



**EXPLORING FEMALE STUDENTS' QUEST FOR LEADERSHIP AND THEIR LIVED  
EXPERIENCES AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

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**by**

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As the candidate's supervisor I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Dr. Rosaline Govender

## **ABSTRACT**

South African institutions of higher learning should support female students as they pursue leadership roles within the institution. It is compulsory for the institution of higher learning to have students' representatives in South Africa. Student participation inside formal governance institutions is supposed to provide platforms that allow students to communicate and negotiate their complaints and demands to relevant authorities. However, the representation of female students in student leadership is still dimmed. Providing opportunities for female students to develop and self-identify as leaders would better prepare them for the future. In the dynamic landscape of leadership at the Durban University of Technology in South Africa, female students strive to assume pivotal roles as leaders within various clubs and societies affiliated with the institution. The aim of this study is to explore female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at DUT. The study's objectives are to explore female students' motivation to become leaders and to identify the factors that enable and/or constrain female student leaders in their quest for leadership. Employing a qualitative research approach grounded in interpretivism, this study employed semi-structured interviews conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Purposive sampling was used to identify potential participants. A total of twelve participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. The data collected was thematically coded using Tesch's eight steps to reveal patterns and themes in the data. The findings underscored the intrinsic drive of female student leaders, coupled with extrinsic motivations. However, their experiences were marred by constraints stemming from entrenched patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes within affiliated groups. Despite the university's efforts to foster gender equality and equity, institutional support often falls short in mitigating the impact of gender bias. Moreover, the study identified a pressing need for capacity development programmes tailored to enhance the leadership skills of female students. This study advocates for proactive measures to address gender disparities, empower female leaders, and cultivate an inclusive environment to foster their growth and development.

## DECLARATION

I, Thamente Hadebe, declare that:

- I. Unless otherwise noted, all the content contained in this thesis is my own original work.
- II. No other university has received the thesis for evaluation or credit toward a degree.
- III. Unless explicitly cited as originating from another person, no data, images, graphs, or other material from other people are included in this thesis.
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Signature

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Date: 22 August 2024



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

.....	1
ABSTRACT.....	i
DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
ABBREVIATION LIST.....	xii
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.1    Introduction.....	1
1.2    Context of the research.....	2
1.3    Research Problem and Aim.....	4
1.3.1    Research Problem.....	4
1.3.2    Aim of this research.....	5
1.3.3    Objectives.....	5
1.3.4    Research Questions.....	5
1.3.5    Student Leadership.....	6
1.3.6    Leadership and Gender.....	6
1.4    Overview/Structure of the Dissertation.....	7
1.5    Conclusion.....	7
CHAPTER TWO.....	9
2.1    Introduction.....	9

2.1.1	Definitions of Leadership .....	9
2.1.2	Leadership styles.....	10
2.1.3	Leadership Theories .....	11
2.1.4	The global history of women’s empowerment.....	12
2.15	Understanding leadership and patriarchal relations .....	16
2.1.6	The history of South African student leadership .....	18
2.1.7	Constitutional and legal frameworks that support gender equality in South Africa 19	
2.1.8	Factors that enable and/or constraint females as student leaders.....	21
2.19	Motivation of students to become a leader. ....	23
2.1.10	Female student leadership in South Africa .....	25
2.3	Theoretical Framework .....	27
2.3.1	Introduction.....	27
2.3.2	Management Theory.....	27
2.3.3	Planning.....	28
2.3.4	Organising .....	29
2.3.5	Leading.....	31
2.3.6	Controlling .....	33
2.4	Social Identity Theory .....	34
2.5	Participative theory .....	36
2.6	Conclusion .....	39

CHAPTER THREE.....	40
3.1 Introduction.....	40
3.2 Research approach .....	40
3.3 Pre-testing .....	41
3.4 Methodology .....	42
3.5 Research Paradigm .....	43
3.6 Research Design .....	43
3.7 Selection of Participants .....	44
3.8 Semi-structured Interviews .....	46
3.9 Data Analysis .....	47
3.10 Trustworthiness.....	48
3.11 Covering letter.....	49
3.12 Letter of Informed Consent .....	49
3.13 Ethical Consideration .....	50
3.14 Limitations.....	50
3.15 Conclusion .....	51
CHAPTER FOUR.....	52
4.1 Introduction.....	52
4.2 Thematic analysis .....	52
4.3 Theme One: Motivation to be a leader.....	53
4.3.1 Political affiliation: “I got politically affiliated” .....	53

4.3.2	Social Background: “Be the Change” .....	54
4.3.3	Assisting students to transition from high school to university: “an advocate for students who don’t have a voice” .....	55
4.4	Theme Two: Enabling and Constraining factors .....	57
4.4.1	Factors that enable female student leaders.....	58
4.4.2	Constraining Factors of Female Student Leaders.....	66
4.5	Theme Three: Navigating the lived experiences as female leaders.....	76
4.5.1	Decision-Making .....	77
4.6	Conclusion .....	82
CHAPTER FIVE.....		84
5.1	Introduction.....	84
5.2	Reflection on the research process .....	85
5.3	Main Conclusions from this study .....	85
5.3.1	Motivation of female student leaders.....	85
5.3.2	Enabling and constraining factors of female student leaders.....	86
5.3.3	How Do They Navigate Their Lived Experiences?.....	88
5.4	Recommendations .....	88
5.5	Recommendation for future research .....	89
5.6	Study Limitations .....	90
5.7	Conclusion .....	90
REFERENCES.....		91

APPENDICES .....	111
Appendix A – Covering letter .....	111
Appendix B .....	112
Appendix C .....	117

## **ABBREVIATION LIST**

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Youth League
BEC	Branch Executive Committee
DUT	Durban University of Technology
EFFSC	Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSSL	National Survey of Student Leaders
POA	Programme of Action
POLC	Planning, Organising, Leading, and Controlling
QLN	Qhakaza Ladies Network
SANSCA	South African Native College Students' Association
SASCO	South African Student Congress
SAUS	South African Union of Students
SG	Secretary general
SRC	Student Representative Council
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats
UDF	United Democratic Front
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Leadership is a dynamic and evolving concept, defined as the ability to persuade and inspire individuals toward achieving collective goals. It encompasses both art and science, and various theories have been developed to understand how leadership behaviours shape organisational outcomes (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). In the context of higher education, student leadership is crucial, as student representatives play a vital role in institutional governance. However, gender disparities persist, with female students often facing unique challenges in accessing leadership roles. The global history of women's empowerment shows signs of male domination and a continuous struggle for women's empowerment in different sectors such as politics, work environments and higher education. At the DUT student leadership is mainly male dominated. If there are female student leaders, they often deputise for the male student leaders. The underrepresentation of female student leaders does not contribute to the inclusivity and gender equality. This study focuses on the experiences of female student leaders at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), exploring their motivations, the obstacles they encounter, and the factors that either support or hinder their quest for leadership.

Chapter One provides an overview of the study, outlining the background and rationale for examining female leadership in higher education. It presents the research problem, the study's aim, and the specific objectives guiding this investigation. Additionally, the chapter introduces the research questions, which explore female students' motivations, enabling and constraining factors, and how they navigate leadership within the university setting. Finally, the chapter outlines the structure of the dissertation, detailing the contents of the subsequent chapters.

## 1.2 Context of the research

Leadership is the skill of persuading and inspiring people to help drive an organisation, community, or country forward (Everett, 2021). Everett (2021) further argues that leading is an art and not just a science. According to Chobanuk and James (2015), leadership is a multifaceted process with several facets. Leadership is a challenging term with numerous interpretations, implications and feasible applications. Many leadership theories have been created in order to better understand how behaviour might be affected (Marshall and Kay 2019). The popularity of leadership is founded on its ability to guide both the conscious and unconscious needs (Western, 2019). Students play a vital role not only in every higher institution of learning but also in the country (Rou *et al.* 2017). The extent and nature of governance of higher education, were re-configured for a post-apartheid era and enhanced through legislative changes.

Student participation inside formal governance institutions is supposed to provide platforms that allow students to communicate and negotiate their complaints and demands to relevant authorities. Student participation in formal platforms also contributes to defining the structure of university life (Luesche *et al.* 2020). Student representation at higher education institutions is a legal requirement. According to Section 35 of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, the institutional legislation must specify the structure, membership, election process, term of office, duties, and rights of the students' representative council (SRC) of a public higher education institution. Sebola and Sibiyi argue that South African universities are regulated by the Higher Education Law 101 of 1997, which guarantees them operational flexibility and authority (Sebola, 2019). DUT's SRC constitution affirms conviction in the ideals of democracy, non-sexism, non-racism, non-tribalism, equity, freedom, and the abolition of prejudice as stated in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996. Institutions of higher learning provide student leaders with opportunities to develop their leadership skills while they are studying. According to a study conducted by Morwe *et al.* (2018), there is no management or

leadership development programme at DUT that is oriented at developing younger leaders, usually academics, who aspire to become junior managers and/or leaders.

In South Africa as well as beyond Africa, gender parity and females' access to top leadership and management roles in higher education have critical constraints (Seale *et al.* 2021). It is compulsory for every institution in South Africa to have student representatives. Students play a vital role not only in every higher institution of learning but also in the country as a whole (Ruben *et al.*, 2023). Student participation inside formal governance institutions is supposed to provide platforms that allow students to communicate and negotiate their complaints and demands to relevant authorities. Student participation in formal platforms also contributes to defining the structure of university life (Luesche *et al.* 2020).

The nature and extent of student representation in higher education governance were re-configured for a post-apartheid era, enhanced through legislative changes. Student representation at higher education institutions is a legal requirement. According to section 35 of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, institutional legislation must specify the structure, membership, election process, term of office, duties, and rights of the SRC of a public higher education institution. Sebola and Sibiya (2019), argued that South African universities are regulated by the Higher Education Law 101 of 1997, which guarantees them operational flexibility and authority.

The DUT's Student Representative Council constitution affirms conviction in the ideals of democracy, non-sexism, non-racism, non-tribalism, equity, freedom, and the abolition of prejudice as stated in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996. However, there are no guidelines governing the number of females that should be part of the SRC. It is within these structures that student leaders are being capacitated or affiliated under. Institutions of higher learning should provide student leaders with opportunities to develop their leadership skills while they are studying. According to a study conducted by Ngcamu and Teferra (2015), there is no management or leadership development programme

at DUT that is oriented toward developing younger leaders who aspire to become junior managers and/or leaders.

### **1.3 Research Problem and Aim**

#### **1.3.1 Research Problem**

Women's economic and social responsibilities have changed considerably since the previous century, when women were responsible for domestic duties such as providing water and firewood, gardening close by, small-scale subsistence, and village trade. Men and women may differ not simply in the extent to which they use leadership practices but also in the way they do it (Hallinger *et al.* 2016). A study conducted by Hallinger *et al.* (2016), who expanded on previous gender research on transformational leadership, showed that women displayed a higher level of transformational leadership than men. Coquery-Vidrovitch and Raps (2018) argue that women's involvement is still uneven on a social level, especially because of cultural barriers that they must conquer. Institutions of higher learning aim to develop students as leaders; therefore, institutions must support female students in understanding the leadership challenges that they may encounter.

Inspiring a feeling of self-efficacy and assisting female students in identifying as leaders while still in university might drive them to seek leadership roles in the workplace and in society at large, resulting in changes in perceptions of female leaders' capabilities as well as workforce demographics (McKenzie, 2018). The representation of female students in student leadership roles is minimal at the DUT. Only a few female students take up leadership positions. There is insufficient research that identifies the reasons for this. Providing opportunities for female students to develop, become acquainted with the various aspects of leadership, and identify as leaders would better prepare them for their post-graduation experiences. The global history of women's empowerment shows signs of male domination and a continuous struggle for women's empowerment in different sectors such as politics, work environments and higher education. Student leadership at the DUT is dominated by male students. When female students are nominated to leadership

roles they often deputise for the male leaders. This underrepresentation of females in leadership positions does not contribute to the inclusivity and gender equality at the DUT.

### **1.3.2 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this research is to explore female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at DUT. The study's aim is accomplished by achieving the following objectives:

### **1.3.3 Objectives**

1. To explore the motivation of female students to become leaders,
2. To identify the factors that enable and/or constraint female students to become leaders, and
3. To examine how female student leaders navigate their lived experiences at the university.

### **1.3.4 Research Questions**

1. Why are female students motivated to become leaders?
2. What are the factors that enable and/or constrain female students to become leaders?
3. How do female student leaders navigate their lived experiences at the university?

Leadership is a challenging term with numerous significances and diverse feasible applications. The popularity of leadership is founded on conscious and unconscious needs to be guided (Western, 2019). An organisation's success or failure is influenced by its leadership. Leadership is not a stable idea, especially in today's connected and disruptive society. It is multidimensional and complicated (Veldsman

and Johnson 2016). According to Sibiya (2023), the early ideas of leadership, which characterised a leader as an extraordinary individual, emerged during the industrial revolution and the period of expansion. He further stated that with every era, ideas about leadership and leaders have evolved and expanded along this historical excursion.

### **1.3.5 Student Leadership**

According to Muthoni *et al.* (2018), from the beginning of time to the present, leadership has been essential in all facets of human endeavours, including educational institutions. However, customary student leadership has been perceived as the privilege of elder students (Coffey and Lavery, 2018). Student organisations and work surroundings are facilitated to share organisational similarities in arrangements, mission-driven goals, and group subtleties. Students who take on leadership responsibilities in student groups have a better chance of acquiring leadership abilities (Larasatie *et al.* 2020). Student leaders should be able to affect both the university management and fellow students in order to develop mutually beneficial student affairs activities that meet the interests of the institution as well as the demands of the student fraternity (Muthoni *et al.* 2018). Therefore, one of the most important aspects of a university's existence is the growth of student leadership (Sebola, 2019).

### **1.3.6 Leadership and Gender**

According to Mashele and Alagidede (2022), leadership has always been portrayed as a masculine task in some situations. Archer and Kam (2022) stated that these gender disparities may be exacerbated by masculinised leadership titles, which perpetuate preconceived notions about men as leaders. Women have an edge in terms of leadership, and consequently, they should be fortified to take on leadership responsibilities. According to Keohane (2020), women who want to be leaders still confront significant challenges. These challenges include childcare and homemaking responsibilities; most workplaces lack family-friendly policies; popular culture's perpetuation of gender stereotypes; and rules and practices in various regions of the

world that prevent women from obtaining an education or opportunities outside the home. Most people associate leaders with traits typically identified with men: superiority, power, and assertiveness (Rhode, 2017). The mismatch between the values identified with leadership and the qualities associated with women remains one of the most intractable obstacles to women's leadership.

## **1.4 Overview/Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 presents the introduction to the study. This includes the study's background, the rationale behind the study, the research problem, aim and objectives, and the research questions.

Chapter 2 constitutes the literature review. It covers the contributions of previous researchers and earlier authors in the field of the study. It includes the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology employed in the study. It delves into the research design, research techniques, sampling, target population, measuring instrument, pretesting and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the findings of the study, themes and sub-themes of the study.

Chapter 5 constitutes a summary of the study and conclusions pertaining to the findings of the research.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the key concepts and rationale underpinning this study, focusing on the leadership experiences of female students at the Durban University of Technology. It highlighted the significance of leadership as both an art and a science while acknowledging the unique challenges that female students face in pursuing leadership roles, particularly within the context of higher education. The chapter also outlined the research problem, the aim and objectives, and the research questions guiding the investigation. By framing the research within the broader

discussions of leadership, gender disparities and institutional governance, this chapter sets the foundation for the subsequent exploration of female student leadership at DUT. The literature, methodology, results, and implications of this study will all be covered in depth in the upcoming chapters.

# **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature related to the concept of leadership and females' experiences in the quest for leadership roles at universities. It provides a detailed insight into women's roles worldwide, both in the public and private sectors. The importance of studying female students' leadership is based on the fact that most women have to defeat many barriers determined by gender roles before they take on leadership roles (Kezar and Lester, 2008). Therefore, this study argues that universities present a beneficial opportunity for female students to pursue leadership roles within the university and their communities.

The chapter will explore the literature on female students' leadership from a global perspective before zooming into South African universities. The study maintains that patriarchy still dominates most societies, especially in developing countries like South Africa. Though there is much literature on women's leadership, most of this literature focuses on women's leadership in politics, government and industrial workplaces. There is a paucity of literature that focuses on female leadership in higher education, especially at the student level.

### **2.1.1 Definitions of Leadership**

Leadership is a challenging term with numerous significances and diverse feasible applications. Leadership is not a stable idea, especially in today's connected and disruptive society. It is multidimensional and complicated (Veldsman and Johnson 2016). According to Mensah (2019), the cohesive force that not only unites diverse forces but also maintains them till the goal is accomplished is defined as leadership. The popularity of leadership is founded on conscious and unconscious needs to be guided (Western, 2019). An organisation's success or failure is influenced by its leadership. Although it is discussed in academic discourse and is a topic of significant interest in many different professions, leadership is a broad and nebulous notion. Sibiya (2023) asserted that the word "leadership" most frequently relates to a

person's position or their characteristics and actions. This study employs Everette's (2021) definition of leadership as the skill of persuading and inspiring people to help drive an organisation, community, or country forward.

### **2.1.2 Leadership styles**

The manner in which a leader conducts and motivates others to achieve organisational goals is known as a leadership style. Leadership style is examined as a mixture of different features, traits and performances that are used by leaders. (Al Khajeh, 2018). In this section, I will discuss autocratic leadership and democratic leadership styles.

Below are the different leadership styles that leaders may adopt:

Authoritarian leadership is another term for autocratic leadership. Autocratic leaders are traditional and domineering in character (Al Khajeh, 2018). Under authoritative leadership, research shows that decision-making is less innovative. Abuse of this type of leadership is often interpreted as commanding, bossy and dictatorial behaviour. Leaders at higher education institutions have been noted to display an authoritarian leadership style (Chukwusa, 2018).

Democratic leadership indicates that people may actively participate in the process of decision-making rather than being viewed as mere followers. A wide definition of democratic leadership promotes transformational dialogue and an equal distribution of power that enhance comprehension by subordinates and/or followers, but it also promotes comprehensive learning as well as well-roundedness (Woods, 2020). Several social scientists believe that one of the strongest indicators of students' long-term engagement with democracy, as adults, is engagement in civil society through groups designed to foster civic and political skills, identities, and efficacy. The National Survey of Student Leaders (NSSL) is the first endeavour to apply scholarly discoveries on the democratic advantages of involvement in civic groups to student-run campus organisations (Robiadek, Strachan and Bennion, 2019). Student representatives are granted full student rights through democratic procedures that

also allow for the removal of such powers, enabling them to stand up for the best interests of the entire student body (Bhengu and Webbstock, 2020).

Laissez-faire leadership is regarded by researchers as a third degree of leadership. Laissez-faire leaders are not concerned with productivity or completing necessary duties, they offer their staff little assistance and are indifferent to the success of their organisation (Zareen, Razzaq and Mujtaba, 2015). Laissez-faire leadership gives employees as much flexibility as possible, so that all authority is delegated to the employees, who must define goals, make choices, and handle issues on their own (Thanh and Quang, 2022). The conventional perspective of laissez-faire leadership has been to avoid it or to perceive it as zero leadership. It has been suggested that as an outcome, laissez-faire leadership has the potential to negatively affect the mentality as well as performance of colleagues (Robert and Vandenberghe, 2021).

### **2.1.3 Leadership Theories**

In this section, I will briefly discuss a few types of leadership theories, such as the Great Man Theory, Trait theory and Contingency theory.

#### **2.1.3.1 The Great Man Theory**

The great man theory believes that leadership characteristics are intrinsic (Ahmad and Maidin, 2020). The phrase "great man" was coined because, at that time, leadership was seen to be primarily a characteristic of men, especially in the context of armed force leadership. According to popular notion, great male leaders place greater focus on the "I" rather than "we" (Danquah, 2021).

#### **2.1.3.2 Trait Theory**

The Trait theory considers that people are either born or developed with particular attributes that will allow them to flourish in leadership roles (Ahmad and Maidin, 2020). Trait theory also states that leaders also share particular personalities or behavioural traits. Early trait theorists sought to connect physical, societal,

psychological, intellectual, and task- related factors—attainment motivation effort and persistence—to understand how well societal elements influence the emergence and performance of leaders (Brown, 2020).

#### **2.1.3.4 Contingency Theory**

The Contingency theory perspective of leadership originated in systems theory and had significant implications for organisational and administrative theories. In this paradigm, various leader behaviours are related to collective outcomes and contentment (Ahmad and Maidin, 2020). According to McGiboney (2018), contingency theory is founded on the idea that there is no optimum approach to creating or managing an organisation due of conditions, time, demands, risks, and so on that are unique and change depending on the time and place. As a result, the kind of organisational structure is determined by both internal and external influences. According to Shala *et al.* 2021), the contingency theories of leadership stress that the leader needs to adjust their actions according to a clear understanding of the situation and adopt an appropriate leadership style that fits the context.

