

**Today's Youth,  
Today's Leaders and Citizens:  
Youth Leadership and its Importance  
in Education**

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**B. A. Mod., H. Dip. Ed.**

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## ***Abstract***

This study focuses on youth leadership as one way in which students within the school community are encouraged to be involved in the school and the effects of this involvement on them. It discusses the styles of leadership utilised and the views of youth on leadership. It considers the characteristics of a leader as defined by adolescents and the potential opportunities for involvement as perceived by the adolescent. Research conducted with participants in a youth leadership training programme forms the basis for discussion. Research conducted with a school not involved in the programme allows a basis for attitudinal comparisons.

The methods employed for data gathering include questionnaires, interviews with key personnel and a focus group discussion. Findings include a description of leadership characteristics based upon personality, physical traits and work ethos. Participation in leadership programmes is influential in opinion formation, development of self-esteem and an increased sense of belonging to the school community. In addition, it provides a model for citizenship and democratic involvement. There is an increase in skills at both personal and interpersonal levels and an improved understanding of the school structure and personnel.

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## Contents

<i>Figures and Tables</i> .....	<i>VI</i>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	<i>1</i>
Reasons for this Research.....	3
Overview of the Dissertation .....	3
<i>Chapter One Leadership, Adolescents and Participation:</i>	
<i>A Review of Key Writings in These Areas</i> .....	<i>6</i>
What is leadership? .....	7
Leadership theories .....	11
The Moral Dimensions of Leadership.....	15
Leaders are.....	19
Why develop Leadership Skills in Adolescence? .....	24
Why Youth Leadership Training is Important.....	27
How society views young people.....	28
The Tradition of the Education System.....	31
<i>Chapter Two Tobar: A Leadership Training Programme</i> .....	<i>41</i>
Tobar: The Vision .....	42
The Historical Context .....	43
Structure of the Leadership Training Programme .....	46
<i>Chapter Three Methodology</i> .....	<i>55</i>
Selection of Schools .....	56
Selection of Participants .....	57

Ethics of Research.....	58
Overview of Research Method .....	59
Rationale for the study .....	60
Rationale for use of the questionnaire.....	61
Questionnaire Design and Content .....	61
Interviews .....	64
Focus group .....	66
Data Analysis.....	69
Triangulation.....	70
Reliability of the Process.....	71
<b><i>Chapter Four Results and Initial Analysis of the Study .....</i></b>	<b>73</b>
Why Tobar? .....	74
To Act Justly - becoming more aware of the surroundings.....	78
To Love Tenderly - changes in interpersonal relationships. ....	82
To Walk Humbly - personal development .....	87
Characteristics of Leadership - Who is a Leader? .....	92
What is Leadership?.....	98
Tobar / Non-Tobar: Differences in Perception .....	103
Females and Males: Different Understandings? .....	112
The Female Viewpoint .....	113
The Male Viewpoint.....	117
<b><i>Chapter Five Conclusions and Recommendations.....</i></b>	<b>125</b>
'I Have No Opinion On This Issue' .....	125
Idealism versus cynicism.....	126

Is Sports The Only Extra-Curricular Activity That Matters? .....	127
'No Tokenism Please' .....	128
'Mol an Óige agus Tiocfaidh Sí' .....	129
'But Why? ' .....	130
'I Will Survive' .....	131
Gender Differences in Understandings of Attractiveness: Implications for Young Women .....	132
'What Do We Want? Change!' .....	132
Tobar Changes .....	133
Educational Implications .....	134
The consultative school .....	138
Findings and Recommendations .....	139
<b><i>Bibliography</i></b> .....	<b>141</b>
References from Popular Culture.....	145
<b><i>Appendix A: Training Guidelines</i></b> .....	<b>146</b>
<b><i>Appendix B: Questionnaire</i></b> .....	<b>147</b>
<b><i>Appendix C: Covering Letter</i></b> .....	<b>151</b>
<b><i>Appendix D: Abridged Version of Questionnaire</i></b> .....	<b>152</b>
<b><i>Appendix E: Questions for Interviews with Principals</i></b> .....	<b>154</b>

