

## Emotionally intelligent learner leadership development: a case study

**CA Jansen, SO Moosa and EJ van Niekerk**

Department of Educational Leadership and Management, University of South Africa,  
South Africa

[vniekej@unisa.ac.za](mailto:vniekej@unisa.ac.za)

**H Muller**

Department of Interdisciplinary Research, University of South Africa

*A case study was conducted with a student leadership body of a private multicultural international secondary school in North-West Province, South Africa, to indicate that the emotional intelligence leadership development challenges of student leaders can be identified through a questionnaire as a measuring instrument, which can then be utilized in promoting training and development of student leaders. The questionnaire results were used to construct emotional intelligence leadership profiles for the 12 participating student leaders, followed by semi-structured interviews with them to verify the results qualitatively. The results of the questionnaire and two of the interviews are reported. It was established that it was possible to develop a reliable instrument to measure the emotional intelligence leadership development challenges of student leaders, which can be used in promoting their training and development.*

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence; emotional intelligence student leadership profiling; emotionally intelligent student leadership; student leadership; student leadership development; student leadership questionnaire

### Introduction

In a noteworthy article on emotions and leadership, George (2000) postulates that the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in the self and others contributes to effective leadership in organizations. According to George (2000:1046), the relevance of emotional intelligence (EI) to leadership revolves around leadership as an emotion-laden process, both from a leader and a follower perspective. Ashkanasy and Dasborough (2003:19) also state that leadership is intrinsically an emotional process through which leaders recognize and influence the emotions of followers.

This being the case, leadership theory and research have not yet adequately considered how leaders' moods and emotions influence their effectiveness as leaders (George, 2000:1028). Furthermore, the majority of research and writings on leadership focus primarily on adult leadership in corporate organizations or other institutions. A great deal of attention has been given to adult leadership training, yet leadership skills need to be taught and developed primarily in the youth. There is indeed an urgent and compelling need to study youth leadership learning and development models, and to disseminate this epistemic knowledge to organizations and institutions that educate and develop the youth (Cowan & Callahan, 2005).

One must take note of a cautionary warning by Sousa (2003:8), who is rather apprehensive about schools as ideal environments to foster leadership: "Schools are seldom ideal places to develop leadership skills because policies and regulations often place strict limits on the discretionary power of a school leader." Observation by one of the writers of this article at the school used in this study shows a similar situation where learner leaders are wedged into a system where they serve the authoritative body above them. These learner leaders lack the initiative to bring about positive change or make valuable contributions to decisions in schools. They lack both skills and experience and their voices are therefore largely disregarded. Their functions centre on the organizational goals as dictated by the authorities in the school, namely, management (Moosa, 2010). Though one cannot generalize on the current leadership role of learner leaders in all South African schools, one may rightfully ask what the leadership role of learner leaders should be. At this stage it is unclear to the researchers whether there really is agreement on the role of learner leaders in schools, other than adopting them into the managing system of the school in a patronizing way without real prospects for their growth as leaders. We argue for a more authentic leadership role for learner leaders in which they may get a chance to grow towards becoming emotionally intelligent leaders who make a meaningful contribution towards the core function of the school. This presupposes being able to identify their EI leadership development needs in order to be able to assist their growth as leaders. The advocacy of EI in relation to leadership raises the question, according to Hartley (2004:589-590), of whether EI can be measured in order to objectively establish the needs of leaders for training purposes.

The purpose of this article is to indicate that the emotional intelligence leadership (EIL) development challenges of learner leaders can be identified through a relevant measuring instrument, which can be utilized in promoting the training and development of learner leaders. In order to reach this aim, a conceptual theoretical framework will firstly be established through a clarification of relevant concepts; thereafter the methodological tools for establishing EI learner leadership development needs will be introduced; followed by the findings of the application of the measuring instrument to 12 learner leaders in a case study conducted at a private multicultural international secondary school in North-West Province, South Africa.

### Clarification of concepts

The concepts of emotional intelligence and learner leadership are discussed in this section in order to establish a theoretical framework for contextualizing the research.

