# TRAINING LEARNER-LEADERS IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ASPECTS: A STRATEGY TO IMPROVING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE IN BOTSWANA

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**Abstract**
*This article focuses on the training of learner-leaders as a way of empowering them to participate in strategies of improving discipline in secondary schools in Botswana. The study investigates the extent to which the school managers train learner-leaders and examines selected management aspects that could be included in a training program. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The findings indicated that the training of the learner-leaders was inadequate in providing leadership management skills. Finally, the study recommends selected knowledge and skills aspects that may be included in training content to empower the learner-leaders.*
**Keywords:** learner-leaders, empowering, participate, discipline, training, conflict.

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## Introduction

"Reducing bad behaviour is a realistic aim. Eliminating it completely is not", Lord Elton once said (D.E.S., 1989, p.65). Lord Elton was referring to learner indiscipline in British schools that it had always existed and that school managers could only try to reduce its levels. Similarly, many secondary schools in Botswana experience numerous indiscipline problems, to the extent that some stakeholders fear the worst for the country if they are not managed effectively or minimized (Hulela & Matsolo, 2011). Garegae (2008) has described discipline in Botswana secondary schools as being in a state of crisis. In a study on the state of discipline in Botswana, a teacher-respondent informed him that the "forms of crime that teachers used to watch in movies were now acted out in schools." This teacher-respondent added, "We are no longer fighting against laziness of not finishing homework but we are dealing with more serious things, such as drug abuse, and use of dangerous weapons" (p.51).

The study by Hulela and Matsolo (2011) confirmed that the issue of indiscipline in Botswana schools was indeed not abating. The study further revealed that acts of indiscipline in Botswana secondary schools were on the increase in terms of frequency and gravity. There were increased numbers of violent and non-violent indiscipline acts than was the case a few years earlier. For instance, there have been several reports of violent acts such as; learners tripping off the main switch and attacking a prefect, learners burning hostels, and some learners forcing nine others to take methanol and they all died (Tjavanga & Jotia, 2012). Physical and non-physical bullying is also common in Botswana schools (Mangope, Dinama & Kefhilwe, 2012). Other forms of indiscipline include property vandalism, alcohol and drug consumption, late coming to school or class, noise making in class, and unwillingness/failure to do homework (Modikwa, 2008; Garagae, 2008).

Success of institutions including secondary schools in addressing indiscipline problems can be enhanced if key stakeholders are engaged in the design and implementation of strategies to address such problems than if they are excluded (UNAIDS Inter-country Team for West and Central Africa, 2001). In a school setting, learners are key stakeholders that should not be excluded. In addition to the fact that involving learners in decision making makes good sense in terms of democratic values, it is also conventional practice because organisational management is moving towards a form of, what Villiers and Pretorius (2011) called, collective, shared, distributed responsibility. However, recognising the fact that learners in secondary schools are generally young, less knowledgeable and inexperienced, Harris (2005) advises that it would not be wise to involve them in management activities without building capacity in them in terms of equipping them with certain skills and body of knowledge. In this connection, the thesis of this study is that it is important that learner-leaders should be trained in school management aspects as a means of improving school discipline in Botswana.

Although indiscipline in educational institutions is a universal problem, there is no universal method of dealing with it. Some of the factors that make it almost impossible to find such a solution are differences in understanding the meanings of the terms "discipline" and "leadership". The term "discipline" for some people may mean the use of corporal punishment because they believe in the maxim "spare the rod and spoil the child." This view is typical of the classical Roman and Greek approach to discipline (Oosthuizen, Roux & van der Walt, 2003).

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With the onset of children's rights, there are now fewer schools that still practice corporal punishment because rights activists would not let them do it. However, similar forms that also cause physical discomfort still exist, such as making transgressors clean toilets, cut grass and dig pits. Such cases demonstrate juridical as opposed to educational exercise of discipline. Juridical discipline is retrospective in that it punishes past transgressions (Oosthuizen, et al, 2003). To a large extent school authorities in Botswana subscribe to this view as they seem to believe in the "an eye for an eye" purpose of punishment (Education, Ministry of, 1995). Wamba (N. Wamba, personal communication, March 30, 2013) and Oosthuizen, et al, (2003) hold a different view that schools should not throw away retributive punishments altogether, but they should focus more on the educational sense of discipline. Schools should serve as centers of building positive character and guiding those who miss the right track.