#### **2.1.4 The global history of women empowerment**

Patriarchy is a structural force that dictates power relations and gender roles by celebrating male dominance while devaluing women's empowerment (Pringle, 2020). Due to patriarchy, women's history is painted by male dominance and under-representation in different sectors, and this is especially visible in leadership positions. The United Nations has been pushing for gender equality over the years, promoting women's empowerment as one of its sustainable development goals. According to the United Nations (2022), sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Europe, and Western Asia, all had high percentages of female unemployment in 2013. Due to the historical trend of men having higher employment rates globally, women tend to experience higher unemployment rates than men (United Nations, 2022).

Kele and Pietersen (2015) looked at the under-representation of women in politics and concluded that patriarchy still plays a significant role in trapping global political leadership into the hands of men. According to Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021), “under-representation of women in politics is not accidental, but is an intentional and seriously calculated move that is systematically and deeply interwoven in societal belief”. Due to these patriarchal barriers, women have to work extra hard to prove they can hold leadership positions. However, Vetten (2016) looked at South African women’s representation in politics and acknowledged that there has been a significant rise in women’s representation, especially at the local municipal level. This trend has significantly improved worldwide, where political parties respect the quota system to ensure women are adequately represented in politics (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020).

Phakeng (2015) claimed that although other industries are still struggling and far away from attaining gender equality, the increasing representation of women in government may provide the wrong impression. For example, women’s representation in the corporate world, managerial positions and education sectors remain low. Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) argue that women’s roles in the workplace are primarily reduced to administrative roles.

The global history of women’s empowerment shows signs of male domination and a continuous struggle for women’s empowerment in different sectors such as politics, work environments and higher education. Several studies by scholars like Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) maintain the view that women’s representation remains low in most sectors even though the representation massively improved compared to decades ago. For example, though progress is witnessed in different sectors, the higher education department’s progress in women’s representation for leadership positions remains low in South Africa (Jali, Suknunan and Bhana, 2021). Similarly, a study by Kele and Pietersen (2015) indicated that South African universities have made little progress in elevating women to leadership positions compared to other government sectors. In order to understand the struggles of women’s representation, it is vital for one to look into the history of patriarchy and how it supports gender roles that largely disadvantage women (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). A protracted and

challenging battle has marked women's history in university leadership positions for gender equality. Women have historically been denied access to positions of power and influence due to patriarchal structures and social standards.

Despite the above obstacles, women have come a long way in the last century in assuming leadership positions at universities worldwide. Dawson (2021) investigated the genesis of women's empowerment in the education sector and gave an example of Mary Lyon as a leading figure in the 1800s. According to Dawson (2021), Mary Lyon established 'Massachusetts' Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837, making it one of the earliest instances of a woman holding a higher-education leadership position. When women were largely excluded from higher education, the institution was created to give them a challenging liberal arts and sciences education. Thus, Mary Lyon promoted education and fought for equal opportunities because she thought education was the path to empowering women (Dawson, 2021). Eventually, women attended and graduated from universities in more significant numbers in the United States during the 20th century. This was partly a result of the work of educators and women's rights activists who battled for women to have equal access to education. Women started to assume leadership positions in universities, frequently beginning as administrators or deans of women's colleges (Thomas, 2021).

Examining at the history of women's representation in America, Lichtenberg (2019) singled Virginia Gildersleeve as one of the most significant female figures in higher education. The woman was the Dean of Barnard College in New York from 1911 until 1947. According to Lichtenberg (2019). Gildersleeve was a trailblazer in 'women's leadership and education, and she contributed to making Barnard College one of the top universities for women's education in the nation. As a strong supporter of women's rights, she strove to guarantee that women had access to the same educational possibilities as men. Fitzgerald and Harford (2021) complement this by arguing that women's leadership in higher education has a long and challenging history throughout Europe as well. According to Fitzgerald and Harford (2021), women did not have full access to universities in the United Kingdom until the 20th century. Emily Davies, who founded Girton College at the University of Cambridge,

was among the first women to earn a degree from the University of Oxford (Kravchuk, 2021). The institution was founded in 1869 as a women's college and was instrumental in advancing women's education. The institution, founded in 1869 as a 'women's college, was also instrumental in increasing the educational options available to women in the United Kingdom (Kravchuk, 2021).

Women's leadership in higher education in India has also encountered many difficulties. Prior to the 20th century, women were largely excluded from higher education (De Welde and Stepnick, 2023). However, educational reformers and women's rights' activists started to fight for equal access to education. Dr Durgabai Deshmukh, the first chairperson of the University Grants Commission of India, was among the most notable women in Indian higher education (Ganjikunta and Kadavakollu, 2022). According to Ganjikunta and Kadavakollu (2022), Dr Durgabai Deshmukh, as a fervent supporter of women's education, worked to guarantee that women had access to the same educational possibilities as men. Despite these achievements, there are still difficulties for women in higher education leadership. Women remain under-represented in leadership positions, especially in executive roles like chancellor or university president (Ganjikunta and Kadavakollu, 2022). In addition, women continue to encounter prejudice and unfair treatment in the workplace, which can impede their professional advancement.

Many women have been provoked to challenge patriarchal roles to make higher education more equal and accessible. The history of women's representation in America, Britain and India shows that female leaders at higher education institutions have persevered for increased diversity and inclusion and tried to foster a community at their institutions that is more encouraging and uplifting for everyone (Kravchuk, 2021). Women leaders have also realised critical importance of advancing women's rights and gender equality in higher education.

Thomas (2021) also notes how women leaders have tried to make colleges more inclusive and welcoming for women by promoting laws and initiatives that encourage women's leadership and education. In summary, the story of women's leadership in higher education globally is an intricate and multidimensional struggle and

advancement. Women have experienced many difficulties and barriers in pursuing leadership positions, but they have also made significant progress in advancing gender equality and increasing educational possibilities (Thomas, 2021).

### **2.15 Understanding leadership and patriarchal relations**

Throughout history, various definitions and interpretations of the concept of leadership have been offered, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Leadership developed as a way to organise and coordinate the work of groups of people towards a shared objective and it has been intimately associated with power and authority. However, the way that leadership has traditionally been understood and applied has frequently benefitted men at the expense of women, maintaining gender disparities and traditional gender roles (Lan *et al.*, 2019). The idea of leadership can be traced back to ancient times when leaders were often portrayed as people who had attained status and power via their strength, knowledge, or other valued attributes (Nawaz and Khan, 2016). These early leaders were in charge of making decisions and giving orders and frequently had a close relationship with their followers.

The role of leadership changed over time to become more structured and institutionalised as civilisation grew more complex and hierarchical. Leaders were in charge of making choices on behalf of their followers and were frequently nominated or elected to positions of power (Prowse *et al.* 2022). Unfortunately, most leadership theories stressed the significance of characteristics like intelligence, charm and assertiveness, and tended to prefer masculine qualities over feminine ones due to this shift toward institutionalised leadership (Prowse *et al.* 2022). These theories frequently portray leadership as an intensely selfish and competitive endeavour with little room for cooperation or empathy. Defining leadership this way reduces it to masculinity and excludes women.

According to Santos (2021), contingency theories of leadership, which first appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, stressed the need to tailor one's leadership approach to the particular demands of the circumstance. However, even these theories tended to place a greater emphasis on masculine characteristics like decisiveness and

assertiveness and frequently failed to consider the particular difficulties and experiences faced by women in leadership positions.

A few of these presumptions have been challenged in more modern leadership theories, including transformational and servant leadership, to develop a more inclusive and collaborative leadership model. Apart from inspiring and motivating their team or organisation to work toward a common goal, transformational leaders also foster a sense of purpose and unity inside their teams or organisations (Mayberry, 2024). Similarly, servant leaders put their 'followers' needs first and seek to foster an environment that encourages everyone to reach their most significant potential.

Despite these initiatives to develop a more inclusive leadership model, there are still gender disparities in many areas of leadership and decision-making (Lan *et al.*, 2019). Women are still under-represented in leadership roles and frequently experience workplace bias and discrimination. This can take many forms, such as being passed over for leadership positions or promotions, experiencing macroaggression, or even open harassment (Evans and Pfister, 2021).

In addition, even when women take on leadership positions, they could face different norms and expectations than their male counterparts (Evans and Pfister, 2021). Women leaders may face prejudices and double standards, making it harder for them to lead effectively. They are frequently judged more harshly for their communication style, looks and behaviour. It is important to challenge these gender biases and advance a more collaborative and compassionate leadership style to develop a fairer and more inclusive form of leadership. This can involve tactics like mentoring and female leadership development programmes and initiatives to boost diversity and inclusion at all organisational levels (Lan *et al.*, 2019). However, historically, leadership is closely related to power and authority and perpetuating gender inequality and traditional gender roles.

### **2.1.6 The history of South African student leadership**

In South Africa, the background of student leadership is distinct and entwined with the nation's fight for racial equality and democracy. Particularly during the apartheid era, when black students faced systemic discrimination and repression, South African student activists were essential in influencing the nation's political landscape (Ndlovu, 2017). The Black University of Fort Hare students established the first student association in South Africa, the South African Native College Students' Association (SANSCA), in 1906 (Johnson, 2019). The group was established to address problems that black students face, such as prejudice, inadequate housing and restricted access to education. SANSCA was a model for the numerous student organisations that would later appear in South Africa.

The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) became a significant player in South African student politics in the 1940s (Johnson, 2019). Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Walter Sisulu were among the organisation's youthful, radical leaders who were devoted to the fight against apartheid (Ellis, 1991). The ANC Youth League was instrumental in getting South Africa's youth involved in the struggle for democratic change by organising boycotts, protests, and other kinds of resistance to apartheid. Student activism in South Africa grew significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), founded by Steve Biko and other young activists dedicated to advancing black pride and consciousness, became a significant force in student politics (Ellis, 1991). The BCM was instrumental in getting South Africa's youth involved in the battle against apartheid by planning rallies, boycotts, and other kinds of resistance.

In 1976, students in Soweto protested against the government's decision to mandate Afrikaans as the language of teaching in schools (Ndlovu, 2017). This protest is one of South Africa's most significant student demonstrations. Unfortunately, numerous students were killed when police started shooting at the demonstrators after the protest turned violent (Ndlovu, 2017). As it came to be known, the Soweto Uprising represented a turning point in South African history and the start of a new age of student movement.

Student activism in South Africa became very important in the fight against apartheid in the 1980s. The United Democratic Front (UDF), a coalition of anti-apartheid groups and individuals, became a significant force in student politics (Johnson, 2019). The UDF played a significant role in inspiring South Africa's youth to struggle for political change and organising boycotts, protests, and other forms of opposition to apartheid.

Student action in South Africa continues to be crucial in determining the political climate of the nation after apartheid was abolished in 1994 (Johnson, 2019). Tuition fees, access to education, and inequality are just a few topics that students organised protests and other kinds of opposition to. For example, the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements, which called for improved access to education and confronted the effects of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, have recently grown into powerful forces in student politics in the country (Mpfung, 2017).

Mpfung (2017) points out that South Africa's historical background of political oppression and the fight for democracy and racial equality make its student leadership distinctive. Student leaders in South Africa have encountered numerous difficulties and barriers while working to end apartheid and advance social justice. These difficulties have included governmental repression, police brutality, and censorship, leading to student activists being imprisoned, tortured, or even dying (Ndlovu, 2017). The student movement has become fragmented as a result of the intense pressure that South African student leaders have experienced. In addition, the conflicting agendas of various organisations and leaders have occasionally weakened student engagement in South Africa (Mpfung, 2017). Despite these obstacles, South African student leaders have been instrumental in influencing the nation's political climate and advancing social justice.

### **2.1.7 Constitutional and legal frameworks that support gender equality in South Africa**

The constitution of South Africa is among the most progressive in the world, as it provides for women's representation and gender equality (Francis and Webster, 2019). The nation has also put in place a variety of legislation intended to advance

gender equality and redress the historical injustices experienced by women. It is, therefore, crucial to discuss the South African legal and constitutional frameworks that support women's representation and gender equality, as well as how they work.

South Africa's 1996 constitution contains several clauses that uphold and advance gender equality. Discrimination based on gender is prohibited by Section 9 of the Constitution (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). This clause has been used to challenge discriminatory practices in several areas of life, including employment, education, and politics. According to the Constitution, one of the actions the government must take to enhance gender equality is affirmative action measures (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Moreover, South Africa has put into effect several laws aimed at fostering gender equality and increasing women's representation. According to the Employment Equity Act of 1998, businesses must develop affirmative action programmes to address the workforce's historical under-representation of women and other marginalised groups. Gender discrimination is illegal under the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000, which also creates equality tribunals to hear charges of prejudice (Francis and Webster, 2019).

In addition to these laws, South Africa has implemented several other measures that support gender equality and increase women's representation in politics. For example, since the end of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC), which has been in power in South Africa until May 2024, has established a policy of gender parity in its leadership structures, mandating that at least fifty percent of all positions be filled by women (Inglehart, Norris and Welzel, 2003). The nation has also established a quota system for political representation, mandating political parties to list a predetermined proportion of women as candidates (Ndlovu, 2017).

Despite these legal and constitutional protections, South Africa still has a long way to go in advancing gender equality and women's representation. The prevalence of gender-based violence, which includes high rates of sexual assault and domestic abuse, shows how gender inequality remains a concerning issue in South Africa (Gwiazda, 2021). Therefore, women are still under-represented in politics and other

leadership positions, especially at higher levels of decision-making. Francis and Webster (2019) argue that although South Africa's legal and constitutional frameworks offer a solid foundation for advancing gender equality and women's representation, their efficacy has been constrained by several factors. First, the absence of implementation and enforcement of these laws and rules is a significant problem. Affirmative action policies and quota systems have been sluggish to take hold among many employers and political parties, and there are frequently few penalties for non-compliance (Warikoo and Allen, 2020). Attitudes and customs that perpetuate discrimination and gender inequality persist widely in South Africa.

These beliefs and standards can make it more difficult for legal systems to advance gender equality (Warikoo and Allen, 2020). Women who report incidents of gender-based violence, for instance, may experience stigma and discrimination and may not get the support they need from the criminal justice system.

In summary, South Africa has a robust legal system that supports gender equality and the representation of women. However, several factors, such as lack of application and enforcement, as well as cultural attitudes that uphold gender inequality, limit the efficacy of these frameworks (Phakeng, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for ongoing advocacy and action to solve these issues if gender equality and women's representation in South Africa are to be effectively promoted. There are factors and constraining factors that female leaders do encounter.

#### **2.1.8 Factors that enable and/or constraint females as student leaders.**

Female student leaders encounter various obstacles and/or opportunities that can either obstruct or support their quest for leadership. Studies on women in leadership, including the Student Representative Council (SRC), can help shed light on factors that can help or hinder female student leaders, ranging from societal and cultural norms, institutional policies and procedures, and personal qualities like self-assurance and aptitude. According to Klugman *et al.* (2014), social and cultural standards are significant aspects that can either empower or limit female student leaders. Gender norms and expectations are firmly engrained in many countries,

which can restrict the options available to women, even in leadership posts. Klugman *et al.* (2014) argue that prejudices and biases can hold women back from leadership positions or imply that they lack the same level of competence as males. For example, Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) conducted a study on UKZN's SRC and pointed out some constraints to women's leadership. According to Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021), patriarchy still prevails in higher education and contributes significantly to the under-representation of female leaders. According to Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021:511), "political activism requires many public appearances, and for women, this means being away from home and family most of the time". Consequently, the legal frameworks and quotas established to empower women have not yielded the expected results in leadership positions for students and organisations such as SRC.

Female student leaders might be supported or hindered by institutional rules and procedures. For example, in the 1800s, universities created rules restricting the options open to women, such as those that prefer male students for specific leadership roles or programmes (Fitzgerald and Harford, 2021). Personal characteristics like confidence and aptitude can also influence the ability or limitation of female student leaders. For example, if female students lack confidence in their abilities or believe they will not be supported or recognised in those jobs, they might be less inclined to apply for leadership positions (Hartman and Barber, 2020.). This is common in areas like public speaking and networking, where women may struggle to build the abilities and competencies required for leadership.

Factors that can help female student leaders succeed despite these obstacles include supportive networks, such as peer networks, mentorship programmes and role models (Hartman and Barber 2020). Women who have access to these networks are more likely to acquire the knowledge and self-assurance required for leadership and the assistance they require to overcome obstacles. Moreover, the availability of training and development opportunities is a critical component that can empower female student leaders (Phakeng, 2015). Women can build the abilities and skills required for leadership at universities that provide these programmes and courses,

and they can take advantage of the opportunity to practice and improve these competencies in a welcoming environment.

Last but not least, institutional practices and policies that support gender equality and female leadership can also significantly contribute to developing female student leaders. Female student leaders are more likely to find a supportive environment at universities with policies and practices that support gender equality and diversity and the resources and assistance they require to succeed (Gwirayi, 2010). For example, in a public higher education institution, the institutional statute and rules govern the creation and makeup of the SRC.

In summary, female student leaders encounter various obstacles and opportunities that can either support or limit their capacity to lead successfully. In addition, female student leaders' experiences are influenced by various elements, including social and cultural norms, institutional rules and practices, and personal characteristics like confidence and skill (Phakeng, 2015). Nevertheless, female student leaders can benefit from a supportive environment created by universities dedicated to advancing gender equality and women's leadership, as well as from the opportunities and assistance they require to thrive.

### **2.19 Motivation of students to become a leader.**

Individual, group and corporate success have all been related to leadership in organisational settings. Leaders set the tone for the business by developing a compelling vision and having the ability to excite and inspire others (Norris, 2017). Student leaders are required to participate actively in various aspects of campus life, contributing to a rich and vibrant campus culture as well as the opportunity for leadership development while in university (Gross, 2018). Leadership capacity, self-efficacy and motivation have been identified as critical psychological components in the leadership development process (Correia-Harker and Dugan, 2020). In general, there are two sorts of motivation: intrinsic motivation, which is derived internally, and extrinsic motivation, which is derived externally (Locke and Schattke, 2019).

Intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to engaging in fundamentally pleasurable or joyful conduct. IM is not instrumental in nature; that is, genuinely driven activity is not dependent on any consequence separate from the behaviour itself (Legault, 2020). Some efforts to comprehend it have concentrated on drivers inside the individual: curiosity, interest, a desire to play, or the desire to appear competent (Nakamura, Dwight and Shankland, 2019). Intrinsically motivated people participate in activities because they find them interesting and enjoyable, leading them to perform at a high level (Laksmana and Riana, 2020). According to Rheinberg and Engeser (2018), instead of using the word intrinsic motivation, they use the term activity-related motivation. Institutions of higher learning have clubs and societies, and being active with such groups provides students with several benefits, including acquiring experience in areas not covered in academic courses, building social networking skills, meeting possible mentors, and engaging in leadership roles within the organisation (Phillips *et al.* 2015).

Extrinsic motivation discusses the execution of conduct that is essentially dependent focusing on attaining a result that is separate from the action itself. According to Locke and Schattke (2019), extrinsic motivation may be broadly described as doing something as a means to an end. It entails doing something now in order to obtain something later. Extrinsic motivators that are frequently mentioned include rewards and incentives, which are crucial for directing efforts toward the correct organisational goals and giving people incentives to achieve their goals at a high level (Locke and Schattke, 2019). Differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation orientations are thought to be significant predictors of individual disposition to choose, engage in, and maintain various activities, even those that are complicated and hard activities (Ryan and Deci, 2020). The top three motivators for students to become formal leaders, according to basic descriptive data, were financial compensation/scholarships, personal growth and the opportunity to make a difference (Robinson, 2019). Furthermore, when it came to being driven to succeed in their leadership responsibilities, personal growth and a desire to lead proved to be more powerful motivators than acquiring scholarships (Robinson, 2019). In comparison to extrinsically driven students, intrinsically motivated students select

voluntary activities more frequently, without regard for external forces (Shin *et al.* 2018).

### **2.1.10 Female student leadership in South Africa**

South African university women leaders have unique difficulties and experiences that are frequently assumed but not always wholly appreciated. These difficulties can vary based on ethnicity, class and cultural background and can be connected to gender stereotypes, societal expectations and institutional barriers. The SRC is considered a leadership body since it is recognised by Section 35 of the Higher Education Act as a governance structure (Jacob-Roussety and Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, the Section singles out SRC as the highest student governance structure, a gateway between students and the university's needs. For Louet and O'Malley (2007), the SRC is a social movement that is often politically driven to represent students' rights and welfare. The South African Union of Students (SAUS) is also important because it serves as a national body that combines all SRCs from all South African universities. Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) researched women's representation in student leadership positions like the SRC at one of South Africa's most prominent universities, the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Their findings showed that the university's Student Representative Council had a patriarchal structure and insufficient dedication to gender equality.

Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) also reported that men outnumbered women in leadership positions despite the university's efforts to push for gender equality. Moreover, their study revealed that only three institutions out of twenty-six South African universities had a female SRC president. This statistic concerned Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021), since the institutional intelligence from UKZN revealed that between 2015 and 2020, female students outnumbered male students. The findings revealed that women were more often assigned administrative-focused portfolios than leadership-focused ones and experienced stereotyped behaviour. Since the SRC operates as a political organisation, Louet and O'Malley (2007) believe that politics is often associated with negative connotations; hence, some females view it as a dirty game that is not worth the risk. As a result, their political

ambition tends to be outweighed by men's political ambitions. In contrast, Darcy (1994) disputes this claim by arguing that women participate in run-up elections for leadership positions in the SRC but more often lose to men. Darcy (1994) points out that the SRC often relegates women's roles to less significant positions such as housing and sports, yet the chairperson's and financial roles are often occupied by male students.

Bayaga and Mtose (2021) researched South African universities and examined some of the presumptions made about women's experiences in leadership roles and the effects of these presumptions. Though their research did not focus on student leadership positions such as the SRC, it sheds light on other leadership positions that women experience difficulties in at academic institutions. According to Bayaga and Mtose (2021), one of the most widespread misconceptions regarding female leaders in South African institutions is that they experience more bias and discrimination than their male counterparts. This situation is worse for black women, who tend to suffer double jeopardy of racial discrimination and gender inequality. Research demonstrating how frequently bullying, harassment and discrimination based on gender are experienced by women in leadership roles in higher education remains limited. However, the existing research confirms that women leaders still suffer from biases and stereotypes that suggest they are unfit for leadership positions, as well as a perception that they are less capable or qualified than men (Diehl *et al.* 2020).

Another presumption regarding female administrators at South African universities is that they are more prone than male administrators to have work-family difficulties. Balancing the demands of leadership with other responsibilities can be challenging because women are frequently expected to take on more significant caregiving duties, both at home and at work (Rosa and Clavero 2022). Therefore, it can be challenging for female executives to assert their authority and leadership style if they are pressured to conform to traditional gender roles.

Other scholars like Walker (2020) believe that female university leaders in South Africa are more likely to engage in activism and issues about gender. Women leaders

may be expected to take a more active part in resolving issues like sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and discrimination because they are often considered natural advocates for gender equality and women's empowerment (Francis and Webster, 2019). Nevertheless, this presumption, can also be problematic because it might lead to the idea that female leaders will only pay attention to matters of a more general institutional and academic nature.

There is also a presumption or belief that female university leaders in South Africa are more likely to use a transformational leadership style. This belief is patriarchal as it looks at empathy, cooperation, and emotional intelligence as three abilities frequently linked to transformational leadership and generally considered more feminine traits (Heller, 2019). It asserts that even if transformational leadership is not their chosen method, women leaders may be expected to adopt it due to gender.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

This study will rely on three theories to explore female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the DUT. These theories are management theory, social identity theory and participative leadership theory. These three theories are important for this study because they will shed light on exploring female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences. The three theories will be discussed and explored in connection with the research objectives.

### **2.3.2 Management Theory**

According to Bowden (2020), management is one of the more difficult terms to comprehend. Management is defined as the successful and efficient attainment of organisational objectives through the utilisation of planning, leading, and controlling organisational resources (Daft and Marcic 2016). Managers rely on various management abilities or competencies to execute management tasks (Shofield, 2017). An early management researcher defined management as the art of utilising

the efforts of others to accomplish goals. This term entails using resources and pursuing goals to complete tasks dominantly through people (Lloyd and Aho, 2020). Management is often self-evidently seen as the managerial authority and a control mechanism, influenced by the scientific management theory (Blok, 2020). The functions of supervision, organisation, and group success is fundamental to management theory, also known as transactional theory. “There are four fundamental management functions which are planning, organising, leading, and controlling” (Fridayani and Pranatasari 2020). Achievement and failure are portrayed as direct outcomes of how well a leader has planned, led, organised and controlled (Laker, 2019).

### **2.3.3 Planning**

Planning is the systematic procedure of identifying a requirement and determining the best approach to satisfy that demand within a strategic context that allows you to define objectives and set operational standards (White and Acheampong 2017). In other words, it involves setting goals, choosing the best course of action, and creating strategies and plans to attain those goals—all important steps in the planning process, which is an essential management process. One of the fundamental advantages of comprehensive planning is its capacity to assist universities in better integrating their operations with their surroundings. However, the institution’s activities may lack comprehensive planning (Hadji and Osunkunle, 2020:191). There are two major tasks for leaders in the planning process: identifying and selecting suitable organisational objectives and activities (courses of action) and establishing strategies for achieving high performance (Fridayani and Pranatasari 2020). Managerial planning outlines the institution’s future goals and how they will be met (Samson *et al.* 2020:13).

Planning, in the first place, is beneficial for businesses in defining their objectives and goals. It is an important part of management because it offers a road map for businesses and people to get from their present situation to the state they want to be in the future (Shahab, 2022). Organisations can aim their efforts and resources properly by stating their goals clearly. Decision-making and resource allocation are

based on objectives, which give decisions a sense of direction (Samson *et al.* 2020). Depending on the needs and goals of the business, they may be short-term, long-term, or both.

Planning also includes studying the internal and external elements affecting the organisation's capacity to meet its objectives. In order to capitalise on their strengths, address their shortcomings, take advantage of opportunities, and reduce risks, businesses can use this method to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) (Benzaghta *et al.* 2021). The planning process progresses to creating strategies and action plans after identifying the objectives and environmental factors. Action plans give the particular methods and dates for implementing those strategies, while strategies define the general approach to accomplishing the goals. This enables businesses to manage resources wisely, spot impending problems, and take preventative action.

Planning is essential for co-ordinating actions among several teams or divisions within a company. It makes teamwork easier and ensures everyone pursues the same goals (Benzaghta *et al.* 2021). Thus, planning aligns efforts, reduces task duplication, and increases productivity by conveying goals, strategies, and action plans. With the aid of planning, organisations can proactively prepare for and adapt to alterations in the business environment (Brooks 2019). Forecasting and scenario analysis are involved in comprehending probable future trends and difficulties. As a result, organisations may take advantage of opportunities, reduce risks, and change their strategies as necessary by being proactive and adaptable (Brooks 2019). In competitive markets, this aids their ability to stay on top of the pack and remain relevant.

#### **2.3.4 Organising**

Traditionally, planning is followed by organising, which represents how an organisation attempts to carry out the strategy. Organising entails breaking down work into manageable tasks and choosing individuals to carry out those tasks (Samson *et al.* 2020:14). According to Tuan *et al.* (2022), the key element of

management that ensures the success of projects is the organising function. The organising function is applied to transform the outcomes of the planning process into actual implementation. Lloyd and Aho (2020:112) identified three categories of resources that contribute to a person or management's effectiveness, which are physical, financial, and human resources. Mugume and Luescher (2017) contend that there is significant resource exchange between student leaders and political organisations in this relationship, including tangible and intangible resources. They discuss the various levels of resource exchange and believe that this reciprocal resource exchange affects the student leaders' independence in speaking up for students' interests.

According to Samson *et al.* (2020), organising is a key management process that involves setting up and structuring an organisation's duties, resources, and activities to effectively and efficiently fulfil its objectives. It focuses on developing a system that enables people and teams to collaborate effectively toward a common goal. Thus, organising is essential for creating the organisation's framework (Daft 2020). This entails establishing reporting lines, figuring out the order of authority, and defining the division of tasks. An organisation with a clearly defined organisational structure makes roles and responsibilities clear, encourages responsibility, and makes communication and decision-making easier. It ensures that everyone is aware of their role as well as the roles of others, which promotes efficiency and lessens misunderstanding.

The organisation also involves allocating resources effectively for the institution's benefit. This entails allocating the organisation's physical, financial, technological, and human resources most effectively (Kanter 2019). Thus, organising ensures that resources are used effectively and efficiently by co-ordinating them with the objectives and requirements of the business. This enables it to minimise waste and prevents the repetition of work while increasing production.

Moreover, organising promotes the growth of specialisations and skills (Samson *et al.* 2020). Organising encourages efficiency and production by segmenting labour into specialised tasks and distributing them to individuals or teams according to their

abilities and competencies. Specialisation enables people to concentrate on fields in which they are knowledgeable, producing results of greater calibre (Tuan *et al.* 2022). Additionally, the organisation offers training and skill development opportunities, allowing people to improve their knowledge and skills in their specialised fields.

In addition, organising enables businesses to respond to change and expansion (Lloyd and Aho, 2020). The organising process enables businesses to adapt to new roles, departments, or teams as they grow and change. In addition to ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to support expansion, it facilitates the integration new roles and responsibilities into the current structure. As a result, organisations can better respond to internal and external challenges by having a flexible and adaptive organisational structure (Mugume and Luescher, 2017).

### **2.3.5 Leading**

Leading can be defined as encouraging members of an institution to perform to the institution's best aspirations (Griffin, 2021). According to "Fayol's five fundamental management functions, leading was traditionally called commanding and co-ordinating", (Rana, 2024). A leader must be able to mobilise the group efficiently and successfully toward accomplishing objectives (Adawiyah *et al.* 2021). Leading involves five roles: leadership, decision-making, communications, groups/teams and motivation. Leading is a key management activity that involves directing, inspiring, and persuading people and teams to realise corporate objectives. It includes the capacity to lead, communicate, and make wise choices in order to motivate employees and promote a productive workplace (Griffin, 2021).

According to Rana (2024), leading is primarily about giving the company and its people direction and creating clear objectives. A captivating vision presented by effective executives motivates followers to support the goals and missions of the company. Leaders foster cohesion and focus by establishing a sense of purpose and direction that helps everyone realise what has to be done. Leading also involves effective communication. For Griffin (2021), the ability to properly and effectively

communicate expectations, information, and feedback is a skill that leaders must possess. Leaders encourage understanding, develop trust, and ensure everyone is on the same page by maintaining open and honest communication. They foster an atmosphere where people feel appreciated, heard, and empowered to do their best (Rana 2024).

Moreover, inspiring and empowering people is part of leading. Thus, effective leaders can inspire their team members to realise their full potential by being aware of their needs, talents, and aspirations (Adawiyah *et al.* 2021). They can do this by developing a work environment that supports participation, creativity, and a sense of responsibility. This makes it easy for leaders to encourage and motivate people to perform to their highest potential by praising and rewarding accomplishments.

Golensky and Hager (2020) identified decision-making as another aspect of leadership. Here, leaders gather data, weigh possibilities, and make decisions in the organisation's best interests. They must consider several things, such as the objectives of the company, available resources, and possible stakeholder impacts (Golensky and Hager, 2020). Effective leaders can manage complex situations and move the organisation ahead by using good judgement and critical thinking.

Furthermore, managing and resolving conflicts is a necessary skill for leaders. Adawiyah *et al.* (2021) acknowledge that any organisation can experience conflict, so leaders need to deal with it constructively and develop solutions that benefit both parties. They encourage candid communication, attentive listening, and respect for various viewpoints. Thus, leaders may create a harmonious workplace, solidify connections, and improve teamwork by handling conflicts well. This means that leaders must be role models through their conduct, work ethic, and ethical standards (Hunt and Fedynich, 2019). They serve as an example and encourage others to uphold the organisation's beliefs and principles. Leaders create a culture of trust and credibility by acting with integrity, honesty, and professionalism.

### **2.3.6 Controlling**

Controlling involves examining and ensuring that objectives and actions are implemented properly and in accordance with the leadership's expectations (Voxted, 2017). It ensures superior efficiency and satisfying outcomes while maintaining an organised and problem-free atmosphere. Monitoring functions also assess excellence in all areas and identify possible or actual deviations from the organisation's objective (Edwards, 2018). During the process of performing task responsibilities and duties, the individuals utilise financial, practical and physical resources. Nevertheless, it is imperative to make sure they are used appropriately when they are available (Kapur, 2022).

According to Voxted (2017), monitoring, assessing, and controlling organisational operations to make sure they are in line with intended objectives is a crucial management activity. It includes evaluating performance, comparing it to benchmarks, discovering variances, and, when appropriate, taking corrective action. It is, therefore, essential for different reasons. Controlling enables firms to gauge their success in attaining their objectives (Kapur, 2022). In order to quantify real performance, performance criteria or benchmarks must be established. Organisations can determine if they are on track, lagging behind, or exceeding goals by routinely monitoring and measuring performance (Edwards, 2018). This data gives important insights into how well plans, processes, and resource allocation work.

Controlling also facilitates spotting and addressing deviations (Edwards, 2018). It enables businesses to identify the areas that need attention and improvement when actual performance deviates from the anticipated norms. Organisations can take prompt corrective action to get performance back on track by determining the causes of deviations (Kapur, 2022). This proactive strategy lessens the effects of deviations and aids in maintaining the planned course in the direction of attaining objectives.

Controlling also makes resource allocation more efficient. Organisations may ensure the effective and efficient utilisation of resources by tracking resource usage and comparing it to planned allocations (Voxted 2017). Controlling, therefore, enables

companies to make the necessary adjustments and reallocate resources to places that need them the most. It does this by identifying areas where resources are being wasted or underutilised.

Moreover, controlling is essential for improving accountability and responsibility. Controlling holds people and teams accountable for their activities and results by setting performance standards and carrying out frequent performance evaluations (Fridayani and Pranatasari, 2020). Since people are aware that their performance will be measured against predetermined standards, controlling can encourage a sense of responsibility. As a result, the organisation develops a culture of ownership and professionalism as part of its ongoing progress.

## **2.4 Social Identity Theory**

Social identity theory is widely recognised and presents itself as a comprehensive theory of intergroup behaviour grounded in a small number of underlying presumptions. First and fundamentally, it affirms that people view themselves as individuals and occasionally as members of groups—the so-called interpersonal-intergroup continuum (Tajfel, 1978a; Brown, 2020). This theory provides a framework within which interpretations of the identities of female student leaders in various contexts could be produced in light of these presumptions. Social categorisation not only identifies and recognises people as unique beings but also as members of specific social groups. People engage socially with one another based on their interactions with individuals from different groups. They continuously improve their social categories when they interact with different groups (Treppe and Loy 2017:3). The theory holds that self-categorisation occurs instinctively in people. That is to say, it is normal for people to think in terms of their social groups, placing themselves inside them and valuing what they have in common with them (Mangum and Block 2018:3). According to Reimer *et al.* (2020), the self-categorisation method enables us to comprehend self- and other stereotyping, as well as in-group and out-group categorisation, by considering various levels of self-categorisation. The theory could help shed light on the identities of female student leaders at Durban University of Technology.

Tajfel established the social identity theory (SIT) as a social psychological theory in 1978 and was expanded by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. It implies that people classify themselves as members of numerous groups. Masinga (2022) concluded that with self-categorisation, people assess the groups they feel they belong to (in-groups) and the groupings they do not think they belong to (out-groups). Social identity was first created to comprehend the psychological underpinnings of intergroup prejudice and clarify the factors that lead some people to believe their group is superior to others (Lai and Smith 2021). Social identities vary in both content and strength (Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019). In terms of social identification, the strength component is conceived, whereas the group's characteristics and standards define the social identity's content.

The social identity theory sheds light on how gender and social identity affect women's experiences in leadership. The social identity theory, which Henri Tajfel and John Turner created, contends that people's attitudes, behaviours and interactions with other people are influenced by the social groupings they are a part of (Brown, 2020). By applying this theory to women's leadership, we can better understand how societal norms and gender stereotypes affect women's access to and experiences in leadership roles.

According to Scheepers and Ellemers (2019), women may experience particular difficulties due to the pervasive gender stereotypes and societal norms connected with leadership. For women who want to hold leadership positions, stereotypes that link assertiveness, dominance, and logic to masculinity might be a hurdle (Brown, 2020). These stereotypes set expectations for women that are at odds with cultural norms, which can lead to unfair assessments, fewer opportunities, and restricted access to leadership positions.

According to Trepte and Loy (2017), the condition known as "role incongruity", in which gender stereotypes and expectations conflict with leadership roles, may also affect women. People experience this incongruity when they believe that traits associated with women—such as nurturing and empathy—are at odds with those of successful leaders (Lythreatis *et al.* 2019). Consequently, women may have to

balance these competing expectations while being subjected to higher standards and more scrutiny than men.

Social identity theorists like Reimer *et al.* (2020) highlight the significance of social classification and identification and maintain the view that women may form a social identity based on their common gender, which fosters a sense of community and kinship with other women. Thus, a woman may attain a leadership position as a result of increased awareness among female leaders about their gender identification in the workplace (Lai and Smith, 2021). This subgroup can assist in offsetting the detrimental impacts of gender stereotypes and cultural biases by offering support, networking opportunities, and role models for aspirant women leaders.

The social identity theory also highlights the importance of social comparison processes. Here, women leaders may compare themselves to successful male leaders or gender role models in an upward social comparison (Lai and Smith, 2021). This contrast may impact their self-perceptions, confidence, and leadership aspirations. Women's motivation, self-efficacy, and pursuit of leadership positions can also be impacted by the availability and visibility of female leaders as role models (Reimer *et al.* 2020). Women can defy gender norms and raise their own aspirations for leadership when they have access to successful female leaders.

In summary, organisations should foster inclusive workplaces that value diversity and advance gender equality to overcome the obstacles women face in leadership. This can be accomplished via tactics including diversity training, unbiased selection procedures, leadership development programmes, and mentorship programmes (Reimer *et al.* 2020). Organisations may empower women leaders, give them equitable opportunities, and support the growth of their leadership potential by establishing a supportive and inclusive culture.

## **2.5 Participative theory**

Kurt Lewin, a behavioural scientist, carried out experiments in the 1930s and determined the value of the participative leadership style in organisations (Burnes, 2021). While transformational leadership is extensive, it also presents a systematic

approach to institutional leadership that demonstrates how leaders affect institutional results (Owusu-Agyeman 2021). The three basic tenets of participative leadership theory include the mutual support principle, the collective decision principle, and the high moral standards principle (Wang *et al.* 2022). A participative leader, before taking decisions in an autocratic manner, first modestly enhances organisational participation in making decisions and addressing problems (Lythreatis *et al.* 2019). This will certainly assist in comprehending the decision-making process of female student leaders at DUT. Even though a democratic decision is one of the slowest leadership styles, it fosters cohesiveness within the organisation, stimulates team morale, and gives them a stronger sense of belonging within the organisation (Lythreatis *et al.* 2019).

The democratic leadership theory, sometimes called participative leadership theory, emphasises the value of involving team members or employees in the decision-making process. It implies that team members get a sense of ownership, involvement, and commitment when their leaders involve them in decision-making, problem-solving and goal setting (Burnes, 2021). The benefits of shared decision-making and the importance of collective intelligence are acknowledged by participative leadership theory. Some of the advantages of this theory include the way it encourages the participation of team members or employees in decision-making processes (Lythreatis *et al.* 2019). Participative leaders seek feedback and suggestions from their team members rather than making choices on their own. Since they are frequently closest to the tasks at hand and have a deeper understanding of the difficulties and opportunities involved, this approach recognises and respects the knowledge, expertise, and insights of people working on the front lines (Burnes, 2021).

Owusu-Agyeman (2021) points out that participative leaders foster a collaborative environment that promotes active involvement and open communication. They encourage team members' participation in problem-solving and decision-making by facilitating talks, seeking ideas, and soliciting opinions (Wang *et al.* 2022). Thus, employee engagement, motivation and job satisfaction increase as a result of this involvement because they feel their opinions are valued and heard. Participative

leaders use the team's collective intelligence to make decisions by incorporating team members in the process (Owusu-Agyeman 2021). They take into account different thoughts and opinions, resulting in more thorough and creative solutions. The team's ability to be creative, think critically, and solve problems is improved by this strategy since everyone feels empowered to voice their opinions and question accepted wisdom.

Additionally, participative leadership encourages a sense of accountability and ownership among team members. Individuals are more dedicated to the outcomes and take responsibility for their actions when they have a stake in decision-making (Vasilescu 2019). This sense of ownership brings about increased dedication, proactivity, and commitment to accomplishing common goals. Participative leadership also prioritises improving teamwork and communication. Participative leaders foster a culture of trust, respect, and cooperation by fostering open communication and appreciating team members' opinions (Owusu-Agyeman 2021). This inclusive and open environment promotes efficient knowledge transfer, teamwork, and information sharing. Additionally, it strengthens the bonds between team members and leaders because the leader is no longer viewed as a strict authoritative figure but rather as a collaborator and facilitator.

For Wang *et al.* (2022), participative leadership promotes personal and professional development. Leaders allow team members to learn, grow, and enhance their skills by involving them in decision-making. Team members can learn from one another, strengthen their problem-solving and decision-making skills, and receive insights into decision-making (Vasilescu 2019). This ongoing learning environment supports employee growth and encourages an organisational learning culture.

