

# Teachers' strategies to develop leadership skills in Foundation Phase learners<sup>1</sup>

**Shonisani Agnes Mulovhedzi, University of Venda, South Africa<sup>2</sup>**  
**Ina (Jacobina Christiana) Joubert, SANTS Private Higher Education, South Africa**

## ABSTRACT

*This research paper focused on the strategies employed by teachers in the development of leadership skills in learners at the Foundation Phase. The study aimed at exploring the strategies which teachers employ in developing Foundation Phase learners to embrace sound leadership attributes as young learners must develop and assume leadership roles at an early stage. A purposive sampling procedure was followed to select eight Grade 3 teachers from four government primary schools. The study was qualitative in nature and data were collected through focus-group discussions, capacity building workshops and observations. Data were merged into relevant themes using thematic analysis. The study was grounded in participatory action research with Erikson theory of psychosocial development and transformational leadership theory as its theoretical framework. The main finding was that the strategies suggested and adopted by the participating teachers in the development of leadership skills in the Foundation Phase showed a significant effect on the learners' behaviour, performance, willingness and readiness to perform in various leadership roles.*

**Keywords:** Foundation Phase learner, leadership, skills, teaching and learning, transformational

## INTRODUCTION

A passionate active teacher as a leader shares a set of personalities and attitudes with other teachers in schools. The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2009: 1) indicates that these teachers are 'energetic risk-takers whose integrity, high efficacy, and content knowledge give them credibility with their colleagues'. As teachers, they must be able to lead, enthuse, and inspire learners on a daily basis. Leadership skills are an essential part of the role, regardless of one's position or experience (Randstad, 2019). Teaching leadership or providing opportunities for learners to lead helps them with personal and social skills that are in demand. Teachers who are natural leaders are usually on the lookout for colleagues who share their positive intentions as partners in the classroom. These may value a variety of approaches and ideas for developing leadership skills in Foundation Phase (FP) learners. Teachers reflect on their own experiences, learn from others, and gain the resilience to continue the process while developing leadership skills in young learners (Cahill et al., 2014).

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- 2 ORCID: 0000-0002-8355-3377

Teachers have different strategies for developing leadership skills. Welch et al. (2016: 3) posit that 'leadership is learned through using best strategies, such as going full force in training and developing an edge and execution'. From the above point of view, it follows that even born leaders have to learn some leadership qualities in order to become effective leaders. Such qualities can be acquired with the aid of facilitation, training and practice. Penn (2012) points out that there has been debate among scholars for some time about whether young learners learn to be leaders from their experiences or whether leadership is an inborn trait. Some leadership skills, therefore, are learned at school levels, while others are inherent components of their personality (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

Mahanta (2019) asserts that teachers need to come up with effective teaching strategies and implement innovative solutions to meet every learner's individual needs in the class. There are several factors affecting the effectiveness of strategies used by teachers, during teaching and learning, for the development of leadership skills that are appreciated by the young learners, parents, peers and the community. Room 241 Team (2013) contends that teachers as leaders are continuously practising teaching strategies while also improving their facilitation of related techniques. They must be good listeners during class activities and outside of the classroom when interacting with the young learners, parents, peers and the community so that they can discern needed areas for teaching. One teachers' strategy that can develop leadership skills is to make learners in charge of their learning as stated by the Education World (2021). Teachers could include young learners in leadership opportunities in the classroom by engaging them in discussion opportunities, daily, in the lessons.

A collaboration of teachers is the most desired strategy for successful work in creating a quality learning environment. Teachers are aware that they can hardly make huge achievements by themselves, as such, they seek the assistance of others with the right skills to support in developing young learners' leadership skills (Room 241 Team, 2013). Teachers may choose to work on several projects with others in the school system to:

- research the best professional development opportunities for teachers
- study existing school appreciation policies and make suggestions on additional reward for teachers' benefits
- establish an internal teaching-team programs for alternative teaching strategies.