## Figures and Tables

<i>Figure</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
Figure 1.1	Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development	17
Figure 1.2	Characteristics Adolescents Associate with Leaders	22
Figure 1.3	Hart's Ladder of Participation	36
Figure 2.1	Tobar Logo	42
Figure 4.1	Physical Traits Associated with Leadership	93
Figure 4.2	Personality Traits Associated with Leadership	94
Figure 4.3	School / Academic Traits Associated with Leadership	95
Figure 4.4	Leaders are Born, not Made	97
Figure 4.5	Leadership as a Transformational Process	99
Figure 4.6	Leadership as a Transactional Process	100
Figure 4.7	Results (by participation) for Leaders are Born, not Made	105
Figure 4.8	Leadership is the Ability to Influence the Actions of Others	107
Figure 4.9	Leadership is unleashing Energy, Freeing, Building, Growing	109
Figure 4.10	Gender (female) Comparison of Personality Traits	113
Figure 4.11	Gender (female) Comparison of Physical Traits	114
Figure 4.12	Gender (female) Comparison of School / Academic Traits	116
Figure 4.13	Gender (male) Comparison of Personality Traits	117
Figure 4.14	Gender (male) Comparison of Physical Traits	118
Figure 4.15	Gender (male) Comparison of School / Academic Traits	119

<b>Table</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Table 1.1	Age of legal entitlements in Ireland (selection of)	21
Table 2.1	Overview of the Schools Involved in the Programme	44
Table 2.2	Outline of a Typical Training Day	51
Table 3.1	Schools that Participated in Study	56



## Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University.

Signed:   
*Rose Dolan*

Date: 26th July, 2001

## ***Abstract***

This study focuses on youth leadership as one way in which students within the school community are encouraged to be involved in the school and the effects of this involvement on them. It discusses the styles of leadership utilised and the views of youth on leadership. It considers the characteristics of a leader as defined by adolescents and the potential opportunities for involvement as perceived by the adolescent. Research conducted with participants in a youth leadership training programme forms the basis for discussion. Research conducted with a school not involved in the programme allows a basis for attitudinal comparisons.

The methods employed for data gathering include questionnaires, interviews with key personnel and a focus group discussion. Findings include a description of leadership characteristics based upon personality, physical traits and work ethos. Participation in leadership programmes is influential in opinion formation, development of self-esteem and an increased sense of belonging to the school community. In addition, it provides a model for citizenship and democratic involvement. There is an increase in skills at both personal and interpersonal levels and an improved understanding of the school structure and personnel.

## ***Introduction***

“Flowers are red.  
Green leaves are green.  
There's no need to see flowers any other way  
Than the way they always have been seen”.

Chapin, H., (1978)

The publication of the White Paper on Education in 1995 was an important step in the development of education in this country. Its opening chapter sets out a philosophy of education and highlights important educational principles, one of which is educational partnership (Department of Education, 1995). It places the learner at the centre of the educational process and then lists the partners in education. A notable omission from the list of partners is the learner. Partnership has been a major point of discussion in educational and social circles for a number of years yet legislation has not given equal status to students due to the fact that they are legally children. The issue of student involvement within schools has received comparatively little attention in national discussions with regard to school policy (Rutter, 1979; Smyth, 1999).

Recent research (Lynch and Lodge, 1999; Lodge and Lynch, 2000) indicates the aspirations of students for a greater democratic involvement with the school institution. It highlights the desire of students to involve themselves in issues that directly affected them. The White Paper also states that:

Interpersonal relationships within schools, and the way in which the school community is encouraged to be involved in the school's operation, have a significant bearing on both student and teacher behaviour. (Department of Education, 1995, p. 163)

Yet the 1998 Report on European Youth trends notes that:

...young people's aspirations and expectations are often defined and managed by adults who have become experts in proposing strategies through which they can exclude young people from decision-making processes and social and educational benefits...

(Report on European Youth, 1998, p.2)

Lodge and Lynch (2000) state that:

...power relationships, as defined and experienced by young people, have not been a major research subject in education however. While power and control have been examined from the teacher perspective, the same attention has not been devoted to student views.

(Lodge and Lynch, 2000, p.47)

The power relationship for young people within the education system is a central issue for the development of leadership in students in schools. Leadership is the exercise of influence and without the forum to exercise that influence, its development can be significantly impeded.

This study will focus on youth leadership as one way in which students within the school community are encouraged to be involved in the school and the effects of this involvement on them. It will discuss the styles of leadership utilised and the views of youth on leadership. It will consider the characteristics of a leader as defined by adolescents and at the potential opportunities for involvement as perceived by the adolescent. Research conducted with participants in a youth leadership training programme will form the basis for discussion. The programme, currently operating in seven schools, is known as the Tobar<sup>1</sup> Leadership Training Programme, hereafter referred to as Tobar. Research

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the programme has been changed to preserve confidentiality.

conducted with a school not involved in the programme will allow a basis for attitudinal comparisons.