Leadership is another term that means different things for different people. By extension, the term "leadership training" would also generate different meanings. For Greenwald (2010) leadership training in schools should teach life skills, such as understanding economics, cultural sensitivity, and appreciation of lifelong learning. According to Grovum (2011) leadership training should not be a preserve of a few learners; it should be offered to all the learners because we all become leaders in our lives in one way or another. The views of Greenwald and Grovum are surely worthwhile. In the case of Botswana these are not the type of skills that would assist much in dealing with the problem of indiscipline in schools. This is perhaps why Greenwald adds that each institution needs to define leadership in a meaningful way before it can develop a meaningful curriculum for its learners. This is why one of the aims of this study tries to investigate what could be included in a prefect training program for schools in Botswana.

Since there is overlap between the terms "management" and "leadership", where the term "management" is used alone it should be understood to include the sense of "leadership". Where both terms are used it will be for purpose of emphasis.

## Prefect Selection

Prefect selection in public secondary schools in Botswana is carried out by fellow learners, but members of the teaching staff have to approve or disapprove the names (Education, Ministry of, 1995). When time for selecting prefects approaches, aspirants are allowed to campaign for the positions they like. The positions include head boy and girl, dining hall prefects, sports prefects, hostel prefects, and entertainment prefects. It is not clear what criteria learners use to choose candidates. However, the teachers vet the candidates based on character and academic performance. Candidates who may be well behaved but are weak in academic performance may be disapproved. The rationale is that if such learners are given additional responsibilities they may perform even worse. Once a full compliment of prefects is in place, the school authorities organise a handover ceremony. The handover exercise includes briefing of what is expected of the incoming prefects. There is no formal training of the prefects.

The expectation of the learners is that a prefect must ensure that their interests are cared for and yet s/he is also the middle person between learners and the school administration. The position becomes quite challenging in that one has to appear to be advancing the interests of the learners as well as communicating to them the limitations the administration may express in a convincing manner without appearing to be a traitor.

## Problem Statement and Research Aims

Literature reveals that in schools where learner participation in decision making is high, better school discipline exists (Mgomezulu, 2004). Although Botswana secondary schools try to practice participatory management styles (Monyatsi, 2005), evidence indicates that indiscipline has, in fact, remained quite problematic. Since it is not clear why learner participation in school management has not translated into improved discipline, this study aimed to:

- investigate the extent to which schools train learner-leaders to meaningfully participate in school management as a strategy for improving school discipline.
- examine selected management aspects that should be included in a training program to empower learner-leader.

**Review of Literature**
Schools in Botswana as well as in other parts of the world are supposed to impart values, ideals, shared knowledge, and foster cognitive and emotional growth, to mention a few. According to functionalist and Marxist perspective (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995) schools are also bureaucracies designed to maintain social order such as obedience, abiding by the rules, loyalty, respect for authority, punctuality, regular attendance, quietness, orderly work in large groups, responses to order, bells and timetables, and tolerance of monotony. The schools in Botswana take after authoritarian and bureaucratic models inherited from the British-ruled colonial period (Monyatsi, 2005).

There is a scarcity of literature on learner involvement in school management in Botswana. However, a number of scholars have looked at the management of secondary schools, others have examined the prevalence of deviant behaviors and the responses put in place by the Ministry of Education to address the school authoritarian structure.

In 1993 the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Botswana and the then British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) put in place the Secondary School Management Development Project (SSMDP) standards as an attempt to democratize these authoritarian structures (Monyatsi, 2005). This project was carried out under the assumption that one role of the schools is to enhance democratic skills, values, and the behavior necessary to sustain institutions (Harber, 1989). It established staff development committees, school-based workshops, and cluster and regional workshops as a means of preparing school heads to democratize schools. In an evaluation of the project, a respondent mentioned that although the program was successful by transforming schools into democratic organizations, it failed to include learners in decision-making; one key theme this study addresses. The government further established the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) as a direct intervention to head the guidance and counseling department of the Botswana Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoE & SD) and pastoral care units in secondary schools to address deviant behaviors (Monyatsi, 2005).