As part of a Participatory Action Research (PAR), the teacher as a leader can contribute to developing leadership skills in learners by giving some excellent leadership examples and talks, frequently, during teaching and learning. It is important to provide lessons in leadership by explaining what leadership is and its role in future. Teachers should allow learners to invest in the best leadership culture of the schools to find ways of being leaders. Allowing learners to take part in extracurricular activities that encourage learners to learn how to lead is one strategy. FP teachers should give learners the opportunity to learn leadership skills, particularly, when they offer to do so; teachers should keep on supporting them.

Teachers came together during the focus-group discussions in the collaborative PAR team. Rule and Vaughn (2011: 66) state that 'in focus groups the researchers engage a group of six to twelve participants together and facilitates a discussion among participants'. A set of semi-structured questions was used to initiate the discussion that the researchers facilitated. The purpose of focus-group discussions was to initiate interaction among participants and create a dialogue with the researchers.

In the capacity building workshops, teachers suggested some strategies that had helped to guide the development of leadership skills in the school. The strategies were identified collaboratively through PAR and developed to empower the teachers in the cultivation of leadership skills, during class and extramural

activities. It is, for example, through the work of teachers in the FP that leadership skills in young learners are nurtured and facilitated for them to live in a mature and dignified manner (Hay & Dempster, 2004; Bush, 2011).

#### *Objective*

The main objective of this study was to investigate teachers' strategies used to develop leadership skills, in FP learners, and the factors affecting the effectiveness of these strategies.

The research question which guided this study is:

What strategies do teachers use to develop leadership skills in FP learner?

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Leadership skills are taught in various ways, both in South Africa and internationally. Life Skills (one of the subjects in the FP) is used for this study to look at how teachers enable learners to achieve leadership skills. In the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Life Skill's policy, known as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2011) states that the subject of Life Skills is central to learners' holistic development and focuses on the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth and integration of learners into the system of education. Education should provide every child, according to Dewey (in Mooney, 2000), with the opportunity to develop freely, pleasantly and in all respects. Teaching and learning in the school system should give all learners honest respect for appropriate work and participation. Dewey (in Mooney, 2000) believes that the observation of children and what type of experience the children are interested in and prepared for, are essential for teachers. The development of special leadership qualities among young students must, therefore, be taken into account and the FP teachers should follow teaching approaches that are the basis for the curriculum.

Dewey further argues that a growing child's passion and focus should be identified and developed during teaching and learning and that their needs must be satisfied by every subject taught in school. Teachers do not only teach the topics and how-to live-in society, nor only teach individual children, but they also create a society (Dewey in Mooney, 2000). By enhancing the skills of leadership in schools, learners can be guided to act in and outside of school in an acceptable manner, respect others as well as act responsibly and acceptably (DBE, 2011). The teaching of leadership knowledge to learners in the class is essential. In addition, teachers can develop and support the leadership skills of young learners by training them in a group and engaging them in class discussions, according to Helmrich (2015). Teachers should give learners time to choose in order to build a sense of responsibility and trust, through formal and informal teaching, by modeling good conduct.

A system for the development of young leaders should be organised. The aim of education is to promote the development of skills, knowledge and willingness for learners to be responsible leaders at a tender age so that they will become responsible adults (Manktelow, 2014). Some of the most controversial questions are, whether teachers can effectively develop leadership skills, and what strategies and factors affect the process, in the classroom, during teaching and learning; this has motivated me to conduct this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Theoretical foundation*

This study is framed by two theories namely, transformational leadership of Bass and Avolio (1994) and psychosocial development of Erikson (1959). The psychosocial development theory supposes that leadership skills develop through a series of stages (Erikson, 1959). It also contends that a situation of

conflict should exist to trigger the development of leadership skills. Transformational leadership relates to the need for teachers to engage in the development of leadership skills, in learners to accomplish certain life-long goals (Barthold, 2014). Cherry (2021: 1) states that the 'concrete operating phase' is the third stage of child development; is a period that extends from the middle age of 5 to approximately 11 years and is characterised by the development of logical thinking. Erikson presents the stages of age development in various phases (Karcher & Kristine, 2007). The most critical stage includes the early years of schooling beginning around five to eleven years, hence, this study focused on teachers of Grade 3 learners. It is believed that strategies that teachers use should promote transformational leadership skills in FP learner.