### ***Reasons for this Research***

The researcher has a long-standing interest and involvement in the field of youth leadership training, which predates her teaching career. The choice of this subject area was guided both by the topicality of the research and by the researcher's own involvement in this programme. It provides an ideal opportunity to evaluate the programme and to implement changes that may be required. Research in leadership within schools has tended to focus on the adults in the system. This provides the opportunity to consider the views and experiences of the young people in schools. The researcher acknowledges the partiality which she may have and will attempt to limit this partiality in the manner explained in Chapter Three. Triangulation methods will be employed and a number of sources of information (e.g. interviews and information documents from the programme) will be used in order to increase the reliability and validity of the study.

### ***Overview of the Dissertation***

This chapter has explained the context of this study. It also explained the reason for the choice of topic.

Chapter One provides an overview of many of the key research writings in the area of youth leadership, focusing in particular on characteristics of leaders,

charisma and morality, adolescent development and the status of young people in Irish schools and society.

Chapter Two contains background information about Tobar, the youth leadership programme outlining its vision, inception and development.

Chapter Three presents a detailed explanation of the methodology employed for the gathering and analysis of data. It considers the advantages and disadvantages of the methods adopted and highlights the areas of concern and the methods by which they were addressed.

Chapter Four engages in some initial analysis of the data, highlighting the significant factors obtained from the research. It presents the analysis of the qualitative material on the benefits of involvement in Tobar, followed by the statistical data concerning traits and styles of leadership. This data is further analysed by comparison with participation in Tobar and by gender.

Chapter Five explores key issues arising from the findings and contextualises these in terms of key findings in the research literature. It outlines an overview of a model for provision of participative opportunities for young people within schools and concludes with a summary of the main findings of the study and recommendations arising out of these.

The current debate about power and leadership in the field of education has tended to focus on the adults in the system. It is hoped that this research will add

a different dimension to the debate by allowing the voices of students involved in leadership training to make their contribution. It illustrates the desire to participate and the need to belong that is felt by those who took part in the study.

## **Chapter One**

### ***Leadership, Adolescents and Participation:***

#### ***A Review of Key Writings in These Areas***

##### ***Introduction***

This chapter provides an outline of many of the key research writings in the areas of leadership, adolescence and participation in schools. In this way, it introduces many of the key areas under study in this research, such as attitudes towards leadership, the traits of a leader, moral dimensions to leadership and the importance of leadership development in adolescence.

The chapter begins with a definition of leadership and explores the evolution of leadership theories. It then considers contemporary issues in leadership and examines some of the characteristics of leaders, with specific reference to the charismatic leader and to the moral dimension of leadership.

The second section examines the concept of adolescence with specific reference to the developmental needs of the adolescent. It examines how adolescents view leadership and concludes with an analysis of gendered differences in leadership traits. It also considers the reasons for the development of leadership in adolescence. In particular, it highlights the advantages of leadership development for the individual, for the school and for the community.



The chapter concludes with an examination of the school as an agent of socialisation. Drawing from the work of Devine (1999), it looks at Irish society and its changing views on the child. It examines the power structures of the school and considers the potential of the school to provide opportunities for active learning about democracy.

### ***What is leadership?***

Martin Luther King had a dream for his people. John Fitzgerald Kennedy called for Americans to contribute to their country. Mary Robinson invited us to celebrate being Irish with her. Archbishop Romero entwined his spirit with the struggle for independence of the Salvadorian people. Each of these people had qualities that defined them as leaders, that motivated people to follow them. They had a vision of what is possible, an ability to communicate that vision and to inspire others to work for the achievement of that vision. They had inner determination and inner strength. They led people to a pride in their identity. These are characteristics of charisma as described by Weber (1968). Yet the definitive list of charismatic characteristics is difficult to compile. Weber says that those who follow "crave for a characteristic which would define the charismatically qualified ruler" (p.27). Over the years much research has been done to identify these characteristics (e.g. Adler, 1991; Yukl, 1989); yet it continues to elude. So what is a leader? What expectations do we have of our leaders? What traits do we associate with successful leadership? These are some of the questions that will now be considered.

The Oxford Dictionary (1997) defines leadership as influence, the action of leading or influencing or the ability to lead or influence. It defines leading as giving direction by going in front, by example or by precedent. This is echoed in the work of Halloran and Benton (1987 in van Linden and Fertman, 1998), who define the leader as the person who influences the actions of others in either formal or informal settings. Handy (1976) perceives that leaders have a dual role of representation of their followers and of binding that group of followers together. But none of these indicate the type of influence or its direction.