While attempts at developing a pro-active discipline policy in schools are laudable, the question of corporal punishment that is nationwide applied and sanctioned (Botswana-Country Report, 2010) becomes a setback to these efforts. The question of whether the incidences of indiscipline are the result of school authoritarian structure and the imposition of corporal punishment needs further inquiry. How does corporal punishment account for the rights of the

learners (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.)? How are learners suppose to behave in an institution that professes to impart democratic values, while simultaneously perpetuating violence on the learners? In this context it is not difficult to suggest that schools breed violence. The fact that schools have experienced several violent acts (Tjavanga & Jotia, 2012; Mangope, Dinama & Kefhilwe, 2012; Garegae, 2008) may, as Kandel (1992) suggests, be a consequence of the violence the education system exacts on learners. The government has rejected recommendations to prohibit corporal punishment (Botswana-Country Report, 2010). A point of interest is to find out if the government position about corporal punishment took into consideration views of a key stakeholder, the learners.

**Research Design and Methods**
The study was quantitative and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire because it would allow the researchers to involve a large sample and hence also provide high internal reliability and generalisability (Simon & Burstein, 1985). A team of research assistants gathered the targeted respondents, gave them the questionnaire to answer and collected the completed questionnaires. The study also included examination of documents, such as the Education Act, Guidelines on Offenses and Punishments in Secondary Schools, and Procedures for School Heads to enhance communication and handling of students grievances/strikes, natural disasters and related emergencies in secondary schools. There are two traditions of document analysis: authenticity and transferability. Authenticity focuses on truth-value, trustworthiness, credibility and the ability to provide a believable interpretation of the meaning found in the documents (Richerson & Boyd, 2002). Authenticity relies on the subjective evaluation of the readers as opposed to being based on some objective standards (Krippendorff, 2004). Transferability is the ability to offer insights extending beyond the specific cases under study (Bryman, 2004). As is the case in authenticity, the researchers rely upon their readers to assess the broader applicability of the lessons drawn from findings. This study applied both types of document analysis.

**Sampling**
Botswana has 28 senior secondary schools distributed over eight school districts. Eight senior secondary schools in the North-Central District were purposefully sampled based on their proximity to the researcher's station. Samples consisted 16 learner respondents from each school, namely: one head boy, one head girl, two dining hall prefects, two hostel prefects (boy and girl), one sports prefect, one entertainment prefect, four non-prefect learners (two girls and two boys) from Form 5, and four non-prefect learners (two girls and two boys) from Form 4. In short, there were 64 learners who will now be referred to as prefects and 64 learners who will be referred to as non-prefects. The terms "head" and "prefect" denote positions of leadership amongst the learners. The term "learner-leader" is widely used in literature sources whilst "prefect" is less used but widely used in Botswana. For the sake of the research participants and the wider readership, the terms will be used interchangeably. The selection of prefects was done by the research assistants who were trained in the task. The assistants listed each sample of prefects alphabetically and chose the first boy and girl on the list. For the non-prefect learners, the assistants listed each sample (such as all boys in the hostel) alphabetically and chose the 15th and 25th boys and 10th and 20th girls on the list (see Table 1).

From each school, two prefect advisors (teachers working in collaboration with the prefects), one member of the management team and the principal of the school (four members of

the teaching staff) were included to confirm or negate the views of the prefects and non-prefect learners from a professional point of view. In summary a total of 160 participants took part in the survey (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Total participants by gender and position**

| Gender _____ Position | Males | Females | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principals | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Teachers | 13 | 11 | 24 |
| Prefects | 33 | 31 | 64 |
| Non-prefects | 32 | 32 | 64 |
| Total | 83 | 77 | 160 |

**Data Collection**
The research assistants assembled the learner respondents in a classroom at a convenient time to complete the questionnaires. The teacher respondents were given the freedom to do so at their own convenient time but they were given three days to return the questionnaires. All the respondents were supposed to return the completed questionnaires to the assistants who, in turn, sent them back to the researcher. The return rate was 100%.

**Data Analysis**
The quantitative data was analysed by using a computer-aided statistical analysis program called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). From the analysis the researcher generated frequency tables which are presented and discussed below.