The FP is a period in which learners are ready to learn the materials taught both at school and in society; it is at this stage that young learners begin to grow a sense of confidence. FP learners master leadership abilities in the form of social interaction when they communicate and relate to their teachers and peers. Erikson (1959) posits that learners who are motivated and encouraged by their peers, parents and teachers are quick to develop competence, interest and confidence in their capabilities compared to those getting little or no encouragement. Learners who are not helped by their significant others to develop leadership skills tend to doubt their propensity to be successful. The psychosocial theory of development highlights the early period of development and the role of teachers in assisting learners to grow confidence in their leadership skills. In this study, Erickson theory was used to show the stages in terms of the age development of learners from their initial phase of learning and the assistance teachers can provide in inspiring their leadership abilities.

The theory of transformational leadership falls within the contemporary leadership theory which is often adopted for education in the 21st century (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Denmark, 2012). This theory posits that leadership strategy can transform people and subordinates into leaders (Bass & Bass, 2008). Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994: 7) explain that transformational leadership is a strategy that 'implies major changes in the form, nature, function and/or potential of some phenomenon applied to leadership'. In the same vein, Denmark (2012) posits that a leader checks for potential, motivates learners, seeks to satisfy greater demands and engages people in their entirety. Burns (1978) describes transformational leadership as a method which leads to change in people and in this study, pertains to the role of teachers in helping young learners to grow or change towards the mastery of leadership skills, for the accomplishment of desired goals (Barthold, 2014). This approach to leadership views leadership abilities as a continuous and dynamic process in which one or more persons interact with one another in such a way that leaders and followers motivate and moralise one another (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Fox (2012) states that the theory of transformative leadership also motivates learners to surpass expectations by encouraging the pursuit of common objectives, for example, to take action in the expectancy of the learner to reciprocate or react.

In this study, both theories stress the importance of the development of the leadership skills of young learners with the help and strategies of their teachers. Learners are followers who can be transformed into leaders by teachers as leaders, through the teaching and learning process, in an academic environment.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Qualitative research*

This study adopted qualitative research, using a PAR to establish the way in which teachers facilitate the development of leadership skills in Foundation Phase (FP) learners. PAR as a qualitative research methodology was appropriate as interpretive research has rich content. Interpretative investigators see themselves 'inside the circle' and interpreting the world around them. 'Interpretive researchers aim to interpret their results and detail the meaning to people, rather than just understanding what they have

researched' (Essays: 2015: 1), hence, the approach comes with a form of knowledge development that is interactive (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). PAR needs to be applied in a committed and collaborative way; this form of participation is inherent within the activities of research to yield practical outcomes for positive change. PAR was employed to draw on personal experiences of participants in the development of content and strategies for the generation of leadership skills in the schools under study.

#### *Stages of Participatory Action Research*

The researchers used the stages of PAR which adopted from James, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam (2008).

**Stage 1 Diagnose:** Participatory groups of teachers assess what is currently known about the topic to be studied. They state their assumptions about the topic and research, as well as evaluate factors that contribute to the current state of affairs. Members of the team conduct research into theory and literature to learn what others have done in similar situations.

**Step 2: Action:** Teachers work in groups to plan possible courses and ways to measure their effectiveness based on research. The teachers design their plans.

**Step 3: Measure:** After implementation, participants' work is evaluated in order to ascertain whether they have achieved learner-level outcomes. Teachers use a variety of methods to determine how their actions have impacted the recipients they are studying.

**Step 4: Reflection:** As individuals and as a group, participants reflect on their process, their actions, and their outcomes. They also brainstorm alternative situations and additional steps during the reflection.

#### *How participants applied each stage of PAR*

During the diagnose stage, teachers raised questions to collect data that led them to identify strategies of developing leadership skills in FP learners. PAR does not mean work only for the participant, but rather working in partnership with others to identify challenges and strategies. In this study, comments and suggestions from the participants were combined in all cycles of the PAR. During this stage, teachers also developed learner activities that involved leadership roles.

