may leave a question of the supervisory roles of the two since one would expect the cabinet to have an upper hand. The SRC supervise meals, study, hostels and mediate between the students and teachers whilst the prefects are more of class monitors since they supervise cleaning and do class attendance registers. Therefore the training of the cabinet must have more rigour since they have more responsibility than the prefects. The training period also leaves a question of adequacy since it is conducted in about eight hours. However, inadequate training according to Ngomezulu et al. (2013) leads to inadequate provision of leadership management skills. Such a situation is likely to create conflict between the student leaders and the school management since the student leaders see themselves as competent after training, whilst the school management may see the training as being inadequate. The coordinating committee comprising entirely of teachers could be viewed as teachers being authoritarian which according to Duma (2014) reinforces passive subordination amongst the students. Therefore the training of the student leaders needs to be detailed and focussed on the challenges they are to face when they embark on their new leadership roles. Hence the preparation of the student leaders has been emphasised but the level of compliance after this training needs to be monitored.

#### **4.2 The pastoral policy and student participation in school governance**

Research question two sought to establish how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in school governance in schools A and B. There is not much research carried out to find how the pastoral care enhances student participation in school governance. From the results it was found that participants' responses in this area were limited. The student participation in different school committees was considered and this is presented as follows:

#### 4.2.1 Student participation in school committees

The findings show that student participation in school committees in the two schools is minimal. The results also indicate that all participants in the two schools have revealed that there is no school pastoral council in their schools. The findings also show that students do not participate in the food committee which implies that students are not allowed to make or influence decisions on the meals offered at the two schools.

The student participants from school B indicated that they were *not aware of the existence of any school committees*. However, one student participant in school A had this to say: *students are not involved in school committees, although they may be made members, because one day I came across a file for the disciplinary committee showing that as a minister of justice I am a member of that committee*. The students further said that *students' leaders by virtue of their respective positions in the cabinet, are supposed to belong to various committees but they are never invited for any committee meeting*. One HOH from school A, five (5) teacher participants from school A and three from school B indicated that *there is a food committee in the school*. According to the HOH *the functions of the food committee are not clearly defined and it rarely meets*. The teacher respondents asserted that *the minister of refectory by virtue is a member of the food committee*. The respondents further indicated *that although the committee is not that active, it is responsible for the cleanliness of the kitchen as well as coming up with the students' menu*.

It is quite clear that students are not allowed to participate in the school committees in the two schools, but are rather listed as members of those committees. This is an indication that students' level of participation could be limited and well prescribed by those in authority. The different committees often deal with a range of issues which include school schedules, discipline, academics as well as budgeting, and these are core issues that affect them. If

students are not taken seriously and allowed to participate in these issues which impact on their lives, this may result in a negative effect. For instance, the exclusion of students from the school budget and the food committee demonstrates that there is no transparency, because if students know where the money is coming from and how it is to be spent there will be no problems with the students. If students start questioning their menu and demand for other resources in the school and they are not given satisfactory answers by the school management, this may result in disturbances in the school which can lead to violent acts like vandalism of government property as well as putting students' lives at risk. So transparency in schools should be a concern for the school management.

The school committees are supposed to provide space for students to communicate their needs and concerns, and present their requests to the school management. Hence to avoid unnecessary resistance students need to be involved in decision-making. Matsepe (2014) posits that students do not easily strike if they participate in decision-making because they regard any decision made as their own.

The non-existence of the school pastoral council in the two schools contravenes the Pastoral Policy (2007) which advocates for students' representation in the school pastoral council and other school committees and the existence of both within the school as essential. Student leaders do not participate in these committees but are only representatives by name and by virtue of their position. This concurred with findings of Gambule (2010) that heads of houses and teachers contend that students were actively involved in decision-making, whereas the students themselves argued that they were partially involved. She further posits that there is a trend of school management and teachers making decisions without students' input and that schools rely on student leaders for maintenance of law and order, with more emphasis on supervision of students than their empowerment. However, the non-participation

of students in school committees differs with Gambule (2010)'s findings who contends that the pastoral policy had significantly enhanced student participation in school activities.