**Research Results**
In the following section, the results of the empirical study are presented according to the research aim:

*Research aim 1:* To investigate the extent to which schools empower learner-leaders to meaningfully participate in school management as a strategy for improving school discipline.

**Table 2: Prefect and teacher views on training provided to prefects**

| Item | P=Prefects T=Teachers | Agree | Disagree | Missing | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| | | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) When the prefects were elected their duties were well explained to them. | T | 27 | 84.4 | 3 | 9.4 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| | P | 54 | 84.4 | 3 | 4.7 | 7 | 10.9 | 64 | 100 |
| (b) Enough training was provided to prefects on aspects of school management. | T | 16 | 43.8 | 14 | 50 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| | P | 51 | 79.7 | 5 | 7.8 | 8 | 12.5 | 64 | 100 |
| (c) The training gave the prefects confidence to participate in aspects of school management. | T | 15 | 46.9 | 15 | 46.9 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| | P | 48 | 75 | 7 | 10.9 | 9 | 14.1 | 64 | 100 |
| (d) The involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school has helped to improve discipline in the school. | T | 21 | 65.6 | 9 | 28.2 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| | P | 43 | 67.2 | 14 | 21.9 | 7 | 10.9 | 64 | 100 |

Table 2 presents the views of the prefects and teachers regarding the empowerment of learner-leaders. The table indicates that the majority of the teachers and prefects strongly agreed with two of the items (items a and d). For example, a large percentage of the teachers and prefects (84.4% in both cases) agreed that the duties of the prefects were well explained to the prefects. The teachers and prefects (65.6% and 67.2% respectively) also agreed that the involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school has helped to improve discipline in the schools. A significant percentage of the teachers (50%) disagreed that enough training was provided to the prefects while 79.7% of the prefects agreed with this statement (Table 2, item b). While 75% of the prefects agreed that training gave confidence to the prefects, only 46.9% of the teachers agreed with this statement (Table 2, item c). Both the teachers and the prefects agreed that the involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school has helped to improve discipline in the school (Table 2, item d).

**Table 3: Views of the teachers and non-prefects on prefect activities**

| Item | T=Teachers N=Non-prefects | Agree | | Disagree | | Missing | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % |
| (a) The involvement of prefects in the | T | 19 | 59.4 | 12 | 37.5 | 1 | 3.1 | 32 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| management aspects of the school is high | N | 28 | 43 | 34 | 53.7 | 3 | 2 | 64 | 100 |
| (b) The learners frequently meet prefects to discuss matters of concern. | T | 21 | 65.6 | 11 | 34.4 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |
| | N | 37 | 57.9 | 25 | 39.7 | 2 | 2.4 | 64 | 100 |
| (c) The prefects are doing a good job representing the interests of the learners. | T | 23 | 71.9 | 9 | 28.1 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |
| | N | 40 | 62 | 21 | 33.9 | 3 | 4.1 | 64 | 100 |
| (d) The general level of discipline in the school is sound | T | 22 | 68.8 | 10 | 31.2 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |
| | N | 35 | 55.3 | 26 | 41.3 | 3 | 4.7 | 64 | 100 |

In Table 3, 59.4% of the teachers and 43% of the non-prefects agreed whilst 53.7% of the non-prefects disagreed with the statement that the involvement of prefects in the management of the schools is high (Table 3, item a). In item b (Table 3), a considerable percentage of the teachers and non-prefects (65.6% and 57.9% respectively) agreed that the learners frequently met prefects to discuss matters of concern. Although there was agreement, a significant percentage of the non-prefects (39.7%) disagreed that this was the case. The majority of the teachers (71.9%) and non-prefects (62%) further agreed that the prefects are doing a good job representing the interests of the learners (Table 3, item c). A similar pattern was observed in the way respondents expressed their views on the level of discipline in the schools. Just under 70% (68.8%) of the teachers agreed that the level of discipline in school was sound and 55.3% of the non-prefects agreed with the statement, while a significant 41.3% of the non-prefects said discipline was not sound (Table 3, item d).