Bowden's (2020) literature explores the application of management theory to show how leadership, supervision, organisation and group are essential to the success of organisations. He further stated that success involves leaders being able to plan, lead, control and organise (Bowden, 2020). Most importantly, these leaders cannot be limited to gender, thereby challenging patriarchal and social norms. Management theory will be used to explore female leaders' quest for leadership roles. Lastly,

participative leadership theory argues that leadership cannot be reduced to gender. It maintains that good leaders are democratic and do not take autocratic decisions (Jaafar *et al.* 2021).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the importance of studying female student leadership in universities. This chapter comprehensively reviewed the conceptual literature review. It discussed the concept of leadership, leadership styles and different leadership theories. This chapter further discussed the global history of women's empowerment and the understanding of leadership and patriarchal relations. The history of South African student leadership was discussed to understand the origins of student leadership. The constitutional and legal framework that supports gender equality in SA was also identified and discussed. As one of the primary objectives, factors that enable and/or constrain females as student leaders were also discussed. This chapter also explored the motivation of female students to become leaders and the role of female student leadership in SA. The chapter was expanded by introducing the theoretical framework that was adopted in this study. The three theories that underpin this study—management, social identity, and participative leadership theories—were elaborated on as valuable frameworks for analysis. The exploration of social identity theory shed light on their socially identical groups and classifications. In management theory there are functions that are adopted by this theory. Which is planning, organising, leading and controlling (POLC) they were all reviewed in this section. Participative theory and the importance of adopting this theory were also discussed. The next chapter focuses on the methodology that was adopted in this research.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The theoretical framework for this research was laid out in the previous chapter, and it includes management theory, social identity theory and participative theory. In this chapter, the researcher will outline the research approach adopted which is a qualitative method. Additionally, the interpretivism paradigm of research was employed in this study's technique. Also discuss the research design and selection of participants the female student leaders. It will outline the process on data collection which is semi-structured interviews and data analysis method that was adopted.

### **3.2 Research approach**

The research strategy is a methodical way to look into or examine specific problems, which are influenced by the problem, accessible resources, and the study objectives. Habib (2021) emphasised that choosing the right strategy for a research approach on a certain topic will aid in effective scheduling and utilisation of resources. As a result, the process by which we assess our research is crucial since it influences the interpretation of our findings. There are two fundamental approaches in research, which are the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed-methods research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to provide an inclusive understanding of the research topic. This combination of both methods is of advantage in a study by using their strengths (George, 2021).

This study used a qualitative methodology, focusing on identifying female student representatives at Durban University of Technology in terms of their identities as female leaders and the factors that shape their identities and their experiences in leadership roles. According to Levitt (2021), researchers may learn more about the viewpoints of both similar and dissimilar groups of individuals by using qualitative research methodologies. Adikaram *et al.* (2022) place emphasis on the researcher's connection to the study's participants. According to King *et al.* (2021), the definition of social inquiry is concerned with how people interpret their own experiences. In this

study, I opted for a qualitative methodology since it made it simpler to gather personal experiences of female student representatives' experiences in their roles at the Durban University of Technology. King *et al.* (2021) Investigating the participants' internal perspective makes for more insightful research. King *et al.* (2021) emphasise that qualitative research is founded on the idea that people are the most prepared to explain their experiences and emotions in their own words.

According to Tomaszewski *et al.* (2020), qualitative research is best suited to studies that aim to learn from the participants' actual life experiences. Exploratory in character, this research recorded the personal experiences of female SRC delegates at DUT. To further my comprehension of the phenomena, the researcher drew on the participants' perspectives on leadership and gender at DUT (Manerikar and Manerikar, 2014). To back up this claim, Lim (2024) proposes that qualitative methodologies help these kinds of research get in-depth and interpretive understandings of the social environment of the participants by gaining insight into their actual experiences. Maxwell (2021) argued that the qualitative method is most suited to studies like this one because it allows researchers to get a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. To effectively capture participants' living experiences in a naturalistic inquiry, the qualitative research paradigm is widely acknowledged by all presented researchers.

### **3.3 Pre-testing**

According to Kumar (2019: 305), before conducting a full-scale research study, a small-scale or preparatory investigation is undertaken to analyse the duration, feasibility, expenses, and adverse occurrences to build an appropriate sample group. A detailed review of the understanding of participants for each question and its relevance is included in pre-testing an instrument for research. Pre-testing is applied to identify any potential measurement errors, errors in the independent variables, and puzzling worded items. Pre-testing is helpful in deciding if a comprehensive investigation is necessary. By doing a pre-test on the measuring equipment prior to data collection, researchers may identify potential spelling and grammar mistakes. Untested tools may provide many mistakes, inadequate answers and incorrect

results. Therefore, pre-testing is crucial for determining the validity of the research study and relevance of the questions.

This study was qualitative in nature and used semi-structured interviews. The researcher identified five female student class representatives at the DUT to conduct the pretesting before the main data collection process. During the pre-testing the researcher conducted interviews with the participants to check if the questions were clear enough and relevant to the study. The findings revealed that two questions need to be simplified for better participant understanding.

### **3.4 Methodology**

According to Pandey (2016), researchers commonly agree that research methodology is a way of methodically finding answers to a current issue by laying out exactly how the research study will be conducted. Analysis regarding what is occurring must have an impact on the philosophy selected. The researcher's perspective on what constitutes a reasonable advancement of knowledge and an appropriate research procedure, however, has the most impact. A researcher can easily grasp how to conduct research due to these philosophical hypotheses (Saunders *et al.* 2012: 128). In order to create a well-informed research procedure, the research paradigm alludes to a broader perspective of philosophical knowledge and the world (Kudanga 2018: 69). The research onion by Saunders *et al.* (2012: 128) presents instances of the research paradigms: realism, positivism, subjectivism, objectivism, functionalism, radical structuralism, interpretivism, radical humanism and pragmatism. The main objective of the interpretivist paradigm is to provide an understanding of a situation and to investigate the topic in order to shed light on how a certain set of individuals perceive the circumstances or the phenomena they experienced (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022). Thus, in this study, interpretivism was utilised to enable a close examination of the lived experiences of female student leaders serving at DUT. This will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.5 Research Paradigm**

Various viewpoints around the globe are commonly referred to as paradigms, which are generally the foundation of research. They are a set of assumptions regarding what reality is, how knowledge is created, and what is important when acquiring information. It is crucial that researchers remain upfront regarding their own preconceptions and views in this field of study (Davies and Fisher, 2018). Khatri (2020) further stated that an underlying philosophical framework and belief system known as a paradigm makes assumptions about methods, tactics, ontology and epistemology. In other words, it serves as a framework for how we learn about and comprehend the realities of the world. Interpretivism, critical theory (ideology), positivism, constructivism, pragmatism and post positivism are some types of research paradigms (Kumatongo and Muzata, 2021).

The research paradigm used in this study is the interpretivist paradigm, which guides the research of the actual experiences of female student leaders at DUT. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), the interpretivism paradigm allows for more in-depth investigation of individual events rather than taking into account generalised evaluations or predictions. Cuthbertson *et al.* (2020) continue by stating that research conducted using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach experiences a fourfold increase in its beneficial aspects due to the strong connection that this approach facilitates between the researchers and their study participants. The interpretative research paradigm was most appropriate for documenting the lived experiences of the female student leaders at DUT because the objective of the research was to examine their experiences.

### **3.6 Research Design**

A research design may be conceptualised as an inquiry approach depicting the frameworks used in a study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Moran (2014), advocating for the growth of Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) phenomenology research approach, describes phenomenology as the study of people's lived experiences in their actual worlds. This study used a qualitative methodology since its research questions

focused on identifying female student representatives at Durban University of Technology in terms of their identities as individuals, the factors that shape their identities, their identities as female leaders, and their experiences in these roles.

From the perspective of the study participants, the ability to discover problems and comprehend the meanings and interpretations of events or things are the most distinctive features of qualitative research (Hennink *et al.* 2020:10). A research design may be thought of as an inquiry approach depicting the frameworks used in a study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Cuthbertson *et al.* (2020) explain that phenomenological research aims to elucidate events through the eyes of the people involved in a given scenario. In a similar vein, Frechette *et al.* (2020) suggest that phenomenological research methodology reveals the meaning and essence in the experience being researched and offers rich, in-depth, descriptive and interpretative data that aids in gaining a deeper familiarity with a phenomenon. Lim (2024) argues in favour of the view that natural sciences fail to account for the consciously experiencing person; therefore, social science-based designs like phenomenology may be employed as a substitute. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the phenomenological research method proved optimal for this study since it allowed researchers to better understand the perspectives of female student leaders at Durban University of Technology.

### **3.7 Selection of Participants**

Leadership roles at the DUT include being a member of the executive committee of the Student Representative Council (SRC), leading the sub committees of the SRC, taking leadership roles in organising student events, and leading different clubs and societies. This is in alignment with Mfeka (2024) who highlights the responsibilities of student leaders as being raise student concerns, planning events, handling student finances, and speaking on behalf of the student body in conversations with university leadership. The students' clubs and societies are founded on specialised interests, like advocacy causes, academic disciplines, or cultural origins. The population size of female student leaders at the DUT is twenty. The researcher identified selected female student leaders at DUT using purposive sampling. In

addition to this, student leaders serve as leaders for a variety of DUT-related clubs and societies. The population size of female student leaders at the DUT is twenty. The researcher identified selected female student leaders at DUT using purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is also referred to by a variety of other names, such as non-probability sampling, deliberate sampling, and judgement sampling (Kothari, 2019). Purposive sampling was utilised to choose specific participants for this research. Purposive samples have characteristics that are predetermined for a particular study's goal (Andrade, 2021). Due to the small number of participants in this study, they were specifically chosen based on the conspicuous characteristic of being a female student leader at the DUT. According to Subedi (2021), purposive selection is the best method for studies with a small sample size since it allows researchers to zero in on the most important criteria. Therefore, due to the limited sample size, female student representatives in the Durban University of Technology were specifically chosen as they met the most important criteria for the research. Female students who were representative members of various university structures were selected through convenience sampling to take part in the research. The structures include different organisations that are affiliated with the Durban University of Technology. Golzar *et al.* (2022) defined convenience sampling as a method of choosing participants from the intended audience based on the participants' accessibility.

The sample included female students at Durban University of Technology who were currently serving in leadership roles because they have previous experience serving in a leadership role within DUT's student body. Protecting the participants' privacy was a priority during and after the interviews. All the participants were invited to partake in this study through emails.

The inclusion criteria required participants to be female students in leadership currently enrolled at DUT who were former female student leaders at DUT.

Exclusion criteria

- DUT male student leaders.
- Female students who do not lead any structure affiliated to DUT.
- Profile of female student leaders.

### **3.8 Semi-structured Interviews**

Subedi (2021) contends that because interviews are a dependable and adaptable approach to getting study participants' perspectives and life experiences, they are among the most widely used qualitative data-generating techniques. There are three different types of interviews: semi-structured, structured and unstructured interviews. The technique that was used in this study is interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are distinguished by open-ended questions and the use of an interview guide (or subject guide/list) in which the main topics of interest, occasionally including sub-questions, are identified (Busetto *et al.* 2020). Naz *et al.* (2022) further state that respondents can talk spontaneously about the subjects and elaborate on their individual ideas and interests during a semi-structured interview, which makes it flexible. Given that concepts come from a single source and interviews can be readily organised and controlled, the technique is advantageous because it makes it easy to connect concepts with specific respondent. The study's objectives guided the development of the interview schedule.

A grand tour question was initially presented to DUT female student leaders to enable the participants to provide the researcher with a general overview of what they experienced. The participants were able to respond to the grand tour question in a diverse manner despite being constrained by "tunnel vision", which can cause significant details to be omitted (Maxwell 2012). According to Terry and Hayfield (2023), the questions allowed participants to elaborate on their responses, guaranteeing that the researcher received comprehensive answers to the research questions. This method allowed for the collection of extensive insights into the lived experiences of female student leaders, as they shared their perspectives on serving as representatives in the DUT and navigating their roles as women in a male-

dominated environment. The questions allowed participants to share more in-depth information. As the process of gathering and interpreting information progressed, the researcher tweaked probing questions and made possible for future participants. Once a theme emerged that captured researcher's attention, the proceeded to researcher investigate it further with more participants. As a result, in this research, narratives on the actual experiences of the female student representatives at DUT were introduced as semi-structured narratives. Participants were given a platform to choose if they preferred online or face-to-face interviews. All the participants preferred online interviews, and this was done through Microsoft Teams. The researcher asked the participants permission to record the session for the purpose of data transcription and analysis. Data saturation was reached with a total number of ten participants as the same information was being presented. The interview schedule is provided in Appendix D.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Under supervisor's guidance, the researcher conducted an individual examination of the data to discover emerging themes. Thematic analysis using Tesch's eight-step analysis was applied (Tesch, cited in Creswell, 2009). The process involved transcription, data familiarisation, coding, category development, theme identification, reviewing, interpretation, and reporting.

- Transcription: The researcher analysed and transcribed the interviews' verbatim.
- Data familiarisation: After reading the transcripts, the researcher compared them to the notes and audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews.
- Category development: The transcripts were sent to the participants for member checking.
- Coding: To find the recurring themes, the researcher read the transcript twice and annotated key ideas into the margins of the transcript.

- Reviewing: After choosing the most fascinating and educational interview, the researcher annotated the transcript in the margins.
- Theme identification: Key ideas were then grouped together into themes and sub-themes.
- Interpretation: The researcher discussed the themes and sub-themes.
- Reporting: In order to confirm the analysis, literature was also reviewed.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness**

For research findings to hold significance, they must exhibit a high degree of plausibility. This necessitates making qualitative research trustworthy in order to assess reliability and validity, as supported by positive and naturalistic researchers (Rose and Johnson, 2020). According to Johnsen (2020), there are four standards for determining a qualitative inquiry's credibility, which are confirmability, dependability, credibility and transferability. All four criteria were adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

According to Polit and Beck (2012), assurance in a study that the data interpretation accurately reflects the experiences of the participants is regarded as credibility. Member-checking: each participant was given the chance to examine the notes once the interviews were transcribed to make sure they accurately represented their opinions regarding their experience. When readers are able to recognise the findings as real, the researcher's analysis of the data is able to be trusted. In this research, DUT female student leaders were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The researcher recorded the interviews for data collection. The researcher ensured a precise depiction of the participants' experiences during the transcription process.

According to Stahl and King (2020), it is imperative for qualitative researchers to verify the reliability of their findings. For this study, the raw data will be stored safely as it is for audit trial purposes. The data will be destroyed after five years. After transcribing the data, it was sent to the respondents to do member checking. This was done to confirm that the information was transcribed correctly. According to

Billups (2024), the researcher ought to examine additional ways to authenticate the results of the study to guarantee the findings are credible. This was done to make sure accuracy is guaranteed and the findings are credible. The participants were also given the opportunity to add or remove information.

### **3.11 Covering letter.**

Before the interviews, the researcher emailed all the participants a cover letter that outlined the study's objectives, a consent form and ethical clearance. The research objectives and the supervisors' and researchers' details were included in the cover letter. The respondents' confidentiality and anonymity were outlined in the cover letter. The cover letter also emphasised that participation was voluntary. The attached ethical clearance letter aided participants to understand their rights to partake and not in this study. The covering letter aided the researcher to create a sense of understanding of the study for the participants. The sample covering letter sample is attached as Appendix A.

### **3.12 Letter of Informed Consent**

Before the interview took place, the researcher emailed a letter of informed consent to all the respondents to explicitly express their willingness to participate in this study. Prior to the interview, the letter of consent had to be signed by the participants. The researcher proceeded with the interview after they had read and understood the covering letter and signed the consent letter. The main aim of the letter of informed consent is to protect respondents' privacy and maintain all standards of ethics. The sample letter of informed consent that was provided to the participants is attached to the thesis as Appendix B. The letter of informed consent required respondents to provide their details, such as name, surname, and signature. This was done to ensure participants' participation in this study is voluntary and their particulars will be kept strictly confidential.

### **3.13 Ethical Consideration**

It is paramount for a researcher to follow all the standards of ethics for research studies. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012: 52), any study involving human participants will likely need to be evaluated and approved in accordance with the university's code of ethical conduct, particularly where the subjects are children or the elderly. Approval was gained from the DUT's Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). DUT's Gatekeeper's Committee granted permission for the researcher to commence with data collection. They have the responsibility of evaluating, approving, and monitoring research involving humans, animals and the environment. The gatekeeper for this study was DUT's Research and Postgraduate Support Unit. In order to protect participant secrecy and privacy, the researcher kept participants' identities anonymous throughout the data gathering process. All the research procedures and ethical standards were met. The approval from DUT's Faculty Research Ethic Committee (FREC) letter is attached as Appendix C, which was also attached on the emails to participants.

### **3.14 Limitations**

According to Mbandlwa (2021), the features of the design that affect how the study's findings are applied or interpreted are known as limitations. The first limitation of this study is the sample size. Due to the nature of the study, only ten participants were interviewed, as data saturation was achieved after the tenth interview. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were used, which may not adequately capture the complexity of the topic. Thirdly, the findings of this study may not be generalised to other institutions as the contexts may vary.

### **3.15 Conclusion**

This chapter covered the methodology that was selected and reasons why it was suitable for this study. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study because it was investigative in character. The interpretivist research paradigm was selected for this study. The study sample was recruited from DUT's female student leaders.

Semi-structured interviews were adopted for the data collection method. The researcher recorded the interviews after gaining the interviewees' consent. The interviews were recorded using Microsoft Teams since all individual interviews were conducted online. Tesch's eight-step analysis was used to thematically analyse the data. Ethical concerns were discussed, along with the study's constraints. The findings and discussion of this study will be presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Discussion of Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The research approach was discussed in the preceding chapter. The data gathered from the semi- structured interviews with DUT female student leaders will be presented and discussed in this chapter. All respondents are given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The aim of this study is to explore female student leadership quests and their lived experience at DUT.

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- ✓ To explore the motivation of female students to become leaders,
- ✓ To identify the factors that enable and/or constrain female students to become leaders, and
- ✓ To examine how female student leaders navigate their lived experience at the university.

The researcher transcribed all the interviews and member-checking was conducted. The exact quotations are utilised in the representation of data to maintain the correct context of the replies. This chapter presents the finding on themes and sub-themes that were developed using thematic analysis and Tesch's eight-step analysis. All themes will be discussed and grounded by three theories that underpin this study, which are social identity theory, management theory and participative theory.

### **4.2 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis was adopted for the data analysis of this study. The respondents were given pseudonyms to protect their identities. The themes were identified by the researcher after analysing the data transcription. Three major themes emerged, which are: motivation to be a leader, enabling and constraining factors and navigating the lived experience of female leaders.

### **4.3 Theme One: Motivation to be a leader**

It is critical to comprehend the motivation of female students to become leaders. As outlined in Chapter Two, there are two distinct types of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Locke and Schattke, 2019). Self-satisfaction or interest in the activity are the sources of intrinsic motivation, which originate from inside. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is fuelled by external rewards or recognition (Hajiali *et al.* 2022). Students' motivation to take on leadership roles is also influenced by pre-existing attitudes about leadership and being adaptable to change (Leithwood *et al.* 2020). During the interviews, the participants outlined their motivation to be leaders. Female student leaders shared their different extrinsic motivations to take on leadership roles. The majority of the participants discussed the external motivating factors, which were political affiliation, social background and being an advocate/voice for other students.

#### **4.3.1 Political affiliation: “I got politically affiliated”**

Most of the female student leaders indicated that their motivation to lead was influenced by the political groups to which they were affiliated. Social identity theory (SIT) implies that people classify themselves into groups based on their affiliations (Trepte and Loy, 2017). Student leaders may often be connected to political organisations or political parties by their affiliation with these groups. Student leaders have been reported to affiliate themselves with political parties in university environments (Kaseke *et al.* 2015). DUT female student leaders are motivated by the groups they belong to, which are mostly is political as evidenced by being nominated to serve on the Student Representative Council (SRC). Jali *et al.* (2021), stated that in South Africa, higher education's SRCs function primarily in a political setting. Peck and Callahan (2019) further discussed that political clubs usually assist in the acquisition and growth of the leadership abilities required of elected student leaders, who oversee matters pertaining to students, distributing funds to different initiatives that influence institutional policy, and advocating on behalf of students. Additionally, by encouraging sequential growth, these clubs encourage their

members to participate in activities that improve their general competences in their respective communities. As a result, DUT female leaders joined the student political space to pave their way to leadership.