#### *Emotional Intelligence*

Various aspects of EI are highlighted by various authors. Bar-On (1997) describes the following emotional competencies: emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self regard, empathy, interpersonal relations, social responsibility, problem-solving, flexibility, stress tolerance, happiness, and optimism. According to George (2000:1034-1038) the four major aspects of emotional intelligence are: appraisal and expression of emo-

tion, use of emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision-making, knowledge about emotions, and management of emotions. People differ in relation to their ability in all four of these aspects and all four aspects also contribute towards effective leadership.

According to Morehouse (2007:301) the following aspects of emotional intelligence are considered important: Intrapersonal, which refers to an individual's self-knowledge and the ability to act adaptively on the basis of that knowledge (Mandel, 2003), and includes the competencies of self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization; interpersonal, which refers to an individual's ability to perceive the moods, intentions and feelings of others and to respond effectively to these (Mandel, 2003), and includes the competencies of empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationship; adaptability, which includes the competencies of reality testing, flexibility and problem solving; stress management, which refers to the ability to manage own stress, and includes the competencies of stress tolerance and impulse control; general mood, which includes happiness and optimism.

Goleman (in Philp, 2007) contends that emotional intelligence includes abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope.

An important aspect of emotional intelligence is the close relation between cognition and emotion, which is captured in the following definition of emotional intelligence (George, 2000:1033-1034):

Emotional intelligence essentially describes the ability to effectively join emotions and reasoning, using emotions to facilitate reasoning and reasoning intelligently about emotions... . In other words, emotional intelligence taps into the extent to which people's cognitive capabilities are informed by emotions and the extent to which emotions are cognitively managed.

All human processes are, according to Jensen (2007:63), a function of the complex interplay of mind, emotions, body, and spirit regulated by the brain. This being the case, one can reason that at least some measure of emotional intelligence can be learnt (Coetzee & Jansen, 2007; Goleman, 1998), and therefore also taught in relation to exercising effective leadership. However, one needs to bear in mind that individuals differ in their ability with regard to emotional intelligence as they differ also in respect of other intelligences (Gardner, 1983; 1993). Ashkanasy and Dasborough (2003) argue that there is a role for teaching emotions in leadership courses and that learning about emotions can play a role in performance outcomes in leadership training. According to Seevers, Dormody and Clason (1995) in order to ensure a successful development programme, schools must provide and promote student leadership training opportunities. According to them assuming responsibility and accountability for developing youth leadership life skills today, assures the promise for effective leadership tomorrow.

Jensen (2007:56) points out that teenagers are still learning how to understand and manage emotions and are poor at reading emotions and perceiving outside their own world of feelings. Even though this may be the case, and perhaps because of this, learner leaders need to learn how to handle emotions better in the exercise of leadership. The above brief conceptual exposition affirms this point of view, as does the empirical investigation carried out by Moosa (2010) in a multicultural private international secondary school context. Therefore relevant EI competencies were taken up in the measuring instrument discussed in one of the ensuing paragraphs.

### *Learner leadership*

One may rightfully question whether learner leaders are authentically involved in leadership in schools. Neigel (2006:20) propagates a more authentic involvement of learners in school leadership:

“...students need to be more fully involved in authentic aspects of school leadership. Educators must begin to invest in their students and empower them to be participants in a shared, collective endeavor: their education. Only then will educators be truly able to model participatory democracy in their schools and help prepare students for life as informed, engaged citizens.”

Wallin (2003:55-58) also discusses a school of thought on learner leadership which propagates that learner leaders in a democracy should become a meaningful part of decision-making and involvement in the school community, thereby growing as leaders while serving the community in a healthy supportive atmosphere.

From her experience as an educator and a staff member responsible for the learner leader body, one of the researchers also observed that the focus on leadership for this body is mostly devoid of nurturing and support. Learner leaders in many instances become an extension of management, and simply serve as assistants in a quasi-policing role of the teaching staff and management of the school. From her own experience, this researcher has more frequently encountered learner leaders who adopt a more autocratic leadership style (Moosa, 2010). They find it easier to simply impose control over their peers as they have the authority to do so. The lack of training in terms of leadership, lack of skills with respect to different leadership styles and lack of experience all lead to the adoption of an autocratic style of leadership. This results in conflict and aggravation between the student body and student leaders, with the wider student body becoming rebellious and difficult, and punishment of fellow students becoming more frequent. This extrinsic form of punishment is largely ineffective, leaving the wider student body to continually “test” the system as well as the student leaders, with resultant alienation between leaders and followers.