Underlying these definitions is the notion of vision that can inspire morality. If a leader exerts influence, then a degree of inspiration must be present. The leader needs to be actively involved in creating a vision and promoting the changes required for the adoption of new directions. Therefore, leadership can influence for the social good (Avery, 1990) or for the achievement of goals (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Charismatic leadership has more to do with influence than with the achievement of goals since it involves the pursuance of radical visions and is highly ideological. Consider the speech given by King Henry on the eve of the battle of Agincourt in Shakespeare's Henry V. The vision presented here is full of pride, honour and brotherhood that is valued above life itself.

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers:  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here  
And hold their manhoods cheap while any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

(King Henry V, Act IV)

It idealises a masculinity that is strong, courageous, principled and patriotic.

This concept of charismatic leadership and heroism bound up with hegemonic masculinity has been epitomised in films<sup>2</sup> such as the *Star Wars* series, *James Bond*, *Indiana Jones* and is parodied in *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. *Star Wars* is based on a power struggle between good and evil where the hero, Luke is advised against being seduced by the power of the dark side of the force. Indiana Jones rescues the Holy Grail (and the girl) from Nazi possession and James Bond battles evil in many different forms in every film.

The satirical *Monty Python's Life of Brian* illustrates not just the difficulties when one is identified incorrectly as the messiah but a concept of followership that is both funny and frightening. The following quote from the film highlights the often unquestioning acceptance by the followers of the beliefs of the charismatic leader.

Brian:	You are all individuals!
The Crowd:	We are all individuals!
Brian:	You have to be different!
The Crowd:	Yes, we are all different!
Small lonely voice:	I'm not!

The second quote illustrates the faith of the uninformed follower in the person of the leader.

Brian:	I am NOT the Messiah!
Arthur:	I say you are Lord, and I should know. I've followed a few.

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<sup>2</sup> Popular culture will be used to illustrate the depiction of charismatic leadership in books, films and television programmes. They are referenced at the end of the bibliography in a separate section.

The most recent phenomenon in children's books has been the success of the *Harry Potter* series, again portraying the fight between the good wizards and the evil Dark Lord Voldemort and his followers. Series V of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* contains an episode where Buffy meets Count Dracula, portrayed as a seductive, charismatic man with dark, penetrating eyes who exerts a fascinating influence over the female population<sup>3</sup>. Yet in legend, Dracula is renowned for cruelty. *Primary Colours* portrays a very charismatic American president with very little moral core. Henry, one of the characters in the story, sums up this President's appeal to a population born after the assassination of Kennedy.

I've never heard a president use words like destiny and sacrifice without thinking bullshit and o.k. maybe it was bullshit with Kennedy too but people believed it and I guess that's what I want...I want to believe it.

Ultimately leadership is about power and how that power is exercised. Power may be obtained in different ways: by strength or military means, by social relations such as kinship, by economic means allowing the purchase of compliance and by subscription to an ideology grounded in common experiences (Earle, 1997). The real source of a leader's power is in the vision that attracts the commitment and enthusiasm of members and encourages both leader and followers to jointly pursue that vision (Starratt, 1995).

The influence of charismatic leadership is most probable when people are marginalised or isolated (Weber, 1968). Charismatic leaders appeal to many, particularly those who are disenfranchised from the political system and from

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<sup>3</sup> The portrayal of females in the media will be considered later.

society: King appealed to the Afro-American community, Kennedy to the American working class, Romero to those who struggled for freedom in El Salvador and Robinson to the women of Ireland. But charismatic leaders are not always moral in the exercise of their power. Hitler was charismatic and inspired his followers to acts of mass genocide. How leadership is exercised introduces a concept of value-based leadership or moral leadership that will be considered later in the chapter.

For the purpose of this study, leaders are defined as individuals with vision who can think for themselves, interpret the world around them and work with others towards the achievement of that vision. Therefore leaders are also critical citizens of the society to which they belong.

### ***Leadership theories***

While leadership research is a phenomenon of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, humankind has always been concerned with the nature of leadership. Both the style and the moral purpose of leadership form the basis of a number of Shakespeare's plays including for example *Henry V* parts 1 and 2, *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*. Consider the leadership styles of the following Shakespearean characters: Iago and Othello, Hamlet and Richard III. Both Iago and Othello exert influence; Iago over Othello and Othello over his army. Yet the type of influence is strikingly different. Iago's influence over Othello is destructive, leading to tragedy and death. Othello's influence over his army leads to victory and celebration. Both are leaders according to the definition of leadership. Yet their style and purpose are diametrically opposite, illustrating the moral

dimension to influence. Hamlet as Prince of Denmark procrastinates and loses his country to an invasion force due to this weakness. Richard III becomes king because he is strong enough to eliminate those who are next in line to the throne. Bot examples indicate the acquisition of power by strength or military means. Are these characteristics that define the charismatic leader?