### **4.3 The role of students in decision-making**

Research question three sought to find out the description of the roles of students' leaders in school governance in school A and B. There is not enough research carried out to find out what roles students play in decision-making in schools. From the results it was found that participants responded well in this area. The role of students' leaders was considered

#### **4.3.1 The role of students' leaders**

The findings reveal that the Student Representative Council has some role to play in the governance of schools A and B. According to one HOH in school A *the SRC represents the interests of the students in all spheres of the school. They are the voice of the student community as well as resolving students' conflicts.* A teacher participant at school B corroborated this view by saying that *the SRC upholds the school rules and regulations by ensuring that students obey them.* All students from the two schools share the same sentiments that the SRC *supervises cleaning, meals and studies.* They further indicate that the *student leaders guard students' property as well as raising students' concerns with the relevant ministers and the school management.* The SRC also is said to play a role of *mediating between the students and the school management.*

The prefects, according to a teacher participant at school A, *help in the day to day monitoring of the attendance by keeping the class attendance register.* A student at the same school supported that observation by saying that prefects *help monitor student attendance, report any discipline cases to the relevant authorities and sometimes conduct assemblies.* All

participants at school B say that prefects work *with members of the house on issues such as supervision of cleaning and meals at class level.*

The assertions above demonstrate that both the SRC and prefects in both schools were included in the school governance system. The two schools still use the student leaders as supervisors of other students and do not involve them in core areas such as planning school schedules, curriculum and school budget. This implies that both schools use the SRC and prefects to support them in the performance of their duties. Therefore both schools are still authoritarian because they tend to promote passive subordination amongst the student leaders.

The students' leaders were involved in various governance roles which include supervision duties and ensuring that school rules and regulations were followed. This concurs with the findings of Musyoka (2011) who contended that students' leaders played an important role in the administration of public schools. However, the students' leaders' involvement is mostly in informal interactions, they are not empowered in making certain decisions that affect their wellbeing (Chemutai and Chumba, 2014). These scholars also observed that student leaders' participation in decision making could lead to better learning environment in schools, improvement in discipline, enhance team work and self-esteem and improve peer relations

#### **4.4 Summary of the findings**

The findings of this study from both the questionnaire and the interview show that procedures have been put in place to enhance student participation in school governance. The findings reveal that both schools have an SRC and prefects who are brought to power by students through the ballot box. But the evidence also shows that the prefects are mainly used by teachers to supervise other students as opposed to involving them in decision making.

From the findings it is clear that both schools make arrangements to prepare the student leaders in equipping them with leadership and management skills for their new roles.

The findings further reveal that the school pastoral council, which was recommended by the pastoral policy to enhance student participation in secondary schools, does not exist in the two schools. There is evidence that even though school committees exist in the two schools, students are only listed as members of those committees by virtue of being ministers in the school cabinet but are not allowed to participate in decisions made by the said committees. The non-participation of students in the food committees in both schools is an indication that student are not allowed to make decisions on the meals offered at the two schools.

The findings from most of the participants indicated that both the SRC and prefects in the two schools were included in the school governance system. The results reveal that the student leaders were involved in various governance roles which include supervisory duties as well as ensuring that school rules and regulations were obeyed.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

This study sought to establish the extent to which students participate in school governance in two (2) senior secondary schools in the Kgalagadi and Southern regions of Botswana. In trying to address the research problem, the attention had to be paid to the forces driving the need for students' participation in school governance in secondary schools in Botswana. Therefore the study sort to find out the various areas where students' participation is encouraged to ensure a good governance of the school and how the students' representatives are selected and appointed to participate in these areas of school governance.

The study was guided by three research questions which are: 1) what procedures are put in place to allow students' participation in school governance? 2) How does the pastoral policy enhance students' participation in school governance? 3) Are there any specific roles played by students' representatives in decision making?

The terms school governance and students' participation were discussed in the literature review. The studies that were reviewed have revealed that the student participation in school is an important part of teaching and learning. The literature further indicated that there is a significant trend towards students' involvement in decision making among many developed countries. However, it was evident that in most developing countries students' participation in school governance was not evident.

There are structures put in place to enhance students' participation in decision making. Thus developed countries are using students' councils whilst the developing countries use

prefects. The prefects are usually handpicked by teachers but the students' councils are elected by students into office through the ballot box.

Research on how the pastoral policy enhances student participation in school governance is limited, but the study by Gambule (2010) has shown that the pastoral policy has improved students' involvement in school activities. Her results have proved that the school management and teachers still make decisions without the students' input and the schools still rely on the prefect system for maintenance of law and order, with much emphasis on the supervision of students rather than empowerment. The literature review also revealed that there are different perceptions of the roles that the students should play in school governance. Some of students' roles include supervising students; mediating between students and teachers; and ensuring that school rules and regulations are followed.