Gordon (1994) states that learners get a mixed message when they are asked to take on leadership roles. Are they being co-opted into a system in a patronising way, where they are expected to play the part of co-operators with decisions made by others, or will they be allowed to act as agents of meaningful change? Wallin (2003) says that

important tasks of the learner leaders seem to be empowerment of the student body, promotion of a positive school climate, motivation of the student body to achieve excellence, and promotion of a sense of accomplishment and pride in the school. There are numerous ways in which emotional intelligence can assist learner leaders in accomplishing more effective leadership and a more meaningful role in relation to both the long- and short-term dimensions of their task (George, 2000).

In order to explore the implications of emotional intelligence for effective learner leadership, the nature of effective leadership needs to be briefly clarified. This can be done in relation to a specific leadership model that was developed by Van Niekerk (1995; Coetzee, Van Niekerk & Wydeman, 2008) which incorporates prominent leadership theories and models developed over a period of time (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009). In order to be effective as a leader both the long-term and short-term dimensions of leadership need to be competently executed according to this model. The long-term dimension relates to matters such as vision building and vision communication, value management and the training and empowerment of followers, whereby favourable circumstances are created in which followers can excel. The situational (short-term) dimension relates to the characteristics of the leader, followers and the situation under which leadership is provided, as these will impact on the provision of leadership in specific situations that the leader needs to handle every day in the provision of leadership en route to realizing goals (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009).

As far as the long-term dimension of learner leadership is concerned, learner leaders need to blend in with, identify with, and promote the long term vision, mission, cherished values as well as training, development and empowerment initiatives of the school as they serve the learner community. It will require EI from learner leaders to positively influence their followers through their leadership initiatives. The situational (short-term) dimension of learner leadership particularly requires emotional intelligence, since taking into account one's own characteristics as a leader, those of one's followers, and the specific situation in the exercise of leadership, requires the art of managing one's own emotions and those of followers. This view of perfect leadership poses an authentic leadership challenge to learner leaders, albeit one that is barely taken into account in learner leadership development. Both the long-term and short-term leadership dimensions were taken up in the questionnaire measuring learner leadership development needs in this research (Moosa, 2010).

### **Research methodology**

In the introduction it was argued that EI forms an important component of leadership (George, 2000) and learner leadership development (Cowan & Callahan, 2005; Coetzee & Jansen, 2007). Even though leaders often exhibit a specific leadership style (Moosa, 2010), other leadership styles can, under particular conditions, be applied to good effect. Learner leaders should be sensitized to this effect (Goleman, 1998). The overarching argument is that effective learner leadership development includes leader-

ship and emotional intelligence competencies which jointly constitute an integrated EIL model. The design of effective learner leadership training programmes requires assessment of prospective learner leaders' EIL profiles to address their particular EIL weaknesses (and strengths).

This research methodology section describes the development of an EIL assessment questionnaire, the research design applicable to the study, sampling of the target population, questionnaire administration and EIL analysis results, as well as semi-structured interviews to validate the reliability of EIL questionnaire assessment.

### Sampling

Secondary school learner leaders were regarded as the target population. To this effect the 2009 prefect body of a private, multicultural, international, secondary school in North-West Province, South Africa, was sampled. The student body constitutes 12 learner leaders (six males and six females) who are elected annually. Day scholars and boarders are equally represented on the prefect body. The study was regarded as a pilot project in EIL questionnaire development and sampling was therefore limited to one particular school which implied case study research.

### Research design

The study included a quantitative and qualitative component in the sense that a questionnaire was developed, administered, and quantitative EIL response data analysed to provide EIL learner leader assessment profiles. Since the aim of the study was to develop a reliable EIL assessment tool, the EIL questionnaire results were validated against qualitative interview results. (Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 2009 prefect body once EIL profile results were available). It was argued that a mixed methods research approach would best accommodate the two research approaches and this design ensured that EIL assessment incorporated the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006).

### A quantitative measuring instrument, the EIL questionnaire

The questionnaire designed to determine learner leaders' EIL profile consisted of 203 closed-ended questionnaire statements, divided into 20 subsets. Response options to the statements were made on a 5 point Likert rating scale, where a rating of 1 indicated always *true*; 2 indicated *true*; up to 5 indicating never *true*. The 20 sub-divisions assessed EIL components and sub-components which were based on the following assessment questions and principles derived from the literature:

- According to Srivastava and Bharamanaikar (2004), EI forms an integral part of leadership, and therefore EI attributes (*emotional literacy, EI competencies, emotional values and beliefs*) and leadership competencies (*long-term and short-term leadership*) can be used to describe an integrated EIL profile.
- These components addressed the assessment questions of  
Does the respondent demonstrate *emotional literacy*?