**Table 4: A comparison of the opinions of the principals and the teachers on the training of prefects.**

| Position | Agree | Disagree | Missing | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Principals** | 75% (6) | 12.5% (1) | 12.5% (1) | 100% (8) |
| **Teachers** | 37.5% (9) | 50% (12) | 12.5% (3) | 100% (24) |

Table 4 presents a comparison of the opinions of the principals and the teachers (heads of department and prefect advisors) on the following statement: "Prefects were given enough training on aspects of school management." The table shows that half of the teachers (50%) disagreed with the statement that enough training was provided to the prefects on issues of management, while three-quarters of the principals (75%) agreed with the statement.

*Research aim 2:* To examine selected management aspects that should be included in a training program to empower learner-leaders.

This section comprises responses to an item that asked teachers and prefects whether they agreed or disagreed with the inclusion of some specific knowledge and skills aspects of leadership and management into a training program. Some of the aspects were included because some educationists, including Law and Glover (2000), Lepard and Foster (2003), and Harber

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(1997) recommend that prefects need to be conversant with aspects included in Table 5.

**Table 5: Aspects that should be included in a training program**

| Selected items for inclusion in training program | P:Prefects T:Teachers | Agree | | Disagree | | Missing | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge of** | | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % | Participants | % |
| a)  School vision and mission | P | 32 | 50 | 19 | 29.7 | 13 | 20.3 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 18 | 56.3 | 10 | 31.3 | 4 | 12.4 | 32 | 100 |
| b)  School rules and regulations | P | 45 | 70.3 | 12 | 18.8 | 7 | 10.9 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 25 | 78.1 | 6 | 18.8 | 1 | 3.1 | 32 | 100 |
| c)  Problems/challenges the school faces | P | 49 | 74.5 | 11 | 18.7 | 4 | 6.8 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 22 | 68.8 | 8 | 25 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| d)  Student rights and obligations | P | 54 | 84.3 | 3 | 4.7 | 7 | 11 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 19 | 59.3 | 12 | 37.5 | 1 | 3.2 | 32 | 100 |
| e)  Powers  and limitations of the prefects | P | 51 | 79.7 | 8 | 12.5 | 5 | 7.8 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 21 | 65.6 | 9 | 28 | 2 | 6.4 | 32 | 100 |
| f)  Leadership and management | P | 53 | 82.8 | 10 | 15.6 | 1 | 1.6 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 20 | 62.5 | 9 | 28 | 3 | 9.5 | 32 | 100 |
| **Skills in** | | | | | | | | | |
| a)  Leading by example | P | 35 | 54.6 | 28 | 43.7 | 1 | 1.7 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 27 | 84.4 | 3 | 9.4 | 2 | 6.2 | 32 | 100 |
| b)  Problem solving | P | 53 | 82.8 | 9 | 14.1 | 2 | 3.1 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 29 | 90.6 | 1 | 3.1 | 2 | 6.3 | 32 | 100 |
| c)  Decision making | P | 55 | 85.9 | 3 | 4.7 | 6 | 9.4 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 29 | 90.6 | 3 | 9.4 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |
| d)  Public speaking | P | 48 | 75 | 12 | 18.8 | 4 | 6.2 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 28 | 87.5 | 2 | 7.1 | 2 | 5.4 | 32 | 100 |
| e)  Consensus building | P | 50 | 78.1 | 6 | 9.4 | 8 | 12.5 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 27 | 84.4 | 5 | 15.6 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |
| f)  Assertiveness | P | 29 | 46.2 | 19 | 29.3 | 16 | 24.5 | 64 | 100 |
| | T | 29 | 90.6 | 3 | 9.4 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 100 |

Table 5 shows orientation towards what should be included in the preparation of learner-leaders so that they can meaningfully participate in school management.  The table shows strong agreement in most of the items regarding knowledge that they should be included in the training program.  For instance, no less than 70% of the prefects agreed that all but one (item a) of the

knowledge items should be included in the training program.  Table 5 indicates that the majority
of the prefects (over 70%) agreed that all the items in the "skills" section, except two (items a
and f), should be included in the training program.  There were some prefects (43.7%) who
disagreed that "Leading by example" should be included in the training program.  Prefects were
also uncomfortable with the skill of "Assertiveness" as 29.3% of them disagreed that it should be
included in the training program and 24.5% of them did not respond at all.