*“So, the thing that drove me is student politics” Precious*

*“I got politically affiliated. Because I don’t think at DUT with system that was there at the time I wouldn’t have done it alone”*

**Noma**

*“I was under the EFF Student Command (EFFSC)” Cindy*

Respondents are motivated by their groups to become leaders. Most of them belong to different political organisations, especially those who were in the SRC. In order for them to be in the SRC, they believe they have to belong to certain political organisations. Even though DUT does not recognise the SRC as a political club but instead acknowledges them as independent candidates, female leaders still align themselves with their political groups.

#### **4.3.2 Social Background: “Be the Change”**

Social class denotes a group of individuals with comparable degrees of income, power and position and is strongly related to social background. The majority of DUT’s female student leaders who were interviewed originate from lower social class backgrounds. An individual's habits, prospects, and resources can be influenced by their social status (Carchedi, 2023). Motivation derived from sources outside of oneself is referred to as extrinsic motivation. Within the environmental domain, extrinsic motivation is instrumental (Legault, 2020). Social background plays a vital role for female student leaders at DUT. For some female leaders, their social backgrounds serve as a form of extrinsic motivation. Female student leaders have highlighted that their social backgrounds motivate them to take up leadership positions at DUT.

*“The first thing was my race because I am black, then the second thing was my gender because I am a woman. Three things actually and the third thing was the class background that I come from.”*

**Titi.**

*“I think more than anything it [is] my background where I come from. I come from deep rural Emthunzini. So, the background that I grew up under was it more like motivated me to go out there and be the change... So, that I can go back to my community and demonstrate these leadership traits that I have learned during my leadership years”* **Amanda.**

Female student leaders lead campus organisations, forming clubs, planning events and serving in student governance. These are a few of the activities that can foster self-assurance, decision-making abilities, and the capacity to mentor and inspire others. Female student leaders highlighted social background as one of their motivations to take on leadership roles. It is evident that when they grew up in a community with a lower socioeconomic background. As a result, they are inclined toward leadership roles, developing skills and transferring them to their society and DUT community. They aspired to bring about change, and their social background inspired them to assume leadership roles.

#### **4.3.3 Assisting students to transition from high school to university: “an advocate for students who don’t have a voice”**

The majority of female student leaders shared that their motivation to pursue leadership roles stemmed from the challenges they faced during their first year at university.

Most female student leaders disclosed that they were motivated to pursue leadership roles due to the difficulties that they encountered during their first year at university which. They also mentioned predicaments like the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and residence funding issues. Their aim was to make the transition from high school to university easier for other students.

*“When I got to DUT in first year, I did not have any funding, so I was not funded by NSFAS. NSFAS did not fund me as well because they viewed my parents’ salary as being middle-class salary. Therefore, they [will] be able to pay for my tuition fees. So those things are the factors that motivated me. Because I realised that I was not the only person who was going through those experiences. There were a lot of other students around me who had the same experiences. There were [a] lot of students around me who had even far worse experiences than those which I had, and I wanted to be active so as to make it easier for those who come after me to be able to access university without any hustle. And to be able to have a great university experience without having to be in constant worry about being financially excluded”*

**Titi**

*“It’s that in 2016, beginning of the year I had financial issues and then I went to the SRC office, and I wasn’t treated fairly. Out of the rage I decided out of bravery just be basically an advocate for students who don’t have a voice. Worse for the students from other campuses within DUT Durban, most of the times they don’t*

*know most of the things. Like Brickfield campus, City campus, those students from [the] Faculty of Art and Design, they don't know most of the things" Precious.*

In response to the substantial cost of a higher education, South Africa launched the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in 1991 to help underprivileged students afford higher education (De Villiers, 2023). Female student leaders highlighted that funding issues motivated them to take up leadership positions. They have personal experience of being financially excluded. Most of them come from lower social backgrounds, and do not have funding or bursaries to pay for their studies and accommodation. Most female student leaders were hoping that NSFAS would fund their studies. Female leaders understood the struggle of being a non-funded student and did not want to see others suffer like them. They highlighted that if you have funding issues you are also excluded from residence. They do assist other students in applying for funding for their studies and accommodation in a timely manner.

#### **4.4 Theme Two: Enabling and Constraining factors**

To identify factors that enable or constrain female student leaders at DUT is one of the study's primary objectives. A diverse array of factors, both enabling and constraining, influence the trajectory of female student leaders. Alqahtani (2020) discussed how historically women's ability to lead has been undervalued due to several issues that have prevented them from being recognised for their accomplishments. He further concluded his literature by outlining that the barriers that women encounter in various organisational contexts, which restricts their capacity to attain empowerment through actualisation and aspirational leadership. Different factors that enable female student leaders and constrain them will be discussed.

#### **4.4.1 Factors that enable female student leaders.**

There are factors that enable female student leaders to take on leadership roles. Female student leaders can be influenced by their personal characteristics. The concept of self-efficacy centres on an individual's assessment of their ability to accomplish a task effectively in a certain circumstance (Waddington, 2023). People get their identity from the social organisations they belong to, and this might help them feel more capable of handling situations. People frequently sense more social support from the group they closely identify with. With more self-efficacy in tasks pertaining to the group's objectives, this assistance can increase their self-assurance in their skills (Brown, 2019). The factors that enable female students to take on leadership roles at DUT are capacity development programmes, mentors/advisors and programme of action.

#### **4.1.2 Capacity Development Programmes**

Capacitating female students assists in developing their skills and knowledge so they are able to take up leadership roles or succeed in their leadership positions. Female student leaders do feel there is a need for capacity development and training during their term of office. Participative leadership theory encourages both professional and personal development. This will propel female student leaders to learn, grow and develop new skills (Wang *et al.* 2022). The respondents indicated that they had attended capacity development programmes that were organised by the clubs and societies that are affiliated with DUT programmes. However, these programmes are not only for female student leaders; they are designed for all the leaders.

*“...You are invited to every departments development programmes, every club and society, you are always invited though. So yes, I have attended we even used to have our own as well that used to be organised by Student Governance” Cindy.*

*We have Vuna Leadership Academy; it includes both genders”*

**Asanda.**

*“There is not really one that is specific in dealing with female student leaders, but we do have quite a few, for example, like Vuna Leadership Academy. But it[s] just a mixture of both genders, so I feel like recommendations; we can just recommend that there should be just specific programmes focusing on female leaders”* **Amanda.**

Capacity development programmes are planned by Student Governance as the governing body of clubs and societies. VUNA leadership academy, caters for both genders, however female student leaders do attend the capacity development programmes as they are representing their clubs and societies. These programmes are aimed at developing student leaders, not specifically for female student leaders. Participants indicated there is only one network that is aimed at developing only female student leaders, which is the Qhakaza Ladies Network (QLN). QLN was launched to cater for students living in students’ residences. It is now an institutional programme for all female students.

*“We have Vuna Leadership Academy; it includes both genders. But with females we have Qhakaza the Ladies Network”* **Asanda.**

*“There is not really one that is really specific in dealing with female student leaders, but we do have quite a few, for example. like VUNA Leadership Academy”* **Amanda.**

*“It[s] not specifically for female[s]; it[s] specifically for SRC; I believe it [is] called VUNA Leadership Academy”* **Nelly.**

According to DUT female student leaders, there is only one programme or network that is aimed at developing female student leaders. The Qhakaza Ladies Network (QLN) is strictly for females. There are different perceptions regarding VUNA Leadership Academy. However, it has been highlighted that it is designed to cater for both genders occupying leadership roles. Vuna Leadership Academy is open to all DUT student leaders. DUT may empower and capacitate female student leaders through programmes that are aimed at capacitating female student leaders. Based on the findings it is important for DUT to provide training and leadership opportunities specifically targeted at female student leaders. The objective of leadership development programmes, according to Witte *et al.* (2017), is to empower students by assisting them in reaching higher proficiency levels, developing their leadership abilities over time, and increasing their capacity for leadership positions and procedures.

#### **4.4.1.3 Mentors**

Some of the clubs, societies and networks at DUT do provide mentors or advisors to support members throughout the journey to leadership. Most of the organisations or networks have mentors/advisors for female students only. Even the ones who do not provide mentorships do have females role models whom student leaders can emulate. The data shows that the mentors are an enabling factor. The female student leaders were motivated by the other senior students, female staff leaders and mentors who encouraged and supported them.

*“With Qhakaza Ladies Network (QLN) we are given four advisors with one mentor. They are always there to guide, where we need guidance. Then, from Izimbali zeDUT, I wouldn’t say it [is] coming from Student Governance, even though we [are] affiliated under Student Governance. But from the club itself we do get enough support or motivation from our founders; from our club we also have mentors that are there to support the executive” Zama.*

*“I had mentors and advisors that have advised and mentored me to be where I am. As well as the people that I have worked with, they are inspiration to me as well. For example, sis Khosi, sis Kholeka, Qhakaza Ladies Network advisors—those people are an inspiration, and they are people who mentored me to be the kind of person that I am” Nolwazi.*

*“Yes, Dr Rosaline, who is a Gender Forum Chairperson. Sis Thokozani Sibiyi is in Student Governance... I have been blessed to know these powerful, two powerful women. Including Mbali... they channelled me into getting into a space to learn and bring capacity on myself, not just as an activist but as a person who is going to be able to learn.” Nelly.*

Female student leaders mentioned names of individual women who motivated them to take on leadership roles. The women they have mentioned have been visible and available for them. They see them as their role models and mentors. Some female student leaders felt they were not capable because of male leaders undermining them; however, seeing other women doing very well motivated them to take on leadership roles. It is compulsory to have mentors in some clubs and societies affiliated with DUT. Promoting networking and mentoring opportunities can assist to break down barriers and inspire women to aspire to leadership posts, as these are generally under-utilised by women (Segovia-Pérez *et al.* 2019). Some female leaders do not have mentors or advisors. Women's drive to assume leadership positions can be boosted by assisting them in finding meaning in their positions. Goals that further the common good and align with their personal convictions are frequently pursued by effective leaders (Offermann and Foley 2020). DUT's female student leaders do look up to mentors as role models because they exhibit good

leadership traits and behaviours. Robinson (2019) discussed personal growth as one of the top three motivators for students to become formal leaders. Student leaders obtained important leadership skills and formulated their own strategies through examining the leadership styles of their mentors. They are actively seeking out mentors who share their beliefs, interests, and aspirations.

#### **4.4.1.4 Programme of Action (POA)**

In management theory there are steps that a leader needs to follow to have a successful programme (Laker, 2019), which are planning, leading, organising and evaluation. All student leaders must compile a programme of action (POA) within their term of office. They are required to have a POA, and the researcher asked them to expand in their POA. Female student leaders at the DUT implement their programmes using different approaches and processes. Female leaders shared their POA processes. The data suggests that female student leaders do adopt the management functions, which are planning, organising, leading and controlling. Each network, club and society affiliated with DUT have their own objectives and organisational activities. They are different in nature, but each network, club, and society affiliated with DUT uses POA as a tool to achieve their goals.

*“I do plan, organise, lead and control my programmes. Yes, most definitely. As a business student, I must do that” Cindy.*

*“The actual proposal our plan of action, we had to go to place where we had to sit down and then draft the programmes in terms of offices” Amanda.*

*“Each year the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) had to have programme of action. So, each year it was the organisation’s responsibility to draft a programme of action. And the programme of action and programme of action are quite different and vast in*

*their establishment. In SASCO we have something called the fourth series. Which basically guides on how we keep a branch active” Titi.*

*“With Izimbali, it [is] always done at the beginning of the year, and we always look at how are we going to develop from the previous year” Zama.*

It was evident that all the networks, clubs and societies are compiling POA processes. These can be compiled at the beginning of the year or at the beginning of their term of office. These POA processes are compulsory for all the clubs and societies, including political organisations. Planning is the first step in managerial theory that identifies organisational goals or objectives (Samson et al. 2020). Each club at DUT has its own constitution and conditions. They all want to achieve organisational goals through programmes. They follow management steps, and they communicate with the people they lead.

*“We will first discuss the programme as the leadership. As [the] Branch Executive Committee (BEC), [we] would suggest programmes within the BEC deliberate under and once that is done because we have to go back to our membership to present the programme so that they can add certain things or omitting add new things. We would then host the BEC extended meeting, which are open to the entire membership of SASCO. And in those meetings, that’s where we would present that programme and that’s where people would deliberate and say no, we think this programme is not okay. Can we scratch it out and maybe add the new one or could they come up with other suggestions*

*to enhance the programme and make it more meaningful. So, we would do that, it will first be a BEC then go to BEC extended meetings and deliberate on that. And then once that is finalised depending on a programme if the programme needs to be financed, would have to go to student governance because every club and society needs to have [a] certain budget in a year. So would go to student governance and say ok this is our POA this is our planned programme that we ... ahh planned to have on this particular day. This is how much we think the programme is going to cost. This is what we want in terms of the sound system, and this is how much we think that it would have to be paid and then yeah that is what happens. Then we submit that to student governance and they either pay directly to those people which is mostly what happened” Titi.*

Female student leaders do plan their programmes in advance. As their term of office begins, they are required to have programmes. As they belong to certain groups, they have emphasised that clubs and societies have constitutions. As female leaders, they must adhere to their organisation’s code of conduct. They discuss their POA processes with other executive members with whom they are leading. They allow other members from their group to take ownership and participate or provide input in the POA process. This topic highlights the role of DUT female student leaders as democratic leaders. According to Xu (2017) leaders who share responsibilities with their team are considered participative leaders.

Since DUT is affiliated with student governance, they have budget that is allocated for all the clubs, societies and networks. Section 6.9.9 of the SRC Constitution states

that the Student Governance and Development Unit (SGDU) and the SRC Finance Officer work together to ensure that only clubs, organisations and societies that have had their annual budgets and action plans approved by the joint sitting of the SRC and the SGDU receive funding. They are required to submit their proposals to the SGDU and wait for their approval if they need assistance/logistics from the SG. After approval, the SGDU will provide what they have asked for based on the POA. A female student leader will therefore lead and control the event. Some of the female student leaders perform an evaluation after the programmes.

*“Then, after the event, we do the evaluation link so that we can get the feedback. What was good about the programme? Where can we improve? What did the ladies learn from the programme? And after the evaluation form, we use the evaluation form when we are doing the next programme. We go back to it and then check it, where we need to improve” Zama.*

Female leaders implement all the necessary measures to make sure their programmes are successful and well-coordinated. This minimises risks that will put their programmes in jeopardy. In 2020, DUT introduced ENVISION2030. Female student leaders have disclosed that it is now compulsory to align their programmes with ENVISION2030. Every proposal in all the networks, clubs and societies should align with ENVISION2030 and DUT Living Values.

*“We started at the beginning of the year; we had to do our POA. We had to align with the vision of the institution. Which is the ENVISION2030 we had to make sure that all the living values are being implemented in the POA” Zama.*

*“Whenever we are doing the programmes, we are doing a POA we are told that we need to focus on ENVISION2030” Nolwazi.*

The respondents indicated that for every programme proposal to be approved, they must implement the institution’s adopted initiatives. They must align their programmes with DUT’s ENVISION2030. POA is an enabling factor for student leaders. According to Mittal *et al.* (2019), enabling factors contribute to encouraging action and an improvement in attitude. Enabling components are attributes of the surroundings or available resources that permit a particular behaviour or action to occur in the context of programme development and evaluation. Female student leaders receive support for their programmes. Their programmes include instructional programmes and teaching initiatives that motivate them. As leaders do plan POAs they do gain skills and learn from the process. DUT SG provides the resources they require to implement their POAs. DUT as the institution may provide support to its female student leaders to foster an inclusive culture.

#### **4.4.2 Constraining Factors of Female Student Leaders.**

There are limiting factors that may impede the growth and opportunity for leadership development of female student leaders at DUT. Mabaso (2023) asserts that the path to higher education for women has not been easy or without challenges. Although there has been substantial improvement in the last century to ensure that men and women have the same opportunities to higher education, nevertheless, there remains more work waiting to be undertaken. There are constraining factors at DUT, which are gatekeeping, gender stereotypes and patriarchy, “the female comrade”, programme of action funding and decision-making.

##### **4.4.2.1 Gatekeeping**

Based on the findings, gatekeeping has been a major constraining factor for female student leaders at DUT. Larasatie (2020) elaborated that gatekeeping suggests that aristocrats have the last say in selecting, interviewing, and nominating leader

candidates. Women have a harder time rising to the top if these positions are dominated by men.

The technique of restricting or managing access to leadership roles or opportunities in student leadership, according to predetermined standards or criteria, is known as gatekeeping. Setting guidelines, assessing applicants, and choosing who is eligible to take leadership positions are some of the tasks that may be involved in gatekeeping (Montgomery, 2020). Female student leaders feel that there is gatekeeping within their groups, clubs and societies that constrains them from taking on leadership positions that they think they suitable for.

*“I am sure that you are aware that you contest as a candidate and deployed by the branch... EFFSC, so I was deployed by the branch to be the SRC candidate. Then the branch gave us positions based on our characteristic, there were many things that they look upon” Precious.*

*“When I was contesting, I wanted to be the secretary, but they were like no you actually fit enough to be media... It is the panel that gets to decide when there are elections” Zama.*

Female student leaders strive to seize every opportunity to lead, but they do not always get the positions that they want, as indicated in the above quotations. They must accept positions that are allocated to them by male leaders or BECs. Even though they feel that they are equipped for positions, they do not go against their groups or organisations. Others even feel that if you go against your group, you will not be able to be a leader, or they will be seen as they are boycotting the organisation. The Branch Executive Committee (BEC) allocates positions for them. For example, you want to run for president, but your group assigns you to the social and welfare department. Student leaders indicated that they are forced to take the positions that the leaders allocate to them. They believe they are deployed by the

branch, and they have to respect the BEC's decision. The groups allocate position based on their perceived capabilities of the female students. Abdulrahman and Amoush (2020) argue that emotional intelligence and empathy are qualities that female leaders are frequently acknowledged for since they enable them to relate to and comprehend people more deeply. This is in keeping with the findings where female student leaders disclosed that their group or branch gave them positions in departments like social and welfare, sports or deputy to a male leader.

*“I am sure that you are aware that you contest as a candidate and deployed by the branch” Precious.*

Even if they want to contest, they will not be able to. The reason provided by the student leaders is that they believe their groups are more powerful. Although female student leaders believe they cannot go against their group, at the same time they are constrained by their political groups. They also highlighted that the leaders of their respective political organisations responsible for allocating portfolios for them. They do not choose their own portfolios. This also applies to other clubs and societies that are affiliated with DUT. The DUT SRC constitution that was approved in 2023 emphasised that students contest as individuals, not as an organisation. However, female leaders are candidates who are endorsed by their social group. The institution recognises them as individual candidates or independent candidates, but not as a specific political organisation. Before the DUT SRC constitution was amended, candidates contested for the SRC and not for portfolios. After they secure a victory, their branch or organisation will decide on the allocation of portfolios. Now, the DUT SRC constitution stipulates that candidates must contest for the position in its current form. However, this does not prevent branch members from allocating portfolios for candidates, a practice that contradicts the DUT SRC's constitution. Jali, Suknunan and Bhana (2021) stated that as much as universities are using every available method to advance gender equality, political groups frequently interrelate with implications that are adverse (Louet and O'Malley, 2007). DUT suffers from political groups that obstruct female student leaders from taking leadership positions they

want to take on. DUT female student leaders do not contest the positions they desire; they accept the positions that are given to them.

#### **4.4.2.2 Programmes of Action Funding**

Female student leaders emphasised that they are required to have a POA in place and that they do need funding for their programmes to be successful, as it enables them to gather all the resources and logistics. Female student leaders shared that there is a budget allocated for their networks, clubs and societies. The researcher queried the processes followed to secure funding and support from the institution or external stakeholders and established that a budget is allocated for the operations of their respective organisations. The amounts each club will receive are determined by the SRC. Since it comes from their budget under student governance supervision. Even the SRC falls under the jurisdiction of student governance.

*“We work closely with the office of student governance because they are the ones who are dealing with our budget. So, anything you do, it must be in line with university institutional finance policy. Then also it must be in line with the student governance and SRC constitution... In terms of making our programmes as SRC’s” Amanda.*

*“The SRC is allocated budget every year. Then we take it from the budget” Cindy.*

*“You submit proposal to the Student Governance if you going to need the funding from them and if you not going to need funding from them, we don’t submit anything” Precious.*

*“We do a proposal that has to be sent to Student Governance in case we need funding, or we need transportation. Or we need them to provide us with external speakers or we need a venue” Zama.*

Female student leaders submit their proposals to student governance for assistance with funding and logistics. They organise resources for their organisation to accomplish the organisations’ objectives. Samson *et al.* (2020) elaborated that organising is one of the key management processes. For the POA to be successful, co-ordinating logistics and resources is compulsory for student leaders. They believe it is important to submit proposals if you need funding or the use of the institution’s venues. Sometimes proposals are not approved, which affects organisational operations. Student leaders find themselves having to make alternative arrangements to make the programme successful.