In the action stage, teachers worked together in groups to integrate activities. This improved the relationship between the roles of the PAR participants and their productivity. Teachers implemented the teaching strategies that they discovered to help them facilitate the development of leadership skills in the classrooms, both during class group discussions and during extramural activities. Learners were given different tasks that required them to think critically, make a decision, work as a team or solve a problem; this led to learners understanding each other by communicating effectively.

During the measurement stage, teachers used multiple forms of measurement to study how their actions affected the learners with whom they were working. Learners completed different tasks that could be used to measure their leadership performance. At this point, teachers showed improved learners' work that encouraged leadership; they discussed successes, shared challenges and found ways to improve existing gaps. They summarised by outlining strategies that had worked; the leadership roles they had taught during group discussions and extramural activities and how they evaluated the learners' suggested solutions. The teachers developed professional programmes that they could share with other schools.

During the reflection stage, the PAR practitioner acknowledges the growth in competence that had accumulated during every cycle. The reflection stage helped teachers to examine what they had done in great detail. Daily, they paid attention and reflected on what they imparted to young learners, hence the

participants reflected on their process, their actions and their outcomes as individuals and as groups. They also investigated alternative situations and additional steps. This was a further source of qualitative data that guided their process. Teachers assisted one another if there was a need to change a practice and shared ideas on the solutions, they found during their group discussions and other ideas that they thought they could include in the planning and implementation phase of the intervention. They discussed the professional development programme that could assist the Department and policy makers to train teachers to impart qualities of leadership at the FP.

#### *Research design: Participatory action research (PAR)*

An interpretivist paradigm was used, as proposed by Patel (2015); this requires researchers to interpret the components of a study. This means that realities are mostly interpreted using the qualitative method in order to get multiple realities. This paradigm depends on where people see themselves in relation to the world around them, as well as their views and thoughts. The participatory nature of action research allows each participant to contribute his / her expertise to the project, which empowers the research and leads to improvement and changes at work-place level. Morales (2016) states that PAR is characterised by a collaboration of researchers and their ability to appraise the entire research. The paradigm also provides rich evidence about participants' circumstances, feelings and thoughts. The roles of the various participants in the research process are clearly defined, with the goal of carefully determining whether or not the desired outcomes were achieved. Meetings and workshops were planned by the researchers as the participants came from various selected schools, although, all the participants are teaching Grade 3 learners.

#### *Data generation methods*

The researchers employed three data-generated methods, namely, capacity-building workshop, classroom observation and focus-group discussions to collect formal data as these were quick and convenient. The researchers also thought it would be suitable to view relevant documents related to strategies that teachers used to develop leadership skills in FP learners. These above-mentioned instruments helped to confirm all the findings as they converged to inform the main phenomenon - to develop leadership skills in the FP learners.

Below is a description of the data generation methods to obtain a picture of the new strategies which were developed. Participating teachers were exposed to four stages of capacity development workshops. After each workshop, a focus-group discussion was conducted with the participating teachers where they gave responses to the semi-structured interview questions that were prepared for them. Their responses were recorded, and pictures were taken.

Focus-group interviews were conducted after each workshop to gather data on the current strategies for the development of leadership qualities. Each capacity-building activity had its own purpose. The first one was for the joint designing of teaching strategies; reflections on and sharing what should be implemented and checking whether it would work through observation, joint redesigning and implementation. In the second stage, the teachers implemented the teaching strategies as discussed, reflected on them and shared what will be implemented next and checked whether it would work or not through observation, and redesigned where necessary. At the third stage, teachers reflected and shared ideas and reported back on flip charts to help teachers who were still experiencing difficulties and finalised the capacity-building experiences when enough data were available. Focus-group discussions were conducted after each workshop to gather data about the various strategies that teachers could use to develop leadership skills in learners and to widen the range of responses during capacity building workshops. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to encourage interaction among participants and create dialogue with the researchers. Data were also collected through observation of classroom activities and the researchers

was a non-participant observer, so as not to influence the participating teachers when they were trying to develop leadership skills of the FP learners.