Does the respondent demonstrate *emotional intelligence competencies*?

What are the respondent's *emotional values and beliefs*?

What *leadership competencies* does the respondent demonstrate?

- As suggested by Strydom (1999) the *emotional literacy* component of EI was assessed against the *self-awareness, emotional expression towards others and social awareness* dimensions of *emotional literacy* (33 questions in section 1 of the questionnaire); Similarly, EI competencies were assessed as dimensions of *creativity, intent or focus, resilience, interpersonal relationships and healthy expression of feelings* dimensions in 57 statements (section 2 of the questionnaire). *Emotional values* were assessed in 49 statements covering the *value* dimensions of *empathy towards others, outlook on life, trust, personal strength and integrity* (section 3 of the questionnaire).
- Thirty-seven statements assessed the four dimensions of the *long-term leadership component* of leadership (*vision-focus, vision-communication, value management, and developing and empowering of co-learners*) in section 4 of the questionnaire, while 27 statements evaluated the three short-term leadership competencies dimensions (*self-awareness of own characteristics, awareness of characteristics of others, and situational awareness in leadership*, section 5) (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009).
- Questionnaires by Strydom (1999) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire developed by Bass and Avolio (1990) furthermore served as questionnaire design guidelines.

The framework of these 20 EI and leadership dimensions are listed in the first column of Table 1.

### Ethical considerations

Prior to questionnaire administration and interview sessions written consent was obtained from the headmaster and the parents of the learners. The learner leaders granted their informed consent to participate once information on how the research could possibly affect participants had been explained to them. The rights of the participant to privacy, self-determination and confidentiality were respected (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005), and the leaders were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any prejudice to them. General ethical principles were adhered to (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

### Questionnaire administration and quantitative analysis strategy

The questionnaire was administered in a single session to the 12 learners during lunch break period. Response data were electronically captured and analysed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS), version 9.2 software package.

The questionnaire design allowed EIL profiling for each learner to be presented as a set of 20 EIL scores. These individual scores described learner leaders' EIL dimension competencies listed in the questionnaire design section. Each EIL score per

learner (for example, the *self-awareness* dimension of the *emotional literacy* component) was calculated as the specific learner's mean Likert rating score on a subset of questionnaire statements that assessed that particular EI or leadership dimension.

A summative EIL profile on *emotional literacy*, *EI competency*, *emotional value assessment*, and *long-term and short-term leadership competency* for each learner were calculated as the overall mean rating for an EI or leadership component. The individual EIL profiles (labelled 'A' to 'L') are reported on in Table 1. Sub-component scores formed part of the EIL profile presented in Table 1. (Although the sample size was small in this pilot investigation, internal consistency reliability was confirmed for the various EIL constructs with Cronbach alpha values ranging between 0.84 and 0.97 for the five EIL components).

These quantitative EIL Profiles were subsequently verified against qualitative findings of semi-structured interviews held with the same learner leaders and discussed in the next paragraph.

#### Qualitative semi-structured interviews and observation

Since the design of the questionnaire was innovative in the sense that an integrated EIL profile was assessed, the need to verify results existed and semi-structured interviews were subsequently arranged with learner leaders to obtain an independent assessment of EIL strengths and weaknesses. To ensure uniform conditions in all interviews, a set of questions was compiled and informally discussed with learners. The set of questions addressed the learner's

- self-concept
- relational image with significant others
- personal involvement with his/her life world
- challenges faced by leaders
- conflict management
- subjective evaluation of leadership abilities
- assessed EIL profile

Results of the interviews were captured onto individual pre-designed forms and provided space for interviewer assessment of the interviewee's EIL capabilities.