*“I think it normal that sometimes things are not approved; it [is] just the fact it might not be approved, or it might take time. So, in some cases we get to use our own funds but, in some cases, where we are able to wait for them to process everything. We do wait for them to process, and then the event will sit” Zama.*

Leaders shared their reasons for their programmes not being approved. A reason could be the availability of venues, or they are not in line with DUT ENVISION2030. Another reason could be that they are asking for resources that are beyond their allocated budget.

*“They were willing to give us a class a lecture hall but with the nature of the club it was not going to be enough... And with transportation it is always a case where we are going in the*

*distance. We were told that the distance is very far so they cannot provide transport” Zama.*

Clubs, societies and networks at the DUT are different in nature. They do require different logistics for their programmes. The institution does not meet some of them. For example, the Zulu Reed Dance Club has an annual programme that they must attend in Nongoma, which is organised by the Zulu king. However, due to the travel costs, student governance does not provide funds to assist them as they were above their allocated budget. This means that the leaders must make alternate arrangements to attend that programme. Participants highlighted that in most cases their programmes are not approved based on the limited budget allocation. They actively take steps to raise funds and implement their programmes.

#### **4.4.2.3 Gender stereotype and patriarchy, “the female comrade”**

Female student leaders indicated that they had unpleasant experiences related to gender stereotypes during their term of office. They still believe that patriarchy is evident at DUT, as they have witnessed and experienced patriarchy.

*“My experience has been that patriarchy is still an issue you will be a female and be capable then the people that you are leading with, but they will still prefer a male figure to occupy certain positions, and you wouldn’t be able to occupy them. Even though they know, and you know that you are more than capable to do so because of the fact that you are a female. Patriarchy is still an issue...” Noma.*

*“...first and foremost, it was hectic as we are all aware that in student politics, it an environment that is dominated mainly by males.” Precious.*

*“Exclusion, exclusion, exclusion. You know it been difficult and I see it also happening” Nelly.*

*“It hard! the experience is hard, especially when you are leading where there is males, who are also older than you” Nomzamo.*

Mbithi-Dikgole (2023) concluded that the issue of masculinity in South Africa continues to be prevalent in social interactions. Female student leaders believed they must work harder to prove to their peers that they are equal to tasks, and that they can lead despite their gender. Even if female leaders propose a valid point, they tend to be ignored by the males. DUT female leaders believe that they are being judged or scrutinised based on their gender. They feel intimidated by males; it could be from the group that they represent or the ones with which they are leading.

*“My experience I would say that I had to do more in order to be more recognised as a leader ... There were times that I saw that even my leadership ability or my leadership qualities were being questioned, because of the gender that I came from. There is always this thing that [is] attached to you when you are a female leader that you are a female leader, and we referred you as female comrade. Whereas when it comes to man, they just referred to them as comrades.” Titi.*

The female student leaders have bad experiences, and it is not only with the DUT students or those whom they are leading. Other student leaders are also frustrated or challenged by their male colleagues in leadership. If they compete for a leadership position, they believe they are not measured based on their abilities. When female leaders occupy leadership positions, their abilities are questioned—not because they are not equal to task but because they are females. One of the challenges they mentioned is being undermined because of their gender.

*“I think one challenge that I really experienced was that of being undermined. When you come with solution there is that narrative that they can’t listen to female. So even if you feel like you have a valid point it [is] hard to speak out because the people you are leading with have a stigma or that if you are a female you deserve to be in a kitchen” Amanda.*

*“I would say firstly, it [is] being undermined—that you can actually take a decision on your own and implement it” Cindy.*

Patriarchy has contributed negatively to female student leaders’ experience. Lan *et al.* (2019) stated that at the expense of women, men often benefitted frequently from traditional leadership. This was practiced during ancient times to maintain traditional gender roles and gender disparities. As time went by, these traditional gender roles changed. Jali *et al.*’s (2019) findings showed that the university’s SRC had a patriarchal structure with insufficient dedication to gender equality. Female student leaders believe patriarchy still exists within DUT’s society. From society to the institution, patriarchy goes a long way. It negatively affects the space they are leading in. Even if they try hard to demonstrate strong leadership qualities, they are still questioned and undermined. It was evident that gender stereotyping still exists. The social identity theory aided the researcher in understanding gender stereotypes and societal norms that affect female student leaders’ experiences in leadership roles.

Female student leaders still believe that societal norms contribute to their unfortunate experiences.

*“It does sometimes expose the gender disparities that exist in our society. Because you know we referred to [the] institution of higher learning as microcosms of society. So, they are an indication of what is happening in society” Titi.*

*“Challenge number one and the most annoying challenge is that your voice doesn’t make it across... I can have a male figure saying the exact same thing as I am saying it, but you will find that they will take what the male figure is saying. More than what I have said even though we said the same thing. Its preference over patriarchy that challenge number one” Noma.*

*“You could see that if you are making an opinion or if you are voicing out your concern, what you say is not taken seriously. Compared to something that is said by a male. Even if the male stands up after you and say something you have already said using different words. You could see their reactions compared to the reactions they show to you it is not the same” Precious.*

*“People tend to discriminate you” Amanda.*

Other female student leaders feel that even though they have bad experienced, they do not receive support from the institution and their social groups.

*“Honestly, I feel as a female leader you not given much support as you think you get” Cindy.*

Female student leaders expected better support from the institution and the groups that they lead. They believe that if they receive support, it will positively enhance their leadership experience. However, female leaders do not speak out about the challenges they encounter.

#### **4.4.2.4 Being judged**

Female leaders feel that they are judged based on the private lives. Their leadership skills are scrutinised based on their past or present relationships, a standard which is not the same for male leaders.

*“A lot of female leaders go through sexual audit, who they slept with, who they dated. That usually the campaign and that is also because most man do not see woman as anything either that objects and so even when it comes to politics, even when it comes to us disagreeing on certain things around political programmes. When it comes to females, they always going to use their personal lives to try and get to them. So that is also the experience that I faced, that was also like one of the experiences that I have had to face as a leader or as the female student leader” Titi.*

*“My name has been dragged down to the mud” Amanda.*

*“When you are supported by people when someone backs your idea, there are too many stereotypes that are said that you are*

*probably sleeping with a person, you are probably doing side things with a person” Cindy.*

*“It [is] a very cold, ... it [is] a very cold atmosphere if you are a student leader. There are a lot of assumptions that get made, there’s a lot of exclusion at times and there’s a lot of abuse”*

**Nelly.**

Female student leaders indicated that they are judged by male leaders and their leadership is not taken seriously. What happens in their personal lives is used against them in their leadership roles at the DUT. This is a hurtful experience for female leaders, as they believe you should not be measured or tested based on your personal life. Respect for private lives is essential, as it avoids drawing inaccurate inferences or assumptions from hearsay or scant knowledge. It is crucial to realise that one's personal life should not be the only factor used to elevate or discredit one's leadership qualities. The atmosphere must be conducive for them to lead properly.

It is significant that although these characteristics may present obstacles to student leaders, they can also offer opportunities for development, education, and adaptability. Student leaders may conquer these limitations through networking, seeking resources and mentorship, and refining their skills and abilities.

#### **4.5 Theme Three: Navigating the lived experiences as female leaders.**

Female student leaders outlined different constraining factors, including gatekeeping, programme of action funding, stereotypes and patriarchy, “the female comrade” and being judged. Student leaders shared how they navigate their lived experiences at DUT. The difficulties that female leaders encounter frequently foster adaptability and tenacity. As they learn to overcome challenges, they develop self-efficacy, which enables them to confidently assume leadership roles. They speak out

against gatekeeping and ensure that they are heard. This even pushed them to work tirelessly to prove that they are strong, capable leaders.

*“But I also had to work harder than a normal comrade would, or male comrade would. Because I just had to prove that I am not just a female, but I am also a leader and an activist who deserves to be in this particular leadership position” Titi*

The constraining factors participants highlighted presented a complicated combination of methods and obstacles, as demonstrated by the lived experiences of DUT female student leaders. Even though there are still many obstacles posed by gender prejudices and preconceptions, female leaders are figuring out how to make their voices heard and push for reform in the institution. Female leaders have to prove every time that they are capable of being a leader. They have shared that they have to prove that they are fit enough for their leadership roles. They believed participating in leadership will enhance their leadership skills. They do have mentors who are available to guide them. That is how they also build themselves to be strong. The capacity-building programme was also one of the major components in building resilience and capacitating these leaders. As a result, former leaders were able to complete their office terms despite challenges. They never gave up; they persevered to make a difference. They shared their in-depth experiences, which provided valuable insights for this research.

#### **4.5.1 Decision-Making**

One of the basic tenets in participative leadership theory is the collective decision principle (Wang *et al.* 2022). The participative leadership style exemplifies an array of ideas, including delegating tasks, shared decision-making, and specified participation (Khassawneh and Elrehail, 2022). The female student leaders highlighted the following aspects with regards to decision-making in relation to their roles.

*“We do consult [with] our branch. We [are] going to hold a meeting with the branch leadership if we do not come up with the solution. Then, we hold a meeting with the branch members as well as the SRC. And report that we have met with the branch leadership, or we have met with the management, and we speak about this and that” Precious.*

*“I consult. And at times it is a difficult thing because sometimes consulting we don’t understand things in the same way. In the group you find people who are very anti to certain things, so it takes too long to get to make decision” Nelly.*

*“When the decisions that are to be taken you always go back to the organisation that you were leading. Because when you sign the membership, you adhere to the organisation’s constitution, and you apply the membership ideologies and its principles as well. And so, it can never take decision without notifying or going back to the organisation to deliberate on whether that decision should be taken or not” Titi.*

The participants highlighted that to be a candidate eligible for leadership at DUT, you must belong to certain political groups. The SRC is an umbrella body for all networks, clubs and societies at DUT. To be an SRC candidate, you must be nominated by your group. When elections take place, candidates contest as part of a politically affiliated group. However, the DUT constitution subjects candidates as independent, not as dependents in certain political organisations. The SRC is not restricted to leading their own group or organisation. The SRC leads the entire student population at DUT.

When they have to take a decision, they consult both their groups and the student population. They believe that members of their organisation are the ones who mostly communicate with students. Participants highlighted that after they have taken a decision, they report back to their organisation. They do not take decisions on their own as they believe it will affect the whole student population. Wang *et al.* (2022) discussed the fundamentals of participative leadership, which are collective decision-making, elevated standards of morality and the principle of mutual support. Female student leaders do use their strength and adopt democratic decisions.

*“The problem is usually that when one organisation wins, says the EFF wins all the rights sits at the Durban campus. It means that the SRC that the EFF the EFFSC led the SRC does not only represent the EFF membership but represents all the students at DUT” Titi.*

Female student leaders in the SRC shared how they take or make decisions. They consult their groups before making decisions and they participate in decision-making. Lythreathis *et al.* (2019) support the idea that participation of group or team members in the decision-making process is one of the advantages of participative theory. Female leaders outlined that although they are leaders, they are too few and cannot reach all students. Consequently, they do consult their group members if they must take decisions. DUT’s female student leaders are portrayed as democratic leaders when it comes to decision-making processes. They understand that they are the student body, and all students will benefit from their decisions, including those from other political organisations or groups.

*“Ok well, usually the club and society that I belonged to was usually they say a language will be on the ground. But I will say they are closer to students right, so if there is something you want to initiate or you want to make a decision. Since you are*

*leading students, you got to have opinions of students. So, you take the opinion from the club and society that you come from because you [are] not representing them only. But the club and society that you come from. They actually interact with students on a daily basis, and they get to hear their opinions. And then from there on you take that information and you sit down as the Student Representative Council (SRC), and you see that is this information actually assisting them” Cindy.*

*“Because you know as SRC members we eight so since we are eight each an everyone has their office. There are things that were happening in my office on my own directly that I was taking decisions on my own and give the feedback. But there was thing that needed the SRC as a whole then, when it SRC as whole then we needed to go to brief on what things have transpired. But I think we consulted most” Noma.*

*“Because at the end of the day if the leadership took decisions without notifying the organisation the organisation is the one that is going to be in trouble not Titi. You know, Titi is not going to be the one in trouble students are going to see SASCO as being the problem” Titi.*

Female student leaders at DUT are portrayed as democratic leaders. They do listen to the ideas from other leaders, team members and students. They understand that

making decisions will not affect them personally as leaders, but it will also affect the people they lead. Whenever they make decisions, the decisions are intended to benefit the entire student population and their organisations. The researcher also asked female student leaders if they have equal access to participation in the decision-making process at DUT. Female student leaders reported that they do not have equal access compared to members of the SRC.

*“As far as I am concerned at DUT the Student Representative Council (SRC) is the one that gives part of the decision-making process. And usually, it depends on which organisation has won the Student Representative Council in that particular year” Titi.*

The researcher asked female student leaders who are or were members of the SRC, if they have equal access to the decision-making processes in their clubs and societies at DUT. The responses showed that female student leaders who are in SRC are given equal access to the decision-making processes.

*“Yes, I feel we are given an opportunity so with those opportunities that is where we actually get to you know ... discuss those things” Nolwazi.*

Other female student leaders believed that the portfolios allocated to them do not give them much power. As much as they are part of the SRC, there are meetings that they do not need them. Some meetings only require the president and the secretary general. The president and the secretary general represent the student leaders.

*“I think it depends on the position that you are allocated to because for example there are institutional policies. Where only the president and the secretary or deputy president can attend, it a*

*matter of where we have been allocated to in terms of the structure. And then how does your portfolio give you access? So, I think it a matter of the position that you hold” Amanda.*

At DUT, certain meetings require participation only from the president and secretary general of the SRC. In terms of DUT’s SRC constitution, both the president and the secretary general represent the entire SRC in the Senate. Senex, which is the executive committee of the senate, only requires only the attendance of the SRC president. However, members of the SRC share information with their representatives. They report back to them in their capacity as student leaders. Student leaders indicated that roles and responsibilities are made clear, responsibility is encouraged, and communication and decision-making are made easier in an organisation with a clearly defined organisational structure. This ensures that everyone is aware of their own role as well as the roles of others, thereby promoting efficiency and reducing misunderstandings.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the data was analysed using thematic analysis (deductive). This study was underpinned by three theories, which were discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter outlined the results of the data that was collected by the researcher. All the results focusing on female students’ quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology were presented and discussed. The researcher grouped common responses into themes and sub-themes. Through thematic analysis the following themes emerged: the motivation to be a leader, factors that enable and constrain female student leaders, and how the student leaders navigate their lived experiences. This research yielded four themes and sub-themes. This chapter presented all the results based on the research objectives and questions. All the research questions were answered.



# **CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion and Recommendations**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study of female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at DUT. This study aimed to explore female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology. The researcher was grounded by the research objectives, which were to explore the motivation of female students to become leaders, to identify the factors that enable and/or constrain female student leaders, and to examine how female student leaders navigate their lived experience at the university.

A cursory overview was provided in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, the researcher discussed the literature that is relevant to this study and outlined the three theories that underpin this study: Social Identity Theory (SIT), Management Theory and Participative Theory. The research approach and the research instrument that were adopted were discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presented and elaborated on all the findings of the study. Through thematic analysis the following themes emerged: the motivation to be a leader, factors that enable and constrain female student leaders, and how the student leaders navigate their lived experiences. The three themes that emerged from the data were discussed along with some pertinent literature in Chapter Four. The consolidation of the findings from the previous chapter's analysis follows a brief reflection on the research method at the beginning of this chapter. This chapter will briefly discuss the researcher's reflection on the research process and outline the main conclusion from this study. The chapter will also present recommendations for future research based on the findings of this research.

## **5.2 Reflection on the research process**

It was incredibly fulfilling and growth-promoting for me to start this research and see it through to the very end. Engaging with the abundance of available literature and discussing it was a rewarding experience. Recruiting female student leaders from the Durban University of Technology, conducting the interviews and understanding their experiences in the academic environment yielded a wealth of information that emphasised the struggles and victories these female student leaders encountered. It was not an easy journey but very educational. My comprehension of the extensive labour required to consolidate the themes in qualitative research was further enhanced by examining the abundance of qualitative data and being forced to engage myself in it while researching and evaluating it.

## **5.3 Main Conclusions from this study**

Considering the study's objectives provided in Chapter 1, the following conclusions can be drawn from the data.

### **5.3.1 Motivation of female student leaders.**

The findings highlighted the different motivations that DUT female student leaders possess. Making a difference in their communities is a common source of motivation for DUT female student leaders. They want to actively participate in finding solutions to the major issues that the institution and their generation are now confronting. The opportunity to advance their knowledge, acquire experience, and mature as people frequently serves as a catalyst for DUT's female student leaders. To them, becoming a leader is a process of personal development. Makki and Abid (2017) concluded that people who are intrinsically motivated participate in activities because they find them interesting and enjoyable, leading them to perform at a high level.

Participants are mostly motivated by external factors, which are extrinsic motivation. Robson's (2019) research concluded that student leaders are primarily extrinsically motivated. DUT's female student leaders' primary motivation is political affiliation.

Political views and ideals serve as a source of motivation for DUT female student leaders. DUT female student leaders also believed they could inspire students they are leading, assist them to achieve their goals, to overcome financial obstacles and explore for alternative financing sources. As students who have been personally affected by funding issues, they understand the channels to provide assistance to other students.

They were also motivated by their own socio-economic status and experiences as students, which included financial difficulties. The results of the study by Rodríguez-Hernández *et al.* (2020) indicated that home resources, income, occupation, education and neighbourhood resources are used to measure socio-economic status. It is evident that most of them come from lower social backgrounds. As a result, they are or were NSFAS beneficiaries. They understood or encountered financial challenges and did not want other students to experience the same predicament they had.

### **5.3.2 Enabling and constraining factors of female student leaders.**

Based on research findings, there were different enabling and constraining factors for female student leaders. Capacity development is one of the major enabling factors for DUT female student leaders. During their term of office, the institution organises capacity development programmes for the student leaders. Most of these programmes are organised by student governance. Female student leaders emphasised that capacity development programmes enhance their abilities, competencies and knowledge to succeed in leadership roles. They have mentors they look up to and believe they can aid in shaping their leadership roles. Mentors are provided in some of the structures, for example, the QLN. Respondents declared that it was compulsory to have advisors. Other structures do not provide mentors; however, female student leaders do have people or other women whom they regard as their mentors.

At the DUT, female student leaders face constraints that impair their efficacy and restrict their capacity to carry out their responsibilities. Gatekeeping at the DUT

student leadership is undoubtedly a major impediment. That process does not favour females, but favours males, as they are given portfolios such as social and welfare, deputising, sport, and recreation. According to Jali *et al.*'s (2019) finding females are given positions that are regarded as less important in a structure. The authors further indicated that out of twenty-six universities, only six have female presidents. The only time DUT had the female SRC president was 2016/2017. After that, females were allocated other positions. The gatekeeping process is done through the groups they belong to. Especially BECs since they are the ones allocating positions. This practice perpetuates existing disparities and impedes the formation of inclusive and diverse leadership groups.

### **5.3.3 Experience of female student leaders.**

Based on the findings, the experience of female student leaders is not impressive. Stereotype and patriarchy are manifestations of gender bias faced by DUT female student leaders. They are scrutinised for their leadership qualities and choices based on their personal lives, and they are seen as less capable or powerful than the men in their group. They experience overt discrimination because of their gender. They even highlighted that they must work harder to prove that they are capable or equal to the task. Instead of being respected for their leadership skills, female student leaders are often viewed as symbolic examples of inclusivity or mere attempts of tokenism are made to accommodate them since the DUT population is for all genders.

They emphasised that they are being undermined. Their thoughts or ideas were often disregarded unless it comes from men counterparts. The female leaders believed that patriarchal norms come from society and are subsequently transferred to the institution of higher learning. As much as the institution can try to fight these norms, they cannot change individuals. DUT female student leaders have encountered negative experiences, and they are hoping that as time goes by, individuals will eventually change. Even institutions are promoting gender equality and developing new systems to fight gender disparities. Although they face obstacles, female leaders

provide unique abilities and viewpoints to their positions, like perseverance, empathy and teamwork.

### **5.3.3 How Do They Navigate Their Lived Experiences?**

Female student leaders at the DUT frequently navigated challenging terrains moulded by their distinct possibilities, obstacles and experiences. Numerous elements, such as institutional assistance, personal goals, and societal expectations, have impacted their leadership journey. DUT female leaders shared that they had bad experiences in leading. Despite facing challenges, every one of them completed their term of office, and none of them withdraw from leadership responsibility due to bad experience. They found ways to navigate their lived experience. They worked more than what was expected of them. Being labelled "female comrade" compelled them to work harder to prove that they are capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of a student leader.

Mentors also play a crucial role in motivating these leaders. They gain strength from their mentors or advisors and capacity development programmes. The development and resilience of these female student leaders is founded on their interactions within programmes and with their advisors, who can offer support and share knowledge.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the study's findings. These recommendations will assist DUT and female student leaders in their leadership roles.