#### *Selection criteria of research participants*

The participants were purposefully selected, and the sample include eight teachers. Data were obtained from experienced teachers who had been teaching in Grade 3 classes. Only Grade 3 female teachers participated in the study because of two reasons. Firstly, from the selected school, there were only female teachers who were teaching Grade 3 classes. Secondly, Grade 3 teachers were selected as they are teaching exit grade in the FP to Intermediate Phase (IP). In IP, most of learning activities learners learn independently and the leadership skills would be developed in advanced. Selection criteria included school, experience and language. The participants were selected from lower primary phases that contained two or more Grade 3 classes. All four selected schools are sited in a rural setting and had more than one Grade 3 class and ranged from Grade R to Grade 4. The schools are located within 12 to 18 kilometres of each other. The selected teachers used Tshivenda as a language of instruction in the classroom. Life Skills is one of the subjects that are taught in mother tongue.

#### *Data analysis*

An analysis of data involves striving for a deeper understanding of the collected information through the process of organisation and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Data analysis is 'the process of observing patterns in data, asking questions relating to such patterns, seeking more data and furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing conjectures' (Mayan, 2001). The analysis of data was done through an application of the guidelines for constructivism as given by Charmaz (2000). The inductive approach to data analysis was used in this research. To understand teachers' strategies on how leadership skills can be facilitated for learners in the FP, it became central to document the entire discussions and comments and group them according to resultant themes. Creswell (2012) advises that a study requires an immediate and ongoing analysis of data while it is still fresh, rather than waiting until all data has been collected. To identify themes, the researchers read through the transcribed data so as to see the emerging themes. Coding for patterns was done by looking at phrases and statements.

#### *Ethical consideration*

The research recognised the institutional ethical principles. The research was submitted to the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. Then the researchers sought permission from the Department of Basic Education of the Vhembe District in Limpopo and the participants in order to adhere to ethical issues. All participants were requested to sign informed consent form after the aim and nature of the study was explained to them. Confidentiality was also observed; participants were assured that their identity will not be revealed, and that the information provided would remain confidential. Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue with the participation if they feel so.

#### *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness relates to the stance adopted in a study to ensure the findings are convincing and believable; this establishes rigour in qualitative studies. Qualitative research does not perceive quality in terms of validity and reliability, which are characteristic of quantitative research. Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that trustworthiness focuses on the criteria to enhance the research findings. The criteria consist of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

## **RESULTS**

The section presents and discusses the strategies that emerged from the finding, that teachers can employ towards assisting learners to develop leadership skills. The participating teachers were empowered

during the capacity training workshop which enabled them to contribute relevant information during the focus-group discussions. The researchers used a video recorder to capture the activities and to interpret the comments made during the oral discussions. There were field notes on the perceptions of teachers regarding their strategies used to develop leadership skills in Foundation Phase learners. The discussions are presented according to the research questions asked.

The participants were coded as follows: T1 – T8, which stands for teacher 1 to 8; SCH A- D, which stands for school A; FGI 1 to 4, which stands for focus-group interview; and lastly CBW 1 to 4, which stands for capacity-building workshop.

The teachers identified and discussed several strategies that can be adopted to facilitate the development of leadership skills in young learners during classroom activities and extramural activities. The teachers highlighted the following strategies during the focus group interview (FGI 3 and 4) - that learners who are struggling and lazy should be given a lot of class activities to keep them occupied as well as assist them to attain expected goals; learners should be given remedial teaching when necessary; teachers must motivate learners to assume roles such as class representatives or managers; the emotions of teachers should be monitored in their interactions with learners, that is, they need to be patient with learners, thus, avoiding being short-tempered. Young learners effectively engage in class activities when provided with conditions where they are loved and catered for by their teachers (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

It emerged in the discussion that teachers should be passionate leaders during the facilitation of leadership skills among young learners. This resonates well with the description provided by the Department of Education (DoE) (2008), which presents passionate teachers as those who believe in caring, are achievement-orientated and committed, show trust and work collaboratively. Teacher leaders who are passionate actively promote - critical thinking, effective communication, swift decision making, problem-solving skills and teamwork - as an ongoing skills development agenda in the classrooms.

The themes emerging from the participating teachers on strategies to develop leadership skills among learners are discussed hereunder.