The researcher employed the interpretive paradigm through a qualitative approach using a case study method to have a deep understanding of student participation in school governance in the two schools. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the HODs and teachers, whilst data was gathered from the students through an in-depth interview. The participants in the study were drawn from twenty four (24) form five students and eleven (11) teachers who have been in these two schools for two (2) or more years. The students were composed of cabinet members of the SRC, prefects as well as non-student-leaders. The teachers on the other hand consisted of senior teacher I and senior teacher II who should have some experience of management being seen as middle managers in the schools. The sample comprised of HODs who have a considerable experience in matters of administration since they manage the different houses within their schools. The data was presented in the narrative form and a thematic analysis of data was employed.

The study wanted to establish if there are any structures put in place to enhance student participation in school governance and what criteria was used to select the student leaders into office. The participants indicated that both the SRC and prefects exist in the two schools. The results also demonstrated that the SRC leaders are elected into power through a ballot box and have a student cabinet similar to the national cabinet. The two schools also prepare the new student leaders, through workshops, induction and meetings, for their leadership roles. The student leaders are also given guidelines indicating their duties and responsibilities.

The enhancement of students' participation by the pastoral policy through school committees was considered. It was established that students' participation in different school committees was minimal. The participants reported that although some school committees exist in the two schools, students do not participate in these committees but are only listed as members by virtue of their different posts of responsibility.

The other criterion was to establish the role played by students in the running of the two schools. All participants concurred that students' leaders play an important role in the management of the two schools. The findings illustrated that student leaders' roles include student supervision, mediating between the students and staff, monitoring discipline as well as monitoring the students.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this research, several conclusions were reached.

The study findings reveal that there are structures put in place to enhance students' participation in school governance. The results show that the SRC and prefects are elected into office by the students. This illustrates a positive move of introducing the students to democratic processes at a young age. Thus students at the two schools are empowered

democratically to elect their own leaders and this eliminates the gap between the way things were done in the past where student leaders were handpicked by the school authority. It was established that the student leaders also undergo training to prepare them for their new supervisory and leadership roles. The student leaders are inducted through workshops provided with duty guidelines and given some guidance.

The study findings indicate that the school pastoral council has not been established in the two schools. The results show the existence of other committees where the student leadership does not have any participation but only appear in name. Lack of participation by student leaders in these committees indicates that decision making revolves around the school management and the teachers, hence no input from the students. This also suggests that the school management use the student leaders to their benefit. This concludes that the Pastoral Policy (2007) that advocates for students' representation in the school pastoral council and other school committees has not been realised.

The research also sought to establish the role that the students play in the decision making process. It was established that the students' participation is defined to supervisory roles and they are excluded from key decision making areas in school administration including making decisions on school schedules; their menu and cleanliness in the dining halls; participating in disciplinary hearings on fellow students; the formulation of school rules; and the school budget. The implication is that students are mostly involved in informal interactions which do not empower them in making decisions that affect their well-being. Clearly the above list includes very important areas that would require the students' input.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

- The school management and students must come up with an SRC constitution which should clearly state the roles of the SRC members.
- The roles of the SRC should be widened to include: participating in school committees; PTA activities; and making of the school rules.
- The prefects should be on the SRC board as councillors.
- The school management should introduce a body, comprising mainly of teachers, who can oversee the activities of the SRC and the student leaders can also consult with them when the need arises.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS AND HEADS OF HOUSES

This study is designed to better understand the extent to which students participate in school governance at two senior secondary schools in the Kgalagadi and Southern regions of Botswana. Non-involvement of students in decision-making in our schools is a problem that affects us all and to help solve this problem everyone's input, including you, is vital. Please be honest and truthful in your responses. Your responses will not be identified with you in any way and will be treated in confidence.

**SECTION A:** Personal details. Place a tick (✓) next to your response.

What is your gender?

- Female                       Male

What is your nationality?

- Motswana                       Expatriate

Teaching experience (in years)

- 2     3     4     5     6     more than six

Length of stay at this school (years)

- 2     3     4     5     6     more than six

Position held

- Assistant teacher

- Teacher

- Senior Teacher II

- Senior Teacher I

- Head of House

**SECTION B**

For each of the following questions, please write your response in the lines provided below each question. Please use a legible writing.

1. Do you have a student representative council (SRC) in your school?

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2. How are students elected into the student representative council?

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3. What are the functions of the SRC?

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4. Do you have prefects in your school?

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5. How are students elected into the prefectship?

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6. How does the prefect system fit into the pastoral or house system?

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7. After being elected into the SRC / prefectship, what type of support is offered to the students?

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8. Who offers this support?

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9. Do you have a school pastoral council in your school?

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10. What are the functions of the school pastoral council?

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11. How are students selected into the school pastoral council?

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12. Do you have a food committee in your school?

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13. What are the functions of the food committee?

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14. How are students selected into the food committee?

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15. How often do these committees hold their meetings?