- DUT should have more programmes that capacitate female student leaders, including skill development programmes and seminars strictly for female student leaders that will help them to lead more efficiently.
- Female student leaders must be capacitated by attending emotional intelligence workshops and personal mastery classes to better deal with the challenges and barriers that they face.

- Support platforms should be established for female student leaders seeking support.
- The DUT SRC constitution must highlight the importance of gender equality among student leaders and include provisions from the Gender Equity Act.
- The institution must advance the Qhakaza Ladies Network (QLN) from the residence level to institutional level to benefit more female student leaders and develop support structures that advocate for gender.
- DUT Student Governance should make it compulsory for clubs and societies to have mentors or advisors. This will benefit student leaders in developing their leadership abilities.
- Female student leaders must be capacitated by attending emotional intelligence workshops and personal mastery classes so they can deal with a very negative environment and personal challenges.
- DUT must assign student advisors to the SRC to assist them manage their roles effectively since they interact extensively with many students. This will enable them to shape their leadership roles.
- DUT should provide skill development programmes for female student leaders.
- All leaders (male and female) should undergo compulsory training and development programmes that deal with gender stereotyping and gender equity.

## **5.5 Recommendation for future research**

This research focused on female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology. Future research should include male leaders at DUT to understand their perspective on female leaders and the reasons for their behaviour towards female leaders. Future researchers can also adopt or use mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) research, as this study only adopted the qualitative approach.

## **5.6 Study Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is the sample size. Due to the nature of the study, only ten participants were interviewed, as data saturation was achieved. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were used, which may not adequately capture the complexity of the topic. Thirdly, the findings of this study may not be generalised to other institutions as the contexts may vary.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This qualitative study explored female students' leadership experience, quest for leadership and lived experience at the Durban University of Technology. This chapter incorporated the researcher's reflections during the research process. It also wrapped up the main conclusions from this study. The institution implements gender equality and equity policies but still needs to address gender disparities. Recommendations for study and for future researchers were outlined. The limitations of this study were discussed.

By understanding the challenges and opportunities female leaders face, we can work toward promoting gender equity and creating inclusive environments in higher education. Further research should continue to explore these areas to empower females in leadership roles.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A – Covering letter



Dear Prospective Participant

I hope this email finds you well. I am a full-time registered master's candidate for Master of Management Science in Administration and Information Management under Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. My research title: Exploring Female Students' Quest for Leadership and Their Lived Experience in at the Durban University of Technology.

The purpose of this study is to explore female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the DUT. The focus of this study is on female students who are leading different clubs and societies that affiliated to DUT. This includes religious organizations, political organisations and students that are leading residence life networks. I am particularly interested in hearing about your quest and experience in leadership. I humbly request your participation in this study. Your participation in this study would involve a semi-structured interview, which will be conducted either in person or online through MS Teams or Zoom based on your convenience. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded, and I will also take notes to ensure accurate data capture. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your responses will be kept confidential, and any identifying information will be anonymised to ensure your privacy.

Please indicate your interest by replying to this email, and I will provide you with further details and arrange a suitable time for the interview. Thank you for considering this invitation. Your contribution to this research study would be highly appreciated should you decide to participate, I look forward to the opportunity to engage further with you.

Warm regards  
Thalente Hadebe

For further enquires please contact you may also contact my supervisor Dr R Govender [rosalineg@dut.ac.za](mailto:rosalineg@dut.ac.za) or the Chairperson of IREC Prof J K Adam [adamjk@dut.ac.za](mailto:adamjk@dut.ac.za).

## Appendix B- Letter of Information and Consent



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

**Title of the Research Study:** Exploring female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology.

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Thalente Hadebe,

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:** Dr Rosaline Govender

#### Greetings

My name is Thalente Hadebe, I am a Master's degree candidate at the Durban University of Technology. I am currently undertaking a research study aimed at Exploring female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology.

#### Invitation to the potential participant

You are cordially invited to take part in this research. It is important to understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you have the right to refuse or withdraw from the interview at any time. Kindly be informed that even though you will be recorded, all information will be handled anonymously. The focus of the study is on female students who are leading the different clubs and societies that are affiliated to DUT. This includes religious organisations, political organisations and students that are leading residence life networks at residence.

**Outline of the Procedures:** If you decide to partake in the study, you will be asked to engage in the following activity: Personal interviews: Questions will take approximately 30-40 minutes. The interviews will occur in a one-on-one setting in a safe environment through a scheduled zoom call with only the researcher and you present.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** This research is not meant to hurt you in any way. If you decide to end the interview, you are free to do so by notifying the researcher of your decision and giving no explanation.

**Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:** Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to decline or withdraw for any reason you choose without suffering any negative effects.

**Remuneration:** Nothing will be given to you in the way of compensation or reward. However, if you select an online interview, internet access will be given to you.

**Research-related Injury:** The nature of the study does not pose any risk of injury to the respondents.

**Confidentiality:** Nothing you say can be used to identify you. As per the IREC's data storage guidelines, all collected information will be secured in a safe location and deleted after five years.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:** Data will be collected and stored in a manner that ensures participant confidentiality is maintained throughout the study. The data collected will be kept secure and stored in a locked office of research study personnel at DUT. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the stored data and will be destroyed after 5 years.

**Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Please contact the researcher (Tel no. 0810520792), my supervisor (email: Rosalineg@dut.ac.za or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Prof K Motaung on TtiDirector@dut.ac.za



**CONSENT**

**Full Title of the Study:** Exploring female students’ quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology.

**Names of Researcher/s:** Thalete Hadebe

**Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:**

- I ..... hereby confirm that I have been informed by the (Name of researcher, \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_,

- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Participant Thumbprint</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Signature / Right</b>

I, Thalente Hadebe (Name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full Name of Researcher** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full Name of Witness (If applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature**



## APPENDIX C

Faculty Research Office  
Durban University of Technology  
Date: 18 July 2023

Student: Ms Thalente Hadebe  
Student Number: 21642828  
Degree: Master of Management Sciences in Administration and Information Management  
Degree  
Email: 21642828@dut4life.ac.za  
Supervisor: Dr R Govender  
Supervisor email: rosalineg@dut.ac.za

**Dear Ms Hadebe**

**ETHICAL APPROVAL: LEVEL 2**

I am pleased to inform you that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) following feedback from two reviewers, has granted preliminary permission for you to conduct your research 'Exploring female students' quest for leadership and their lived experiences at the Durban University of Technology.'

**When ethics approval is granted:**

You are required to present the letter at your research site(s) for permission to gather data. Please also note that your research instruments must be accompanied by the letter of information and the letter of consent for each participant, as per your research proposal.

This ethics clearance is valid from the date of provisional approval on this letter for one year. A student must apply for recertification 3 months before the date of this expiry.

Recertification is required every year until after corrections are made, after examination, and the thesis is submitted to the Faculty Registrar.


A summary of your key research findings must be submitted to the FRC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mogiveny Rajkoomar  
FREC Chair  
Faculty of Accounting and Informatics

## Appendix D- SRC Constitution

 <b>DUT</b> DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE	
<b>STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SRC) CONSTITUTION of            THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY</b>	
Document name	Students' Representative Council Constitution
Co-ordinating Executive Manager/Document Owner	Registrar
Operational Manager/s	Dean of Students
Contact and telephone number for support	031 373 2683
Status	Submitted for approval
Approved by	Council
Date approved	24 June 2023
Date last amended	
Title of manager responsible for monitoring policy implementation	Manager: Student Governance and Development
Date for next review	
Related policies	Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997); Amended Institutional Statute of DUT (Gov Gazette No 48062 of 2023)

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the students of the Durban University of Technology, are cognizant of our diversity and the consequent need for unity as a student community. Further, we affirm our commitment to the principles espoused in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996. We pledge our commitment to remedying the divisions of the past by establishing a student community embracing the following values and principles, amongst many others: transparency, honesty, integrity, respect, accountability, fairness, professionalism, commitment, compassion and excellence.

Again, we commit ourselves to ensuring that the SRC Constitution:

- enhances general and academic life and promotes academic excellence
- upholds democracy and democratic values
- upholds elements in the Bill of Rights (RSA Constitution) especially those that pertain to universities including academic freedom
- promotes the values and principles of the Durban University of Technology and universal ones that universities subscribe to.
- fosters interaction and communication between the SRC and the student community, and with Management
- inculcates the ideal of equality in all aspects of student life
- contributes to the realization of unity that is based on values and principles
- is implementable through the establishment of appropriate support and leadership development programmes for students

The SRC Constitution must be read to give expression to the powers granted by the Constitution of South Africa, the Higher Education Act, the Institutional Statute of DUT and the DUT Student Handbook.

## INTERPRETATION

In this Constitution, unless inconsistent with or otherwise indicated by the context:

- (a) “**Academic days**” shall mean days during normal term time and excludes Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.
- (b) “**Act**” shall mean the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997) as amended.
- (c) “**By-election**” shall mean an election conducted to fill in a vacancy in the SRC
- (d) “**Campus**” shall mean, based on context, any of the various campuses of DUT.
- (e) “**Centre**” shall mean, based on context, either the Durban Centre or the Midlands Centre.
- (f) “**Central Housing Committee**” shall mean leadership from House Committees.
- (g) “**Club, Society and Organisation**” shall mean all formally organized campus student formations (social, cultural, religious, or political) which are formally recognized by the SRC, the student umbrella body as defined in the DUT Statute.
- (h) “**Constitution**” shall mean the SRC Constitution as delineated in this document.
- (i) “**Council**” shall mean the Council of the University as defined in the Act and the DUT Statute.
- (j) “**Dean of Students**” shall mean the member of the Management team responsible for the student services portfolio.
- (k) “**DUT**” shall mean the Durban University of Technology.
- (l) “**DUT Statute**” shall mean the Amended Institutional Statute Durban University of Technology published in terms of the Act by Government Notice No. 1611 of 17 February 2023 in Government Gazette number 48062 of 17 February 2023.

- (m) **“Faculty Boards”** shall mean the Faculty Boards of the University.
- (n) **“Full Council”** shall mean a sitting of all 15 (fifteen) members of the SRC.
- (o) **“Institutional Forum”** shall mean the Institutional Forum of the University as defined in the DUT Statute.
- (p) **“Management”** shall mean the personnel responsible for the academic and administrative management of the University under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.
- (q) **“Manager: Student Governance and Development”** shall mean the person who holds the portfolio of student governance and development and who reports to the Dean of Students.
- (r) **“Majority centre”** shall refer to the centre with the majority of students.
- (s) **“Minority centre”** shall refer to the campus/centre with the minority of students.
- (t) **“Month”** shall mean a calendar month.
- (u) **“Recognition of clubs”** A process by which a newly established or a revitalized club that was inactive in the previous year is affiliated to the SRC
- (v) **“Renewal of affiliation”** A process by which clubs that existed during the previous year are affiliated to the SRC.

- (w) “**Senate**” shall mean the Senate of the University as defined in the University Statute.
- (x) “**Simple majority**” shall mean 50 (fifty) percent plus one of the members present at a meeting.
- (y) “**SRC**” shall mean the Students' Representative Council, members of which are elected in terms of the Constitution.
- (z) “**SRC Disciplinary Tribunal**” shall mean the Students' Representative Council Disciplinary Tribunal as contemplated in rule SR5 (2) in the General Handbook for Students.
- (aa) “**Student**” shall mean any person currently registered as a student for a formal program approved by University Senate.
- (bb) “**Student Governance and Development**” shall refer to the designated University Unit with duties, responsibilities and tasks in support of the SRC specified in this Constitution
- (cc) “**Student Parliament**” shall mean the official student assembly of the University. (dd) “**University**” shall mean the Durban University of Technology.
- (ee) “**Vice-Chancellor**” shall mean the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University as defined in the University Statute and the Act.
- (ff) “**Year**” shall mean the University academic year as determined by the University’s annual academic calendar.

## **SECTION 1**

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE SRC**

- 1.1 The objectives of the SRC are to:
  - 1.1.1 Represent students of the University in matters that may affect them.
  - 1.1.2 Provide leadership to students through exemplary conduct, serve the interests of students without partiality, bias, prejudice, discrimination or preference and shall promote:
    - 1.1.2.1 A culture of learning and academic excellence.
    - 1.1.2.2 Democracy.
    - 1.1.2.3 Community service.
  - 1.1.3 Promote unity-in-diversity among students.
  - 1.1.4 Promote the values and principles of the University.

## **SECTION 2**

### **NAME, STATUS AND LOCATION**

- 2.1 The official name of the SRC shall be “Durban University of Technology Students' Representative Council”.
- 2.2 The official location of the SRC shall be at the University centre where the majority of students are registered.
- 2.3 The SRC can sub-own assets, but not independently of the University. The SRC shall not have the power to dispose of or alienate any assets, save for the distribution of funds as approved and as contemplated in the Constitution.

## **SECTION 3**

### **POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SRC**

- 3.1 The powers and functions of the SRC are contained in paragraph 40 of the Institutional Statute Durban University of Technology (gazetted in 2023) In terms thereof, the SRC is the umbrella organization for all student committees, clubs, councils, societies and organizations, and shall have the power to grant or withdraw recognition of such student

committees, clubs, councils and societies based on prescribed grounds and procedures in the relevant Rules.

- 3.2 The SRC shall represent students in negotiations and interactions with the University's structures.
- 3.3 The SRC shall, keep accounts of all monies spent by and accruing to it. The SRC shall allocate funds for student activities in consultation with recognized clubs, societies and organizations.
- 3.4 Student Governance and Development shall exercise oversight over the expenditure and income of the SRC.
- 3.5 The SRC shall organize co-curricular activities for students in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- 3.6 The SRC shall co-ordinate student involvement in both community and student development projects it initiates and those that the University may assign.
- 3.7 The SRC shall hold at least one public feedback meeting before the end of each semester.
- 3.8 The SRC shall consult all student clubs, societies and organizations before making decisions that affect these structures.
- 3.9 The SRC shall convey student matters in all general referenda and petitions organized by students, in accordance with the rules of the SRC and the University.
- 3.10 The SRC shall co-ordinate and supervise the use of student facilities, assets and resources placed under its care and jurisdiction in conjunction with Management.

- 3.11 The SRC shall foster student awareness of the Constitution and make it readily available for inspection by interested students.
- 3.12 The SRC may issue media statements in respect of any matter relating to students, provided that there shall be no misrepresentation.
- 3.13 The SRC shall perform such functions and enjoy such privileges as may be specifically conferred upon it by Council.
- 3.14 The SRC shall preserve order at student functions and approved meetings of students.
- 3.15 The SRC shall, in consultation with the Student Services Board, the Students Parliament and Management recommend to Council the rules and procedures determining the conduct of its affairs.

## **SECTION 4**

### **COMPOSITION, MEMBERSHIP AND SIZE OF THE SRC**

- 4.1 The SRC, known as the SRC Council, shall consist of 15 (fifteen) elected members as specified below:
  - 4.1.1 Seven (7) members from the Midlands centre
  - 4.1.2 Eight (8) members from the Durban centre
- 4.2 The SRC Executive Committee (SRC Exco) shall consist of the:
  - 4.2.1 President
  - 4.2.2 Deputy President
  - 4.2.3 General Secretary
  - 4.2.4 Deputy General Secretary
  - 4.2.5 Finance Officer

## **SECTION 5**

### **RULES FOR ELECTION OF THE SRC**

#### **5.1 Direct election of SRC members to portfolios during elections**

5.1.1 The position of President shall be directly contested by candidates of the majority centre; that of Deputy President shall be directly contested by candidates of the minority centre

5.1.2 The Secretary General shall be directly contested by candidates of the minority centre and the Deputy Secretary General directly contested by candidates of the majority centre.

5.1.3 The Finance Officer shall be directly contested by candidates of the majority centre

5.1.4 The other portfolios of the SRC that shall be directly contested for by candidates are the following

5.1.4.1 Two Sports and Recreation Officers - one each from the Durban and Midlands centres

5.1.4.2 Two Academic Officers - one each from the Durban and Midlands centres

5.1.4.3 Two Social and Welfare Officers - one each from the Durban and Midlands centres.

5.1.4.4 Two Projects Officers - one each from the Durban and Midlands centres

5.1.4.5 Two Organizations and Accommodation Officers - one each from the Durban and Midlands centres.

#### **5.2 Filling of vacancies**

5.2.1 Should a vacancy occur in the SRC, the position shall be filled by the runner up candidate who stood for that portfolio, depending on their availability.

5.2.2 If 5.2.1 is not applicable, it shall be offered to the next runner up who stood for the portfolio,

depending on availability, in a descending order.

5.2.3 In cases where there are no candidates, from those who stood for the portfolio, to invite to fill the vacancy:

5.2.3.1 The Chief Electoral Officer will invite the losing candidate who has polled the highest votes from all the other positions competed for in the elections of the centre, to form part of the SRC.

5.2.3.2 The Chief Electoral Officer will preside over a meeting in which the whole SRC shall re-allocate portfolios among themselves by means of secret vote.

5.2.3.3 The vote shall be by secret ballot and all members have the right to vote, including those who are nominated.

### **5.3 Allocation of office bearers to University Committees.**

5.3.1 The SRC allocation to University Committees shall be as follows:

5.3.2 The President and Secretary General shall represent the SRC in Council and

5.3.2.1 Together with a postgraduate student at Senate

5.3.2.2 Only the President at Senex (Executive Committee of Senate).

5.3.3 Provided one of them is a post graduate student, the President, Deputy President, Deputy Secretary General and the Secretary General shall be allocated to the Student Services Board.

5.3.4 The Finance Officer and the Academic Officers shall be allocated to the Fees and the Financial Aid Committees.

5.3.5 The Sport and Recreation Officers and the Social and Welfare Officers shall be allocated to Safety/Health and Environmental Committee as well as to the HIV/AIDS Committee and Wellness Committee.

- 5.3.6 The Academic Officers and Projects Officers shall be allocated to the Library Committee.
- 5.3.7 One of the Academic Officers and the President shall be allocated to the Vice-Chancellor's Student Appeals Tribunal.
- 5.3.8 One of the Organizations and Accommodation Officers shall be allocated to the House Committees as well as to the Student Disciplinary Tribunals.
- 5.4 The Secretary General, through Student Governance and Development, shall forward the completed committee allocations to the office of the Registrar through the Committees Unit.
- 5.5 The SRC President, in consultation with his/her executive, under the guidance of the Student Governance and Development Unit may allocate members to new committees established by the University.

## **SECTION 6**

### **DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF SRC OFFICE BEARERS AND COMMITTEES**

- 6.1 In addition to the duties and functions listed below, the SRC may assign other duties and functions to any of its members.
- 6.2 Again, in addition to the Committees listed below, the SRC may establish other Committees when necessary, and may co-opt students with special skills to these Committees.
- 6.3 SRC sub-committees shall have terms of reference.
- 6.4 All office bearers shall submit quarterly reports to the Student Governance and Development Unit.
- 6.5 **Duties of the President The President shall:**
- 6.5.1 Chair all meetings of the SRC, the SRC Executive Committee, Annual General Meeting (AGM) and General/Special Mass Meetings of the student body. In the

absence of the President, the Deputy President shall preside. In the absence of the President and the Deputy President, the members of the affected Committee shall appoint a fellow member to preside.

6.5.2 Be an ex-officio member of all SRC standing committees.

6.5.3 Be responsible for the overall co-ordination of the duties and functions of SRC members.

- 6.5.4 Together with the Finance Officer and Secretary General, be an official signatory of the SRC.
- 6.5.5 Be responsible for all international and external affairs of the SRC, including, but not limited to, liaison with any national organization with which the SRC has an association.
- 6.5.6 Co-ordinate matters relating to the SRC Disciplinary Tribunal in conjunction with the office of the Manager: Student Governance and Development.
- 6.5.7 Ensure compliance with the code of conduct by SRC members, its Committees and the Student Parliament.

**6.6 Duties of the Deputy President The Deputy President shall:**

- 6.6.1 Act in place of the President in his/her absence.
- 6.6.2 Support and assist the President in the co-ordination of the duties and functions of SRC members.
- 6.6.3 Perform any other duties delegated to him/her by the President, subject to the terms and conditions of the Constitution.

**6.7 Duties of the Secretary General The Secretary General shall:**

- 6.7.1 Be the chief operations and administrative officer of the SRC.
- 6.7.2 Be the chief custodian of all documents of the SRC.
- 6.7.3 Keep the original signed minutes of all proceedings of meetings of the SRC and ensure that all resolutions are duly recorded in the minutes.
- 6.7.4 Timeously circulate notices, agendas and minutes of meetings to all SRC members.
- 6.7.5 Be responsible for the processing of all correspondence of the SRC with persons or bodies outside the SRC.
- 6.7.6 Manage the process of granting or withdrawal of recognition of clubs, societies and organizations.