During the research period, the interviewing researcher, a teacher, was stationed at the school and responsible for the student prefect body. As such the researcher was able to observe and report on the learner leaders throughout the year and had a personal trust and working relationship with the learners, and empathy for their leadership experiences, since they often sought leadership advice from the researcher. This lived, trust relationship and insight into learners' feelings agrees with the findings of Maree (2007) and Henning (2004) regarding favourable interview conditions towards trustworthy observation and evaluation. The researcher understood the learners' needs in their leadership positions and was therefore in an ideal position to triangulate the quantitative profiles by means of qualitative methods.



Table 1														
Emotional Intelligence Leadership (EIL) profile scores for 12 learners (labelled 'A' – 'L')														
EIL aspects	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	Mean	Std
<b>Emotional literacy</b>														
Self awareness	2.45	2.09	2.64	1.82	2.09	2.73	2.36	3.27	2.22	2.45	1.73	3.1	2.4	0.5
Emotion, express	1.88	3.14	2.71	2.57	2.57	2.14	3.14	3.71	2.57	2.71	2.29	3.1	2.7	0.5
Social awareness	2.71	2.07	2.50	2.64	2.14	2.21	2.43	3.21	2.50	2.36	1.79	3.1	2.5	0.4
<b>EI competencies</b>														
Intentions	3.31	2.38	2.89	2.38	2.15	1.89	2.89	2.82	2.08	2.89	2.00	2.9	2.5	0.4
Creativity	1.22	1.11	2.33	2.56	2.11	2.22	2.22	2.22	2.00	1.33	1.00	3.2	2.0	0.7
Resilience	2.17	2.50	2.33	1.83	2.17	2.83	2.50	2.58	1.83	2.25	2.50	3.1	2.4	0.4
Interpersonal	2.20	2.33	1.70	2.20	1.80	1.40	2.10	3.20	1.80	2.30	1.50	2.4	2.1	0.5
Healthy express	2.45	2.55	2.55	2.55	2.45	2.09	3.09	3.18	2.55	2.36	2.45	3.4	2.6	0.4
<b>EI values</b>														
Empathy others	2.30	1.90	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.30	2.60	1.50	2.80	1.80	1.80	2.6	2.2	0.4
Outlook on life	2.40	2.33	2.10	1.80	2.10	2.40	1.80	3.30	1.50	2.20	1.50	2.7	2.2	0.5
Trust level	2.88	2.14	1.86	2.29	2.57	1.43	2.71	2.00	2.29	2.43	1.43	2.9	2.2	0.5
Personal power	3.60	3.40	3.60	3.90	3.20	3.00	2.20	2.50	3.30	3.20	2.80	2.8	3.1	0.5
Integrity	3.00	2.88	2.88	2.50	2.63	2.50	1.63	2.13	2.00	2.75	1.50	3.1	2.5	0.5
<b>Leader competency</b>														
<b>Long-term</b>														
Focus on vision	2.00	2.13	2.63	1.63	2.13	1.88	2.63	2.25	1.75	2.13	1.75	3.8	2.22	0.6
Communicate vision	1.43	1.86	2.71	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.86	1.71	2.00	2.00	1.14	3.1	2.0	0.5
Value management	1.50	1.63	2.50	1.63	2.00	1.63	2.38	1.25	1.50	2.00	1.13	2.6	1.8	0.5
Develop co-learner	1.93	1.50	2.50	1.86	2.00	2.14	2.00	1.07	2.00	2.00	1.43	2.9	1.9	0.5
<b>Short-term</b>														
Own characteristics*	1.56	1.89	2.44	1.44	2.11	1.56	1.75	2.00	1.56	2.11	1.33	2.9	1.9	0.5
Char of co-learners*	1.70	1.70	2.30	1.90	2.00	1.50	2.50	1.40	2.10	2.00	2.00	2.8	2.0	0.4
Char of situation	1.57	1.71	2.57	1.57	2.00	2.14	1.71	1.43	1.43	2.00	1.29	2.9	1.9	0.4
<b>Five EIL scales</b>														
<i>Emotional Literacy</i>	2.44	2.31	2.59	2.34	2.22	2.38	2.56	3.34	2.43	2.47	1.88	3.1	2.5	0.4
<i>EI competencies</i>	2.35	2.22	2.35	2.29	2.15	2.05	2.55	2.76	2.05	2.24	1.85	3.0	2.3	0.3
<i>EI Values</i>	2.80	2.56	2.59	2.59	2.61	2.39	2.20	2.28	2.39	2.48	1.87	2.8	2.5	0.3
<i>Long-term leader</i>	1.76	1.73	2.57	1.78	2.03	1.95	2.19	1.49	1.84	2.03	1.38	3.1	2.0	0.5
<i>Short-term leader</i>	1.62	1.77	2.42	1.65	2.04	1.69	2.04	1.60	1.73	2.04	1.58	2.8	2.0	0.4

Std = Standard deviation

Because of the focus of this article reference to interview results is restricted to a comparative, validatory process between quantitative EIL profile assessment and qualitative interview assessment. Table 2 presents a compact comparison of questionnaire and interview results.