**Discussion**

***Research aim 1:*** To investigate the extent to which schools empower learner-leaders to
meaningfully participate in school management as a strategy for improving school discipline.
        Table 2 reveals that there was strong agreement (84.4%) among the teachers and the
prefects that duties were well explained to the newly elected prefects.  The importance of
transparency to the prefects cannot be overemphasised.  When the prefects have a full
understanding of what is expected of them, it becomes easier to relate with what they learn later
on with regard to school management knowledge and skills.  When the teachers project to the
prefects such a sense of commitment and caring, this tends to develop in the prefects a sense of
trust that the teachers wish them to succeed in their duties.  This can be a helpful starting point in
building a relationship that will have less conflict (Harber, 1997).
        According to the Education Act (Education, Ministry of, 1995), the duties of prefects are
mainly to supervise, monitor, and administer the general duties assigned to learners in the whole
school.  From this Act, the Ministry of Education and schools developed guidelines for
promoting discipline.  Some of the guidelines include: the prefects--- (i) should insist on
punctuality, (ii) are responsible for the orderly conduct of entertainment, (iii) will help the
master-on-duty, (iv) will ensure that hygiene is maintained in hostels, classrooms and the
surrounding areas, and (v) will ensure that there is order in the dining hall.  Performing well in
these tasks can not be common sense.  Prefects need training to acquire certain skills and
knowledge base relevant to institutional management.
        Items b and c (in Table 2) refer to the training of the prefects.  On the one hand, close to
80% (79.7%) of the prefects agreed that enough training was provided and 75% of them said that
the training gave them confidence to participate in the management of the school.  On the other
hand less than 50% of the teachers agreed with the statements.  From the teachers' perspective
the training may have been deficient, perhaps in terms of relevancy of the content or amount of
content or method of delivery or a combination of the mentioned aspects.   If such a considerable
number of the teachers (46.9%) felt that the training did not give the prefects confidence, then it
does confirm the teachers' sentiments (see Table 2 item b) that the training is deficient in some
respects.  In fact, the documents that these researchers examined do not suggest that any formal
training was meant to be provided to develop skills and knowledge in the prefects (Education,
Ministry of (1978&1995). The prefects seem to believe that they are adequately skilled and
knowledgeable to participate in the management of the school, while the teachers feel the
opposite.   Such a situation can create conflict because the prefects may feel that they are
competent and therefore entitled to greater involvement in the management activities of the

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school, while the teachers may feel justified to not allow the prefects increased involvement. Furthermore, it is rather questionable that the prefects would know what would constitute "enough training". It would appear that the prefects were content with whatever training was given to them and not necessarily that the training was adequate. For instance, it is an injustice that schools should raise citizens who cannot question authority about issues that bother them. Instead, schools should promote enlightenment perspectives that will empower learners to question injustices committed against them, such as corporal punishment (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995). Such an approach would be in tandem with government efforts of promoting democracy. Only when learner-leaders have passed the test of expertise in skills and knowledge (Hoy & Miskel, 1996) would they be able to participate in school management aspects. The test of expertise establishes the degree to which a stakeholder possesses the expertise or qualification to make a useful contribution to a decision or solution of a problem.

Almost 66% (65.6%) of the teachers believe that the involvement of the prefects in the management aspects of the school has helped to improve discipline in the schools. The views of the teachers do not make good sense given the fact that 43.8% of them said the training was not enough and 46.9% said the training did not give the prefects confidence to participate in school management. To understand this inconsistency, it may be necessary to first establish if the prefects and the teachers have a common understanding of the notion of "improved discipline".

In general terms the responses from the prefects suggest that the training of the prefects was satisfactory although it is doubtful if the prefects knew the type of training they were supposed to undergo. The teachers expressed reservations to suggestions that prefects had received enough training.

Table 3 includes views of the teachers (comprising school principals, heads of department, and prefect advisors) and the non-prefects (learners who do not have leadership responsibility in the school). Only 43% of the non-prefects agreed and 53.7% disagreed that the involvement of prefects in the management aspects of the school is high. Given that the non-prefects are probable victims of the rules and regulations which prefects implement, they would want to project them as failures. Another possible explanation would be that they expect prefects to get involved in decision making so that they can influence decisions in favour of the learners. On the other hand, 59.4% of the teachers were in the affirmative. This is a situation where the non-prefects can pressure their prefects to demand greater involvement in decision making and the teachers would probably argue that the learners are already adequately involved. If both sides stick to their positions, it could degenerate into open conflict that could impact on the discipline of the school. It is also possible that the teachers deliberately take this view as a defence mechanism that will keep the learners away from issues of school management in order to not subject themselves to what may sometimes be unreasonable learner demands.