#### *Engaging teachers in continuous capacity-building training*

The teachers suggested some capacity-building strategies that might help them to nurture leadership skills among young learners at school. Gregory and Hine (2013) describe capacity-building strategies as tools to support and complement existing activities and to offer guidance on school practices. Such tools are used in conjunction with Departmental strategy documents to ensure they are operationalized, defined and monitored as expected. The contributed strategies are necessary for FP teachers to build and transform leadership capacities in young learners in the classroom. together, and benchmark at neighbouring schools. Through engaging teachers in continuous capacity-building training, teachers can build strong content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills on how to develop leadership skills in learners and understand learners and their development; this would include general abilities for organizing, observing, explaining ideas, thinking diagnostically, and having adaptive expertise for forming opinions in light of learner' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

This was confirmed by T1- SCH B,

Teachers' training can be put to efficient use. We often focus on learners and their needs when we talk about effective teaching, however, it is necessary for the Department of Basic Education to also concentrate on the training of teacher because learners improve when the teacher has the necessary knowledge on how to make learners, leaders.



T5- SCH C also added,

That is true, learners receive a high-quality education from well-trained teachers.

FGI 2- T2- SCH A explained,

It depends, we can be trained but some of the teachers are lazy that they even fail to implement the developed CAPS policy.

T7 – SCH D also explained,

Knowledge has prompted the teacher to seek out more effective teaching methods. For this, the teacher must have a specific set of knowledge and skills in order to understand how and when to use various tools of developing and transform leadership skills to learners and makes them followers.

It is paramount that the new interventions be infused into the school system with the crafting of supporting goals and aims. In most instances, it is presumed that new interventions can change poor approaches to developing leadership skills in schools. Teachers can be given additional opportunities to facilitate workshops, which would raise their teaching standards. This study identified capacity-building experiences as strategies such as education programmes and new policies – designed to transform the behaviour of learners in terms of displaying leadership skills (Muhdi, 2019). It was also suggested, from this study, that teachers must facilitate the growth of leadership skills at school through understanding learners and meeting their needs (Mulovhedzi, 2017). Teachers may place the targeted learner next to him/her and use leadership identifiers in the classroom, thereby, training teachers on how to facilitate leadership skills and blending the old policy with the newly amended one. Teachers should be exposed to training, workshops and continuing professional-development programmes, as these play a major role in implementing curriculum innovations. They assist teachers to gain more experience and learn how to transform the leadership abilities of learners. The training workshops, hence, would assist teachers to gather more knowledge which allows them to instil skills of leadership in learners according to the norm.

#### *Educational transformation of leadership skills to FP learners*

Teachers are expected to keep in mind the most appropriate approach in developing leadership skills, such as problem-solving skills, teamwork, good decision-making skills and confidence (Mulovhedzi & Mudzielwana, 2016). This is also supported by IQualify UK (2020) which states that learners, particularly young ones, are usually in the process of gaining an understanding of their skills. The teacher, on the other hand, has enough experience to recognise when a learner possesses a particular skill which requires nurturing to develop. As a result, once the teacher has identified the needs of the learner and provided the necessary support for their development, the learners are able to discover and grow them.

T3 and 4 - SCH B confirmed,

Skills become needs to learners because they require nurturing to develop. As a result, once the teacher has identified the needs of the learner and provided the necessary support for their development, the learners are able to discover and grow them.

T6 – SCH D also explained,

Once we are familiar with our learners' individual needs, we can easily plan our day-to-day classroom activities to accommodate them all. For example, if we are aware on how to organise individual

tutoring, group interactions, and overall supervision it will be easy for us to develop leadership skills. In other words, each activity is tailored to the needs of specific learner, so that by the end of the day, all of the learners' needs have been met.

A transformational teacher-leader is expected to model leadership skills to young learners which will prepare them for the assumption of leadership roles within and outside the school premises (Mulovhedzi, 2017). Mills (2020) avers that teachers' transformational leadership skills should result in increased participation and identification of potential in the classroom among learners. Some learners need added support to adopt some leadership functions and to exhibit desired leadership attitudes. Teachers must assist learners to deal with leadership difficulties during extramural and classroom activities by offering support and adapting instructions. It is possible for a teacher who is observing class activities to notice transformations and commonalities in the behaviours of learners. This occurs in cases where the practice of leadership escalates to the level where it involves a responsible way of life for the learner.

