



2015

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Education in Educational Management

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by

Learner Participation and Satisfaction in Decision-Making in School Governance
within the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province

The findings of this study revealed that, on the one hand, there is some significant learner participation in decision-making and a moderate degree of satisfaction in relation to learner welfare issues. On the other hand, the findings also revealed that there is limited learners' participation and a low degree of satisfaction in decision-making in administrative and curricula issues. The reasons are that adult SGB members are still intolerant and disrespectful of learners, and that they consider them as minors, who are untrustworthy, inexperienced and lacking in knowledge.

Data were manually transcribed and coded, and responses were grouped according to the questions that were posed. During analysis, references were made to relevant documents of the Department of Education, as well as to other related literature.

Meaningful learner participation in school governance remains problematic despite legislation by the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996. This prompted the investigation of learner participation and satisfaction in decision-making in school governance within the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. The aim of this study was to examine the extent of learner participation and satisfaction with the decision-making mechanism of the schools. The study was conducted in six secondary schools from three circuits, Dzindi, Mvudi and Sibasa circuits in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. Fifty three research participants comprising principals, parent representatives, teacher liaison officers (TLO) and the executive committee members of the Representative Councils for Learners (RCL) took part in the study. The study was foregrounded in an interpretive paradigm underpinned by the theory of deliberative democracy. Semi-structured interview schedules were used to explore the extent of learner participation and the degree of the participants' satisfaction with decision-making.

ABSTRACT

Keywords: Deliberative decision-making; Learner participation; Satisfaction; School governance

The objective of the study was to examine the degree of learners' satisfaction with regards to their participation. This is unlike previous studies which have mostly focused on the extent and/or nature of learner participation in school governance decision-making. The findings are meant to inform Vhembe District officials to revise training of SGB members, and to enable policy makers to determine whether or not to revisit existing policies on learner participation in school governance.