With regard to teachers, 65.6% of them and 57.9% of the non-prefects were in agreement that learners frequently met prefects to discuss matters of concern. As Harber (1997) alludes, this is commendable in a democratic system because the assumption is that when leaders consult their constituencies they will be better able to advance their interests and thereby reduce possibilities of conflict between them and promote the interest of the school. The assumption that their meeting regularly advances the common good of the school may be wrong in that the meetings may be a breeding ground for indiscipline acts, especially if the prefects are unskilled in directing and managing the meetings in a way that limits space for trouble making.

The teachers and the non-prefects strongly agreed (71.9% and 62% respectively) that the prefects were doing a good job representing the interests of the learners. A point of concern may be whether or not the learners' interests are in conflict with the core business of the school to deliver a good education. If there is conflict, it may be a symptom of what Harris (2005, p. 5) refers to as the failure of school managers "to harness all those within an organisation to create a common culture." In other words, a school with a common culture is likely to have its members understand its core business.

Nearly 70% (68.8%) of the teachers and only 55.3% of the non-prefects agreed that the general level of discipline in the school is reasonable although a considerable 41.3% of the non-prefects disagreed with the statement. Considering Tables 2 (item d) and 3 (item d), it is clear that the prefects and the non-prefects agree that the general level of discipline in the schools is acceptable. The views of the learners are also supported by the teachers in Tables 2 (item d) and 3 (item d). This is in contrast with what Garegae (2008) and, Hulela and Matsolo (2011) who observed that discipline in Botswana schools is in a state of crisis. It is difficult to explain why the researchers and the people (teachers and non-prefects) in the schools differ so much with regard to the state of discipline in the schools. One possible explanation could be that they have different views on the characteristics of acceptable or unacceptable discipline. Viewed from the perspective of the teachers and non-prefects, their way of thinking suggests that training prefects in leadership and management aspects in Botswana is unnecessary. Given the ever-increasing body of knowledge/information powered by the ever-growing research and information technology, it is difficult to subscribe to a view that training prefects is pointless.

In Table 4, 75% of the principals and only 37.5% of the teachers (heads of department and prefect advisors) agreed that prefects were given enough training in aspects of school leadership and management. In fact, 50% of the teachers disagreed with the statement. The disparity between the views of the teachers and the principals are confusing because it is difficult to know who represents the truth. Taking into account that the prefect advisors are likely to be involved in the training of the prefects and that they are in the 50% of teachers who disagree, their views should, perhaps, carry more weight than those of the principals who tend to be too busy to get directly involved in such exercises. In addition, it is likely that the principals would not say something that would reflect negatively on their own management style.

The position of the teachers in Table 4 is consistent with their views in Table 2 when only 43.8% of them agreed and 50% disagreed that enough training was provided to the prefects. In relation to discipline and training the teachers have taken two views; that discipline in schools is reasonable; and not enough training in aspects of leadership and management is given to the prefects. The views give the sense that it is possible to have a high learner involvement rate in aspects of school management (see Table 3, item a) and good discipline without having to train the learners in aspects of leadership and management. Harber (1997) clearly disagrees with the conjecture that people genetically inherit such knowledge and skills, rather, he says, they are learned socially and schools must play a role in this.

The prefects strongly agreed that they were empowered through training to be able to participate in leadership and management activities of the school. The teachers are also quite clear that they are not satisfied with the preparation of the prefects to ably take leadership and

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management roles. Given the understanding that the learners are generally less knowledgeable and experienced than the teachers, these researchers take the following positions:

- that training the prefects in leadership and management aspects is a prerequisite for meaningful involvement of the prefects in the running of the school, and
- that when the prefects are empowered through training, the knowledge/skills gap between them and the school managers will be bridged and that should translate into fewer areas of potential conflict and therefore improve discipline.