- 6.7.7 Be responsible for the circulation of important information both within and outside the SRC.
  - 6.7.8 Together with the President and Finance Officer, be an official signatory of the SRC.
  - 6.7.9 Ensure that the minutes, duly signed by the relevant Chairpersons of SRC meetings, are forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students.
  - 6.7.10 Be responsible for the Public Relations of the SRC, ensuring that the SRC cultivates and projects a positive image.
  - 6.7.11 In the spirit of collegiality and in conjunction with the President and Organizations and Accommodation Officer, correspond responsibly with the media on relevant issues.
  - 6.7.12 Issue all notices of an AGM/Mass Meeting to the general student body.
  - 6.7.13 In consultation with the SRC President, convenes special SRC meetings, Student General Mass Meetings and Annual General Meetings (AGMs).
- 6.8 Duties of the Deputy Secretary General The Deputy Secretary General shall:**
- 6.8.1 Deputize for the Secretary General in his/her absence.
  - 6.8.2 Support and assist the Secretary General in the administration of the affairs of the SRC.

6.8.3 Perform any other duties assigned to him/her by the Secretary General or by the Executive Committee.

**6.9 Duties of the Finance Officer The Finance Officer shall:**

6.9.1 Be responsible and accountable to the SRC for the finances of the SRC.

6.9.2 Convene and chair the Finance Committee of the SRC, ensuring that 5 (five) of the members on the Committee are selected from students registered for finance or accounting related programs.

6.9.3 Consult with the full SRC Council on the draft proposal of the budget prepared by the Finance Committee before submission to the Student Governance & Development Unit.

6.9.4 In conjunction with the Student Governance and Development Unit approve the SRC budget and be responsible and accountable to the SRC constituency for the management of the budget of the SRC.

6.9.5 Ensure that the finances of the SRC are duly audited and prepared for presentation at the AGM.

6.9.6 Ensure that all financial transactions of the SRC and its Committees and substructures conform to the financial rules, policies and procedures of the University.

6.9.7 Together with the President and General Secretary, be an official signatory of the SRC.

6.9.8 Present a financial report to the AGM, Student Parliament, and to the SRC whenever required, provided that he/she is given at least seven working days' notice to do so.

6.9.9 In conjunction with the Student Governance and Development Unit, ensure that funds are allocated only to those clubs, societies and organizations whose plans of action and budgets for the year have been approved by the joint sitting of the SRC and Student Governance and Development Unit.

**6.10 Duties of the Sports and Recreation Officer: The Sports and Recreation Officer shall:**

- 6.10.1 Convene and chair the Sports and Recreation Committee of the SRC.
- 6.10.2 In conjunction with the Sports Union and the Sports and Recreation Committee, design an action plan for the year for approval by the SRC.
- 6.10.3 In conjunction with the Sports Union, organize and co-ordinate all sporting activities organized by the SRC.
- 6.10.4 Cultivate collegial relationships between the SRC and the Sports Union.
- 6.10.5 Organize recreation activities and entertainment for the student body.
- 6.10.6 Submit quarterly reports to the SRC secretary for submission to the Department of Student Governance and Development Unit at the end of term.

**6.11 Duties of the Academic Officer The Academic Officer shall:**

- 6.11.1 Convene and chair the Academic Committee of the SRC.
- 6.11.2 In conjunction with the Academic Committee of the SRC, design an action plan for the year for approval by the SRC.
- 6.11.3 Be responsible for assisting on academic matters affecting students; liaise with Faculty Boards to identify issues that require the attention of the SRC and; provide feedback on progress made regarding those issues referred to the SRC.
- 6.11.4 Gather information pertaining to the transformation of the University, and, in conjunction with the Office of the Registrar, facilitate programs and campaigns to educate and inform students about the academic rules of the University.
- 6.11.5 Cultivate positive relationships between the SRC and the student body, lecturers, Heads of Departments and Executive Deans.
- 6.11.6 Submit quarterly reports to the SRC Secretary General for submission to the Student Governance

and Development Unit at the end of term.

**6.12 Duties of the Social and Welfare Officer The Social and Welfare Officer shall:**

6.12.1 Convene and chair the Social and Welfare Committee of the SRC.

6.12.2 Together with the Social and Welfare Committee, design an action plan for the year for approval by the SRC.

6.12.3 Promote and protect the welfare of students who do not reside in the University's residences.

6.12.4 Investigate and attend to issues that relate to the social development of the student community.

6.12.5 Together with the Projects Officer, collaborate on projects that address the challenges facing students.

6.12.6 Represent the SRC in all matters relating to safety, security and accessibility of buildings to physically- challenged students.

6.12.7 Facilitate the initiation and establishment of programs aimed at educating students about safety and security on and off campus.

6.12.8 Facilitate the provision of support to students who are victims, targets and survivors of violence and abuse.

6.12.9 Submit quarterly reports to the SRC Secretary for submission to the Student Governance and Development Unit at the end of term.

**6.13 Duties of the Projects Officer The Projects Officer shall:**

6.13.1 Convene and chair the Projects Committee of the SRC.

6.13.2 In conjunction with the Projects Committee, design an action plan for the year for approval by the SRC.

6.13.3 Co-ordinate all projects of the SRC.

6.13.4 Create awareness amongst students about SRC projects.

6.13.5 Identify community outreach programs or developmental projects to be initiated or supported by the SRC.

6.13.6 Forge links to collaborate with development-oriented community based and non-governmental organizations.

6.13.7 In collaboration with the Finance Officer, fundraise for projects of the SRC.

6.13.8 Submit quarterly reports to the SRC Secretary for submission to the Student Governance and Development Unit at the end of each term.

**6.14 Duties of the Organizations and Accommodation Officer The Organizations and Accommodation Officer shall:**

6.14.2 Convene and chair the Organizations and Accommodation Committee of the SRC.

6.14.3 In conjunction with the Organizations and Accommodation Committee, design an action plan for the year for approval by the SRC.

6.14.4 Be the link and point of reference between the SRC and the various organizations, ensuring that the SRC cultivates and maintains good relations with clubs, societies and organizations.

6.14.5 Ensure that clubs and societies draw up their respective action plans and budgets for the year for approval by the SRC.

6.14.6 Ensure that clubs, societies and organizations submit their quarterly reports to the SRC as required by the SRC constitution.

6.14.7 Submit quarterly reports to the SRC Secretary for submission to the Student Governance and Development Unit at the end of each term.

## **SECTION 7 MEETINGS**

7.1 The SRC shall hold meetings with the following limitations:

7.1.1 Ordinary Mass Meetings: only the SRC may call centre-based mass meetings and any decision taken has to be ratified by a sitting of the Full Council.

7.1.2 Special Mass Meetings: are mass meetings constituted at the request of affiliated constituencies. As opposed to ordinary mass meetings that are called by the SRC and endorsed by Management, such call must be supported by 20% of students at any given centre and two-thirds of the delegates of the Student Parliament at each centre. This may include passing a vote of censure. A successful motion of censure does not, however, result in the dissolution of the SRC; it only records majority student dissatisfaction. This motion may be aimed at the SRC jointly or severally.

7.1.3 Annual General Meeting: this is a compulsory meeting of the SRC to be held before the expiry of the term of office of the SRC. It evaluates SRC performance for their term in general.

7.1.4 Full SRC: the SRC has the power to make decisions that are binding on policy matters and programs.

7.1.5 Centre SRC Meeting: whilst the SRC is one structure comprising representation from all centres, the SRC can have individual centre-based meetings. Motions of an individual centre meeting must be ratified by the Full Council of the SRC.

7.1.6 Executive Meetings of SRC: The Executive acts on behalf of the SRC in urgent matters with subsequent reporting to the Full SRC for ratification of decisions.

7.1.7 All members of the SRC are members of the Student Parliament, and it is compulsory for them to attend all sittings of the Student Parliament.

7.1.8 When requested by Student Parliament to account, the SRC is obligated to appear in person before Student Parliament and to submit a written report on the matter.

### **7.2 Voting at meetings**

7.2.1 Voting at meetings shall be by show of hand, except where 50%+1 (fifty percent plus one) of those present decide on a different specified form of voting.

7.2.2 In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a deciding vote.

### **7.3 Quorum**

7.3.1 The quorum at all meetings of the SRC and its affiliates is 50%+1 (fifty percent plus one) of its constituted members.

7.3.2 Where a meeting of the SRC or any of its committees, including the Student Parliament, is called through official and appropriate notification and there is no quorum, the Chairperson shall adjourn the meeting and call another meeting within 7 (seven) days.

7.3.3 The Secretary General shall give notice of the time and venue of the reconvened meeting to all members of the body concerned and, if this is done, the members present at the start of the reconvened meeting shall constitute a quorum despite any provision to the contrary.

### **7.4 Annual General Meetings and Mass Meetings**

7.4.1 Annual General Meetings, regular or special meetings, and Mass Meetings, shall be open to all bona fide students of DUT.

7.4.2 An AGM shall be called by the SRC prior to the end of its term of office to render an account of its finances, and to report on its activities for the year.

- 7.4.3 The SRC may convene a Special Mass Meeting to consider any matter that is raised by students.
- 7.4.4 Mass meetings can be called at the discretion of the SRC in compliance with the University rules and procedures.
- 7.4.5 A quorum of 5% (five percent) of registered students shall be required at an AGM, ordinary mass meeting or special meeting. However, at a mass meeting convened to consider a vote of no confidence motion against the SRC, a quorum of 20% (twenty percent) of registered students shall be required.
- 7.4.6 Notwithstanding the provisions of 7.4.5 above, in the event that the scheduled meeting is not quorate, another meeting shall be called within 7 (seven) working days and will continue with the students present regardless of quorum. This excludes any meeting called for the dissolution of the SRC.
- 7.4.7 Any resolution taken by simple majority at any mass meeting called by the SRC shall be binding on the SRC.

## **7.5 Aims and Objectives of the Student Parliament**

- 7.5.1 The Student Parliament shall serve as a collective voice of all recognized and registered student sub-structures from all DUT campuses. The Student Parliament will operate within its own terms of reference.
- 7.5.2 The Student Parliament shall serve to keep the SRC and its sub-structures accountable, transparent and rooted in the principles and values of this Constitution by exercising oversight.
- 7.5.3 The Student Parliament shall receive and discuss reports of the SRC every quarter and make its own recommendations.
- 7.5.4 The Student Parliament shall make recommendations to the SRC on policies and issues raised.

## **7.6 SRC meetings**

- 7.6.1 The SRC shall meet at least once every 21 (twenty-one) days except during holidays and examinations. The SRC shall meet at least 10 (ten) times during its term of office. After each full meeting of the SRC Council, a communique shall be published on the Student Portal.
- 7.6.2 The SRC Executive Committee shall meet:
- 7.6.2.1 Once every 2 (two) weeks.
  - 7.6.2.2 When it is not possible to convene a full SRC meeting to address a specific contingency, the decisions of the constituted meeting shall be ratified by a full SRC meeting when it does convene.
  - 7.6.2.3 The quorum of the SRC executive shall be 3 (three) members, provided that not all three are from the same centre.
- 7.6.3 A quorum of 50%+1 (fifty percent plus one) shall be required at SRC meetings.
- 7.6.4 A resolution taken by a simple majority at SRC meetings binds the SRC. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a deciding vote.

## **SECTION 8 TERM OF OFFICE**

- 8.1 The SRC's term of office shall be 24 (twenty-four) months from the final election results to the next final election results. The newly elected SRC may plan its activities for the following academic year, but shall only implement these plans in the following academic year when the budget has been made available.
- 8.2 The SRC shall be inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor (or his/her nominee) in conjunction with the Dean of Students and/or his/her nominee as soon as is practically possible after the portfolio allocations.

## **SECTION 9 ELIGIBILITY**

- 9.1 No student shall be eligible to stand for election unless he/she has passed all the subjects registered for.
- 9.1.1 For students doing annualized programmes, this shall refer to the previous year's results.
- 9.1.2 For the students doing semesterised programs, this shall refer to previous semester's results.
- 9.1.3 The student must have passed the subjects registered for by a combined average of not less than 65%.
- 9.2 Any student who has been registered for at least one completed semester for a formal programme of study recognized by Senate shall be eligible to stand for election, provided he/she complies with stipulations of s9.1 above.
- 9.3 A student may only stand for election at the centre in which he/she is currently registered for a full program as a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student.
- 9.4 The following shall not be eligible to stand for elections:
  - 9.4.1 A student who has been found guilty of an offence by any of the University's Tribunals.
  - 9.4.2 A student who is on academic probation.
  - 9.4.3 A student who has previously been found guilty of an offence/serious misconduct by any other institution of higher learning.
  - 9.4.4 A student who has been found guilty of a criminal offence without the option of a fine by a court of the Republic of South Africa.
- 9.5 All bona fide students registered for a formal program of study recognized by Senate shall be eligible to vote.
- 9.6 The SRC President may not serve more than two terms, whether consecutively or separately.

## **SECTION 10**

### **RECOGNITION OF CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND ORGANISATIONS**

- 10.1 The SRC, being the umbrella organization for all student committees, clubs and societies, councils, and organizations, has the power and responsibility to grant or withdraw recognition of same as it deems appropriate.
- 10.2 Organizations that already exist shall be required to renew their affiliation with the SRC annually by submitting a copy of their program for the current year along with a budget and a list of 150 (one hundred and fifty) signed-up members who are registered students. The date for the renewal of affiliation shall be determined by the SRC at the beginning of the academic year.
- 10.3 Clubs, Societies and Organizations shall be required to submit quarterly reports of their activities Student Governance and Development, who will then forward copies to the SRC office.
- 10.4 Application for recognition shall be done formally via Student Governance and Development using a prescribed form. Student Governance and Development shall keep a record of the application and submit the original to the General Secretary.
- 10.5 An application for recognition shall include a statement of intent (aims and objective, vision and mission), a budget supported by the plan of action, and a draft constitution.
- 10.6 Clubs, societies and organizations applying for recognition shall require a minimum of 150 (one hundred and fifty) signed up members who are registered students of DUT.
- 10.7 An application for recognition shall include the names and signatures of a minimum of 6 (six) students who are willing to serve on the organization's founding committee, provided that they registered for a formal program of study recognized by Senate.
- 10.8 The organization applying for recognition shall call a meeting of its members at which at least one member of the SRC must be present. A record of the proceedings and an attendance register shall

be submitted to the SRC.

- 10.9 The Secretary General shall make a recommendation on the recognition of the organization to an ordinary meeting of the SRC.
- 10.10 The process of recognition must be finalized within 3 (three) weeks after Student Governance and Development Unit has passed the documentation for application of recognition to the Secretary General.
- 10.11 In the event of an application for recognition being rejected, the SRC shall provide reasons in writing to the applying organization.
- 10.12 In the event of a rejection by the SRC, the organization applying for recognition shall have the right of appeal to the Manager: Student Governance and Development whose decision shall be final. The Manager: Student Governance and Development is required to provide written reasons for his/her decision to the SRC and the applicant/s.

## **SECTION 11**

### **WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION OF CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND ORGANISATIONS**

- 11.1 The SRC shall have the right to withdraw recognition of a club, society or organization if, in the opinion of the SRC, the club, society or organization:
  - 11.1.1 Does not operate consistently and in terms of its aims, objectives, and its plan of action during the course of year.
  - 11.1.2 Is, by the actions of its office bearers, found guilty of misappropriation of funds.
  - 11.1.3 Does not submit required reports within 5 (five) days of a reminder being sent out by the SRC.
  - 11.1.4 Is found guilty of any violation of the University's rules and the Code of Conduct.

- 11.2 The SRC shall inform the student organization in writing of its intention to withdraw recognition. Such recognition may only be withdrawn on condition that the SRC provides evidence of wrong doing.
- 11.3 The SRC may give the student organization up to 3 (three) months in which to remedy the problems identified before formal withdrawal of recognition.
- 11.4 An organization that has had its recognition withdrawn shall have the right to appeal to the Manager: Student Governance and Development whose decision shall be final.

## **SECTION 12**

### **TERMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL SRC MEMBERSHIP**

- 12.1 An individual's membership of the SRC shall be terminated on the following grounds:
  - 12.1.1 When the member's registration as a student of the University ceases.
  - 12.1.2 If placed on academic probation and/or is academically excluded.
  - 12.1.3 If found guilty of a serious offence as defined in the University's rules.
  - 12.1.4 If found guilty of a criminal offence by a court of the Republic of South Africa without the option of paying a fine.
  - 12.1.5 On tendering of a written resignation and acceptance of same by the SRC, or through death.
  - 12.1.6 Failure to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without acceptable written explanation
  - 12.1.7 If doing Work-Integrated-Learning (WIL) during the member's term of office
  - 12.1.8 On becoming a member of staff or management or a service provider to the University.

## **SECTION 13**

### **DISSOLUTION OF THE SRC**

- 13.1 Whilst DUT has one SRC for all its campuses, the collective members of the SRC of a specific centre may be dissolved under the following conditions:
  - 13.1.1 Vote of no-confidence motion.
- 13.2 If two-thirds of the SRC members resign simultaneously, the SRC shall be dissolved.
- 13.3 In case of gross misconduct, the Vice-Chancellor may recommend to Council the dissolution of the SRC. Should Council agree to dissolve the SRC, the Vice-Chancellor will facilitate a process to establish an interim SRC.

## **SECTION 14**

### **AMENDMENTS TO SRC CONSTITUTION**

- 14.1 Proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be considered at a Special Mass Meeting.
- 14.2 Students shall be given 1 (one) month to submit any proposed amendments.
- 14.3 Proposed amendments, supported in writing by at least 500 (five hundred) students, may be submitted in writing by any student or student organization to Student Governance and Development who shall keep a record before submitting and passing them on to the General Secretary.
- 14.4 Prior to the Special AGM, proposed amendments must be discussed and recommended for approval by at least 66.6% (two thirds) of the Student Parliament.
- 14.5 Amendments recommended for approval shall be publicized to the general student body 4 (four) weeks prior to the Special AGM where they will be considered. Students may submit written comments or input on the recommended amendments and submit them to the Department of Student Governance and Development who will keep a record before submitting them on to the General Secretary.

- 14.6 There should be clarity on and an indication of amendments recommended for approval and those that are not recommended for approval by the SRC and/or Student Parliament. At the Special AGM, the proposer(s) may motivate to the student body the amendments that are not recommended for approval by the SRC and/or Student Parliament.
- 14.7 A quorum of 10% (ten percent) of registered students shall be required at the Special AGM called to consider amendments to the Constitution.
- 14.8 At least the support of 66.6% (two thirds) of students present at the Special AGM shall be required to pass an amendment to the Constitution.
- 14.9 Amendments to the Constitution shall require the approval of Council. Council may:
- 14.9.1 Accept proposed amendment(s) as is.
- 14.9.2 Accept amendment(s) with changes.
- 14.9.3 Refer a matter back to the SRC and student body for reconsideration.
- 14.9.4 Instruct its own amendments to be incorporated to the Constitution
- 14.9.5 Reject proposed amendment(s). Council shall be required to stipulate their reasons for rejection.

## **SECTION 15**

### **SRC ELECTIONS**

- 15.1 Student Governance and Development shall be responsible for organizing the SRC elections and providing administrative support to the Electoral Commission in accordance with the Electoral Policy.
- 15.2 Elections for the SRC shall be held according to the rules, conditions, processes and procedures set out in a separate schedule entitled "Electoral Policy for the Durban University of Technology SRC".
- 15.3 The elections shall be held during the third term at a convenient date to be determined by the Electoral Commission.

15.4 There shall be no formal SRC activity during the SRC election period, with the exception of the attendance of approved University and/or Committee meetings.

15.5 The SRC comes into office upon the declaration of election results.

## **SECTION 16**

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 16.1 Members of the SRC and its substructures shall at all times strive to conduct themselves and their affairs in a manner worthy of the leadership positions they have been entrusted with. They shall eschew any behaviour and conduct which may bring their structures and/or the University into disrepute.
- 16.2 In conjunction with the Student Code of Conduct as contained in the “General Handbook for Students”, the conduct of the SRC and its substructures shall also be regulated by a “Code of Conduct of the DUT SRC”

## **SECTION 17 PROMULGATION**

- 17.1 Once approved by Council, this SRC Constitution shall:
- 17.1.1 Nullify all existing constitutions or similar documents of the SRC.

## Appendix E- DUT ENVISION2030

# ENVISION2030

## STATEMENT OF INTENT

By 2030

Our people will be creative, innovative, entrepreneurial and adaptive to changes in the world;  
 Our people will participate productively in the development of our region, country and the world;  
 Our state-of-the-art infrastructure and systems will enhance an ecosystem created to achieve this vision.



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
 INYUVESI VASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHIPEHSE  
 Creative. Distinctive. Impactful.