### Quantitative and qualitative results

The results of the quantitative and qualitative (results of learner “K” and “L”) analyses will be discussed concurrently following a brief explanation of results in Table 1.

#### Table 1 description

The results of the quantitative analysis – the EIL profiles of learner leaders – are presented in Table 1. These profiles serve to identify the EIL development needs of the learner leaders in terms of the EIL components discussed in the questionnaire design section of the article. Table 1 lists 20 EIL dimension scores, and five summary EIL component scores per learner (columns A-L). The overall mean and standard deviation for each EIL dimension and component are also noted.

A low component score, indicated in red, should be interpreted as a leader’s feeling of confidence about a certain EIL dimension or component, and a high dimension or component score, indicated in blue, as a feeling of insecurity regarding an emotional intelligence or leadership aspect. This follows logically if kept in mind that questionnaire response ratings were designed to indicate “complete confidence” (or “always true”) rated as “1”, up to “no confidence” (or “never true”), rated as “5”. Since the dimension scores were calculated as averages, the same rating scale applies to the dimension scores. In this way EIL profiles serve to identify EI and leadership “strengths” and “weaknesses”.

Scores were regarded as either “high” or “low” if an individual’s EIL score deviated by more than one standard deviation from the overall EIL dimension score on that particular dimension/component. For example the *emotional literacy* component score of 1.88 for learner K deviated by more than one standard deviation from the overall *emotional literacy* score of 2.51. (The boundaries in this instance are  $2.51 \pm 0.39 = 2.12$ , namely, 2.12–2.90). Learner K’s 1.88-score falls below the lower 2.12 boundary; thus regarded as “low”). The decision rule is based on the fact that 68.27% of normally distributed observations fall within one standard deviation of the mean. Therefore dimension scores that deviate by more than one standard deviation from the overall mean dimension score should be considered as possible outliers in the context of the research and receive extra consideration.

#### Mean score legend

1 = always true; 2 = mostly true; 3 = sometimes; 4 = rarely; 5 = never true.

Note that a low component score indicates that the specific leader feels confident about a certain component (see leader K for instance) and a high component score indicates that a learner feels insecure about an aspect.

#### Concurrent discussion of quantitative and qualitative results

In the discussion that follows, the EIL profiles and interview and casual observation results of two respondents (Respondent K and Respondent L) are compared to determine whether the two assessments correlate, thereby qualitatively validating the ques-

tionnaire findings. The two respondents are referred to as “K” and “L”. They were chosen deliberately for discussion as exemplars because they appeared to represent two extremes in Table 1.

#### General results and observation

Respondent K was an average achieving day scholar but very talented in the areas of music and culture. The respondent was talkative, energetic and an enthusiastic participant in the study. Learner K’s EIL profile (Table 1) indicated dimension scores below the one standard deviation range – which signifies “strength” competencies.

Respondent L, on the other hand, struggled academically. This respondent was extremely polite and always showed a willingness to serve. Casual observation however indicated that L struggled to assert himself/herself and lacked confidence. L served as a hostel student leader, and found the role of student leader demanding and challenging. Student L’s EIL profile indicates that all but one EIL component score fell above the one standard deviation criterion, the “high” score range, indicative of insecurity.

A more detailed quantitative/qualitative comparison will be discussed in the next five paragraphs.