Since the content that can be included in a prefect training program is not obvious, the following section attempts to develop content that is considered appropriate for Botswana schools and benefits from the input of the teachers and learners. The content serves as the foundation over which more advanced work can be built.

***Research aim 2:*** To examine selected management aspects that should be included in a training program to empower learner-leaders.

Table 5 shows strong agreement among the teachers on most of the knowledge items that should be included in a prefect training program regarding making them aware of the school vision and mission, rules and regulations, rights and obligations, among others. The teachers expressed similar sentiments regarding most of the skills items, including problem solving, decision making, public speaking, and consensus building. Referring back to Table 2, item b and Table 4, the teachers were consistent in stating that not enough training was provided to the prefects. It makes sense that in Table 5 they agree with all the items that were proposed for inclusion in the training program. Stated differently, the teachers are suggesting that the content in Table 5 can correct the shortfalls in the training that the prefects currently undergo.

In Table 5, the prefects strongly agree with all but one of the knowledge items proposed for inclusion in the training program. They also strongly agree with all but two skills items. The prefects were rather inconsistent in their views in that they strongly agree that enough training was provided (see Table 2, item b) and in Table 5 they also strongly agree that the listed items should be included in the training program. It is possible that the training program they underwent included content other than the one in Table 5. If indeed that is the case, it raises doubt about the type of content they learned if the items in Table 5 were not included.

The respondents indicated that issues of rights and obligations should be included in the training program. This suggests that the learner-leaders and learners may be ignorant of some of their rights, such as the right not to be flogged. If this is indeed the case, they would not be able to promote the rights of others in the school. The problem also becomes a "values" issue in that they may think "if someone can inflict physical pain on me, why should I not do it on someone if they wrong me?" This pattern of reasoning may explain why schools are experiencing increasing rates of physical bullying and violence.

Table 5 (item a) shows the prefects had misgivings about "Understanding school vision and mission" as only 50% of them agreed that it should be included in the training program. Vision and mission of an organisation are important because they give direction to what stakeholders should be doing. It is therefore surprising that 29.7% disagreed with its inclusion in a training program and 20.3% did not even respond. Perhaps some of the prefects did not understand the importance of the "vision and mission" of an organisation.

The prefects (43.7%) were rather uncomfortable with the skill of "leading by example" (see Table 5). It is understandable that they would feel this way because, although leading by

example is what is expected of leaders, it is a challenging demand.  It is comprehensible that the prefects would feel so intimidated by such an expectation that they would rather not subject themselves to it.

Item f (in Table 5) also shows that the prefects were divided in that 46.2% agreed, 29.3% disagreed and 24.5% did not respond at all.  Assertiveness is a useful skill to master as a leader for many reasons.   For example, an assertive leader will make sure that team members do not depart from the agreed upon course of action.  The fact that some of the prefects do not support its inclusion in the training program may not necessarily mean that they disapprove of it.  It may perhaps mean that they did not understand what it meant.

If the content in Table 5 is properly taught, according to Law and Glover (2000), Lepard and Foster (2003), and Harber (1997), it will empower the prefects in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills appropriate to school management.  In addition, the knowledge gap between the prefects and the school managers would be reduced.  When the knowledge gap is reduced, there will be increased likelihood for greater common understanding and hence, reducing areas of potential conflict between them.  Harber (1997) believes that developing competency in the prefects and bridging the knowledge gap would not only minimise conflict but improve learner discipline as well.

**Conclusion**
The foregone discussion showed that the prefect duties demand certain specific management/leadership skills and knowledge.  The secondary education system does not seem to have clear strategies of equipping prefects with such skills and knowledge.  With the ever increasing awareness of rights to participate in management issues, it is reasonable to expect that learners will continue to demand involvement in decision making processes.  To avert possible worsening of indiscipline in secondary schools, training learner-leaders as a way to prepare them to effectively and meaningfully participate in school management is the sensible measure to take.  In this connection this study recommends that the skills and knowledge items in Table 5 be included in a learner-leader training program.  For the training program to bear the desired fruits, we hope that the learner-leaders will seize it as an opportunity for personal development and that the trainers, who will likely be teachers, will not view the process as robbing them of  power and authority.

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