#### *Make learners to own their learning*

Involve learners in classroom leadership opportunities, such as leading a lesson discussion or handing out papers. According to Paterson (2020) such opportunities should be incorporated into daily classroom procedures. It benefits both the learners who is working and their peers who must collaborate with the peer leader. Activities involving learner leadership in the classroom will assist learners most when teachers give them positive feedback on how they handled their given responsibility. There is, usually, a group of learners that require special attention in every class; the teachers must remember them when developing leadership skills.

During CBW 3- T4, 6 and 7 further explained,

It is not easy for the learners who required special attention to own their learning as they require more help from the teacher. They need strong learning support to adopt leadership skills.

During FGI 2- T1 and 2 confirmed,

When learners are given leadership opportunities, we as teachers need to give them freedom to struggle and even fail, we should support them.

Teacher who participated in the study suggested that the DBE should allow two teachers in one class as it is not easy to develop leadership skills due to overcrowded classes. Having two teachers in one classroom also decreases the number of playful learners during teaching in the classroom. This approach places one teacher in a leading role, while the other is functioning as a support to the class by monitoring learners' work, addressing behavioural issues, answering questions posed by the learners and also developing instruction.

#### *Engage learners in leadership positions*

Teachers must make sure that learners are provided with the opportunity to participate in many leadership capacities. This can be done by giving them leadership identifiers such as scribe, reporter, timekeeper, class-captain and group-leader. Fulton (2019) suggests that one learner could be the scribe, another the reporter, another presenter of visual materials, and so on. Each leader would be in charge of guiding the rest of the group in establishing a clear goal and delegating specific tasks. The teacher should rotate the practice of leadership positions, daily or weekly, to enable learners to experience a multitude of functions.

T1 and 2 from SCH A and T5 &6 from SCH C revealed,

It is possible to engage learners in leadership positions although we have a challenge of overcrowded class. But we need to encourage them to work very hard encourage others to complete their tasks and pay attention to what others are saying.

The teachers also indicated that it essential to locate and observe learners who are shy, lazy and those with learning difficulties. The use of leadership identifiers will also help teachers to develop the necessary leadership behaviours in learners. It is easy for teachers to monitor learners in a given leadership role; leadership identifier also enhances a sense of responsibility and belonging in the classroom context. In this context, learners are inspired to deliver as expected in the leadership tag or identifier that they occupy (Mulovhedzi & Mudzielwana 2016). Some learners show their developed leadership skills during extramural activities, hence, showing the holistic development of learners in an academic environment.

T2 from SCH B and SCH D said:

Extramural activities make learners engage in critical thinking, such as identifying different leaders around them and also identifying good leadership qualities from these leaders that are worth emulating and imitating.

Informal classroom activities offer balance to the academic side of education by making the learners physically active, develop new behavioural skills such as participating in teams, developing problem-solving skills and critical thinking. Consequently, the participation of learners in areas such as netball, traditional dancing, and soccer, helps them to grow leadership skills inclusive of self-confidence, responsibility, self-esteem and belongingness (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

## DISCUSSION

The literature by Murray (2014) confirms the findings of this study, that teachers are aware of the strategies that need to be used to develop leadership skills in the Foundation Phase learners. The findings were also in agreement with statements in the literature that the best time to foster leadership skills in learners is during their early childhood; this will influence their behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom and help them to grow into responsible future citizens as asserted by (Carmichael, 2016). Findings also showed that developed strategies can improve learners' social skills through extracurricular activities, which are a crucial part of their overall development and complement formal learning, Welch (2016). The strategies discussed above were suggested by the participating teachers because they became familiar with how to facilitate leadership skills among young learners. Developing leadership skills in young learners will prepare learners to be responsible for their future, thus, enabling them to take up responsible positions in business, as well as in the academic, religious and political worlds.