#### Emotional literacy

Respondent K’s emotional literacy score of 1.88 (see Table 1) – a “low” score – indicated a very healthy level of emotional literacy. Casual and interview observation indicated that the respondent tended to over-analyse situations, but in doing so was conscious of his / her response to situations, as illustrated in the statement:

*“...because we all got to know each other first to be able to know – now I know she’s in a bad mood because I know how she reacts, so I won’t really bother her a lot or something like that.”*

It appeared from the interview that K’s emotional intelligence with respect to self-awareness and social awareness, had developed during this year, confirming the view from the literature study that emotional intelligence could be learned:

*“At first I didn’t handle it at all, so I would end up for a long time sitting down and thinking, just thinking what’s going on – why is this happening, maybe what did I do wrong, or what did someone else do wrong, no wait don’t blame other people, blame yourself first, ok what is the problem – so it was very muddled up, and the more responsibility I was given the more I learned to think – ok, so this is what happened and that’s what works when you’re stressed, and you actually have to stop when you know it’s not working and start again or try it in a different way.”*

Apart from being able to analyse emotions, K was also able to express own emotions appropriately, as observed by the researcher on numerous occasions.

Respondent L was reluctant to talk about his/her emotions. L lacked the confidence to express himself/herself articulately. This interview observation correlated

with respondent L's EI dimension score of 3.13 (see Table 1) – a “high” score – suggesting insecurity. The researcher observed this insecurity on several occasions. The interviewee expressed the following: *“I feel like sometimes I feel like my decisions are not the right ones...so I don't want to...”* He/she also confirmed this hesitancy in expressing his/her decisions: *“I'm not confident with what I tell people sometimes.”*

#### Emotional intelligence competencies

Respondent K's EI score of 1.95 (see Table 1) indicated a sound emotional intelligence competency. This implies that the respondent was able to manage himself/herself in stressful situations, influence others positively and handle difficult situations in a creative way. This was evident in the interview when the respondent stated:

*“The one thing I really liked about our whole thing that was happening this year was that we tried to show something or to bring a certain message across. We all needed to be together, but we did drama skits all the time, and when you need these popping ideas, I was always there because I was always excited. That was my favourite thing to do when we did the drama skits. On a cultural side and ideas, I would always syringe colour into the room. Cultural, acting, music – that was my side. So that's what I really enjoyed.”*

Observation of K in performing leadership duties confirms the creativity and healthy expression of emotions indicative of K's emotional competencies.

Respondent L scored 3.00 (see Table 1), indicating an unhealthy (insecure) *emotional intelligence competency*. This score alluded to a low resilience and emotional expression level. The researcher deduced from observing this respondent that L is too sensitive to the opinions of others and a people pleaser. The EIL findings correlated with both interview and casual researcher observations, where the researcher witnessed this respondent's difficulty in facing peer pressure.

#### Emotional intelligence (EI) values

Respondent K had a sound set of values which was verified by the “low” EI values component score of 1.87 (see Table 1). K displayed empathy for others which was utilised effectively in providing leadership:

*“I think this year's student leaders, we did a great job on that because we all got to know each other first to be able to know – now I know she's in a bad mood because I know how she reacts, so I won't really bother her a lot or something like that.”*

Respondent K also had a positive outlook on life and was able to exercise personal power to influence others positively.

*“...so if I see that somebody's upset I would know, ok this person doesn't really like to be bothered so don't really approach them. You get more out of them if you approach them later after they're feeling better and say - hey what happened when you were like... . That actually helps because I think it's quite important to know the people first.”*

This was evident in the observations, the findings of the questionnaire and confirmed by responses in the interview.

Respondent L tried to maintain a positive outlook on life and was able to direct his/her personal power positively. However L's "high" EI values score – which signified an uncertain value system – seemed to reflect to some extent in his/her inability to withstand peer pressure. The score of 2.80 (see Table 1) confirmed the interview and casual observation findings of L's inability to direct personal power towards influencing peers to follow school rules. When asked whether L would break rules if pressurized by friends, L responded with, *"I would, I think I would..."*

#### Long-term leadership competencies

Respondent K scored a long-term leadership component score of 1.38 (see Table 1) – classified as "low" – and indicative of healthy long-term leadership capacity. This respondent shared the school's vision of "holistic education to all its learners". In areas where K possessed strengths such as music and drama, K worked tirelessly to assist and support others. K communicated personal values and the school's vision through his/her creative work and in the manner in which he/she conducted himself/herself. K was an outstanding ambassador for the school, who assisted and participated in drama and musical performances throughout the country while representing the school. Questionnaire and interview findings correlated once again.