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16. What impact does the student contribution in these committees have in the running of the school?

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17. What are roles played by students in the school pastoral council?

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18. What are the roles played by students in the food committee?

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19. What steps do you take to ensure that information from students reaches the school management?

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20. How do you convey information from the school management to the students?

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21. Do you see students' participation in school committees having any impact in the improvement of the school?

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. To begin our discussion, do you have a student representative council (SRC) in your school?
2. How are students elected into the student representative council?
3. What are the functions of the SRC?
4. Are there prefects in the school?
5. How are the prefects elected into office?
6. How are the prefects used at the different houses in the school?
7. After students are elected into office, what type of support are they given?
8. Who offers this support?
9. Do you have a school pastoral council in your school?
10. How does the school pastoral council function?
11. How are students elected into the school pastoral council?
12. Is there any food committee in the school?
13. What are the functions of the food committee?
14. How are students selected into the food committee?
15. How often do the school committees meet?

16. What impact does the students' contribution in the school committees have in the running of the school?
17. What roles do student play in the school pastoral council?
18. What are the roles played by students in the food committee?
19. How does information from the students reach the school management?
20. How do students get the information from the school management?
21. Do you see students' participation having any impact in the improvement of the school?

## APPENDIX C

University of Botswana  
School of Graduate Studies  
Private Bag UB 07005  
Gaborone  
4 June 2015

Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education and Skills Development  
Department of Teacher Training and Development  
Private Bag 0067  
Gaborone  
Dear Sir/Madam

**Request for permission to conduct Research Study – Mr Olebile Mothoteng – Student ID: 9703869 – Omang: 404111103 – Personal/No: 60490**

As part of my studies (Masters in Educational Management) at the above addressed institution, I am kindly requesting for permission to conduct a research study at Matsha College in the Kgalagadi Region and Seepapitso Senior Secondary School in the Southern Region.

The topic of my study is **‘The extent to which students participate in school governance at two senior secondary schools in Kgalagadi and Southern regions of Botswana’**. My target population is Form Five students and Heads of Houses. The data collection instruments are interview for students and open-ended questionnaire for teachers and Heads of Houses.

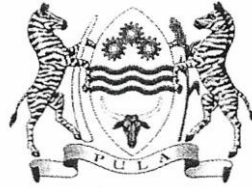
Enclosed is a copy of my Budget

Thanking you in advance

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Olebile Mothoteng

TELEPHONE (027) 3655469  
TELEX: 2944 THUTO BD  
FAX: 3185167



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
PRIVATE BAG 005  
GABORONE

REFERENCE: DEPRS 7/1/5 XXI (42)

11 June 2015

.Olebile Mothoteng  
PO Box 384  
Kang

Dear Madam

**RE: PERMIT TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY**

This serves to grant you permission to conduct your study in the sampled areas in Botswana to address the following research objectives/question/topic:

The extent to which students participate in School governance at two (2) Senior Secondary Schools in the Kgalagadi and Southern regions of Botswana.

It is of paramount importance to seek Assent and Consent from the Director of Kgalagadi and Southern regions, School Heads, teachers and students of selected two (2) Matsha College and Seepapitso Senior Secondary Schools that you are going to collect data from. We hope that you will conduct your study as stated in your proposal and that you will adhere to research ethics. Failure to comply with the above stated, will result in immediate termination of the research permit. The validity of the permit is from 11th June 2015 to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

You are requested to submit a copy of your final report of the study as stated in the Research Guidelines (para 4.5 - 4.6, 2007) to the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, in the Department of Educational Planning and Research Services, Botswana .

Thank you.

A.K.Galeboe  
For/Permanent Secretary

## APPENDIX E

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**PROJECT TITLE: THE EXTENT TO WHICH STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AT TWO (2) SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE KGALAGADI AND SOUTH REGIONS OF BOTSWANA**

Principal Investigator: Olebile Mothoteng

Phone number(s): 71737972

**What you should know about this research study:**

I give you this informed consent document so that you may read about the purpose, risks, and benefits of this research study.

- You have the right to refuse to take part, or agree to take part now and change your mind later.
- Your participation is voluntary
- The purpose of the study is to contribute to Botswana's education system by coming up with workable locally brewed solutions to the problem of non-involvement of students in decision-making in senior secondary schools.
- There are no risks in the study.
- There will be no benefits offered through this study, but your participation will be highly appreciated.
- The data from this investigation will be used for educational purposes and will be treated as such. None of these will be used for commercial use.
- Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above and have decided to participate.

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Name of Research Participant (please print)

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Date

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Signature of Participant

---

Date