Murphy (2011) proposes that leadership skills and capabilities only become evident in naturally occurring situations; for instance, such skills could reduce the crime rate as learners would have learned how to love and respect one another through their group tasks and extramural activities. Young learners are future leaders and teaching them leadership skills from an early age will prepare them to act responsibly and make good decisions now and in the future. This is in line with Barthold's (2014) argument that childhood serves as the most opportune time to instil leadership skills. The teaching of young children implies teaching the whole nation, as today's children are the leaders of tomorrow. It also helps learners to exhibit sound ethical standards and a degree of competence in dealing with cultural, personal and social matters of life. Inculcating leadership skills and moral behaviours in learners makes them more efficient and effective in activities of life (Ornstein et al., 2014).

The findings showed that teachers were able to participate in activities that allowed them to experience the use of the five leadership skills which were discussed in the study, therefore, critical thinking skills in

learners were stimulated by requiring learners, for example, to identify the leaders they admire and give a typology of the skills associated with such leaders. The young learners were also asked to list the names of five huge animals with their portraits on the bank notes of South Africa and to discuss the ones they consider the strongest and why. Northhouse (2013) established that teachers need to develop and instil leadership qualities in their learners during their classroom operations, however, it appeared that those leadership qualities seemed to differ from one teacher and school to others.

This study has delivered significant results on an assessment of the development of leadership skills as an essential strategy used by teachers to engage learners in activities during class and extramural activities; this process inspired learners to assume assigned functional roles. This is consistent with what had been found by Fox (2012) who concluded that FP teachers play a powerful role in influencing leadership development in learners, as they can either encourage, support or discourage and ignore learners' leadership behaviours. Learners were able to solve problems through engaging in effective communication in teams and come up with final decisions.

Teachers need to be very passionate about developing leadership behaviours among learners in classrooms. In this regard, the DoE (2008) advocates that teachers as leaders must exhibit passion for commitment, trust, collaboration and achievement as they work with young learners. Participants in the study encouraged learners to practise what they learned in class in the form of homework and projects which they were to complete in leadership context. Overall, these findings are in accordance with Murphy (2011) who agreed that it is the best to start promoting leadership skills to young learners. Transformational leadership and integration of leadership styles essentially improve the teaching processes. Teachers with a moral value system lean more towards a transformational leadership style and teachers with a pragmatic value system lean more towards a participatory leadership style. The study shows that effective leadership can be provided by searching for correlations between the value systems and leadership styles.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study found that strategies used to develop leadership skills have become a priority for the teachers, as these skills led learners to focus more on their classroom activities. Furthermore, this development should take place at an early stage instead of attempting it later in their school years when harm may already have been done. The paper offers strategies to be adopted in the facilitation of leadership skills during classes and extramural activities, thus, the study concluded that the integrated transformational leadership style in a school context enables teachers to facilitate leadership skills for young learners. When young learners develop and assume leadership roles, it gives evidence that learners can become transformational leaders. The five leadership skills highlighted in this study were inculcated in young learners by their teachers who adopted various strategies from the capacity-training programme and the focus-group discussion. This research has identified several leadership skills for a learner, such as being a leader in class group discussion, and being a reporter of outcomes from group meetings; these might be developed in young learners in the Foundation Phase. Reflection on the implementation of participatory-action research is that it improves practice and the creation of knowledge in social groups; it created new ways of working, interaction and knowledge. PAR created knowledge (leadership qualities) that was useful and meaningful to the participants; the process also helped the researchers, to 'close the gaps' by implementing appropriate strategies.

### *Recommendation*

FP teachers should be encouraged to employ teaching strategies that will enhance the development of leadership skills for their learners. The study showed that learners' performance was improved by leadership strategies adopted by the FP teachers during classes and extramural activities. I, therefore,

recommend that task-based activities - classroom discussions, sports, and traditional dance should be actively employed to enhance the development of leadership skills in young learners.

#### *Areas for further research*

More research is needed to determine how to facilitate the development of leadership qualities in learners from Grade 4 through to 12. The results would determine if the capacity-building strategies used in this study in Grade 3 can be applied to other grades. Teacher training courses and workshops should include facilitation and support for the improvement of young learners' leadership abilities.

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