Casual observation suggested that L did not adopt the common vision of the school. K scored 3.05 (see Table 1) on the long-term EIL component. The researcher reported a low self-esteem for L. L seemed to be unsure of himself / herself, hesitant, and expressed his / her need for guidance and comfort often:

*"Okay like from where I'm from, my parents, I was always led to the right direction so I found it easy to follow. And the, if I'd say...I never had issues with listening or taking orders from people... . Yeah, I had to give them and then I found that difficult."*

This respondent was still cautious and guarded when it came to leading others, suggesting that this area still needed to be developed. In this instance the EIL profile and interview results correlated.

#### Short-term leadership competencies

Respondent K's ability to manage emotions, time and the demands of student leadership were confirmed by the score of 1.58 (see Table 1) on the short term dimension of leadership. This corroborates the observations made by the researcher.

Respondent K's EIL profile singled him / her out as an outstanding person with scores constantly deviating outside the one standard deviation range for all dimensions. Observations and interviews correlate strongly with these findings.

Because Respondent L faced so much indecision and a lack of confidence, he/she had largely tried to impose the necessary rules in the school and hostel. The respondent expressed dissatisfaction at the level of service he/she provided:

*“The thing is, when I first applied to be a student leader, my aim was to leave a positive mark, especially with the students. But then as time went by, I found it very difficult because I think I consider myself as a person that follows a lot more than leading. So sometimes if I had to do something, I found it difficult. So I don’t think I did what I wanted to do.”*

A short-term leadership sub-dimension value of 2.76 confirms this. The researcher was of the opinion that these skills could be developed over time.

Respondent L’s EIL profile was substantiated in the interview and casual observations by the researcher.

Through the interviews it could be established that the EIL profiles of the questionnaire were not only a true reflection of the competencies of the learner leaders, but also that it reflected their EIL needs as was confirmed through the interviews with Respondents K and L as exemplars. Table 2 summarizes the comparisons for the 12 learner leaders. The results clearly verify the EIL profiling capacity of the questionnaire.

**Table 2** Frequency of agreement between the quantitative EIL profile and the qualitative interview evaluation ( $N = 12$ )

	Correspond	Do not correspond	Total
Frequency	11	1	12
Percentage	91.7%	8.3%	100%

### Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the research that it is possible to develop a measuring instrument that can provide individual EIL profiles of learner leaders whereby their EIL challenges and needs can be determined, certain recommendations can now be made. The first recommendation relates to schools making provision for a more authentic role for learner leaders that entails a shift away from a “command and control” type of learner leadership style to an EI type of leadership provision. Thereby learner leaders can be involved in the management of the student body in a more meaningful way, while providing them the opportunity to grow as leaders at the same time. In order to facilitate the implementation of this approach it is recommended that a measuring instrument, like the one developed in this study, be utilized to determine the EIL profiles of learner leaders. (Such an instrument must comprehensively measure relevant dimensions of EIL, as was done in this study). Thereby the EIL challenges of each individual learner leader can be established, which can serve as a basis for relevant training and development of learner leaders by staff working with the prefect body. It is recommended that further research be conducted with a view to providing a standardized EIL measuring tool for use in schools. (Although the researchers are pleased

with the results obtained from the tool used in this study, the questionnaire is not yet standardized, as it was used on a limited number of respondents only, which indicates a limitation of this study). The last recommendation relates to the provision of relevant in-service training to school staff directly involved with the learner leaders of schools in order to raise the level of functioning of learner leaders in accordance with the EIL approach, and to facilitate their development as emotionally intelligent leaders.

### Conclusion

The problem addressed in this article is that of identifying the emotional intelligence leadership development needs of learner leaders, through a measuring instrument, in order to be able to use this instrument to train and develop learner leaders in emotionally intelligent leadership provision. The significance of the research relates to making possible a more authentic leadership role for learner leaders in which they get a chance to grow towards becoming emotionally intelligent leaders who make a meaningful contribution towards leadership provision in their schools. The EIL challenges of learner leaders were identified through a questionnaire and presented in Table 1, and were confirmed through the findings of qualitative interviews with Respondents K and L as exemplars. Thereby the aim to identify EIL challenges of learner leaders was accomplished with a view to be able to provide relevant training in the field of emotionally intelligent leadership (EIL). On the basis of the research indicating that EIL profiles could indeed be constructed for individual learner leaders, it was possible to make relevant recommendations regarding EIL provision in schools.

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