Prior to the Second World War, leadership was perceived primarily as an inherited position. The Second World War was influential in changing that understanding (Handy, 1976) as was an increase in democratic principles in the United States. Indeed, the objective of post-war Europe was about the redistribution of opportunities with respect to wealth, power and status in a fairer manner (Arnot, 1991) thus allowing for a change in the assumption about the inheritable nature of leadership.

While leadership can be clearly defined, it is harder to achieve a unifying theory of how leadership works. The qualities that make a good leader have been the subject of many theories and studies over the years, as have the different styles of leadership and their effectiveness. The study of leadership may be considered as evolving through the following stages, each of which will be considered in more detail. The stages are:

1. studying the lives of leaders, giving rise to the "Great Man" theory and also to the trait theory of leadership.
2. observing individual leaders' behaviors.
3. identifying the situational factors that affect leadership.

While an overview of these theories will be considered, it is beyond the scope of this research to pursue the theories of leadership development to any great depth. The following section examines those theories that deepen the understanding of the characteristics of leaders.

### Trait theory

The trait theory is based on the assumption that leaders are born, not made.

Those who concur with this theory maintain that

...there are certain in-born qualities such as initiative, courage, intelligence and humour, which altogether predestine a man to be a leader...the essential pattern is given at birth.

(Adler, 1991, p.4)

Research conducted in the United States in the 1930's by American social scientists attempted to study leadership traits empirically. Hundreds of leaders in government, business and publishing were identified and surveyed. Up to 100 more studies were subsequently carried out, up to and including the 1950's, yielding different results. A review of these studies (Handy, 1976; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991) found traits common to all studies. The results indicated that leaders had the following characteristics:

- Physical Traits: Middle-aged, Tall, Energetic, Physically Attractive, White, Male;
- Personality Traits: Articulate, Extroverted, Self-confident, Gregarious, Responsible, Persistent;
- Career Traits: Well-educated, Intelligent, Ambitious, Experts in their field.

These link strongly with those characteristics possessed by leaders in mythology such as King Arthur, Fionn Mc Cumhaill, and Zeus. They also have much in common with how kings have been and are seen by their subjects. These common traits also reveal a perception of leaders that is based on gender, class, physical attractiveness, academic attainment and able-bodiedness. It raises the question: is it more difficult for a working-class young woman who belongs to a subordinate/minority ethnic group to be seen as a leader both by herself and by others? Is leadership development constrained by perceptions of leadership based on gender, age and socio-economic background?

Although a definitive list is not available, possession by an individual of some of the leadership traits listed may increase the probability that a person may become a leader, but is no guarantee of such an event.

The research on trait theories of leadership has shown that many other factors are important in determining leader success, and that not everyone who possesses these traits will be a leader. (Adler, 1991, p.267)

Within the trait theory lies the "great man" theory of leadership. This theory rests on the principle that great men make history because of the type of people that they are. The implication of this theory is that history would have been different had they not lived. "A sudden act by a great man could, according to this theory, change the fate of the nation" (Wrightsman, 1977, p.638). Consider the corollary. Circumstances make leaders. The great man emerges as leader because they have the traits necessary to respond to a particular situation or set of circumstances. Do circumstances create leaders or do leaders create circumstances? Each approach has its merits. The type of leadership necessary for a country in times of conflict is different to that needed in times of peace. It is similar for schools.



Different leadership traits are required for the formation of a new school to those needed for consolidation of existing practises yet many of the traits are common to both.

### Leaders are born

There is an implied assumption in this theory that leaders are born and not made. While the trait theory was popular in the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its popularity as a research topic faded with the development of a more democratic and economically driven society. Nor is the theory overly concerned with leadership for economic gain. Indeed, Weber (1968) suggests that charismatic leadership rejects all rational economic conduct and is a force that disregards economy. As society became more economically driven, a new type of leadership research emerged. This research was more concerned with the effective management of people and the implications for increased productivity. Even though research changed its focus, the importance of charisma in leadership and the theory of leadership traits are still a major force in our society. Behind all the political correctness and subscription to the concept of equality, the belief that leaders are born remains central for many people.

### ***The Moral Dimensions of Leadership***

There are two categories of leadership worth considering as part of the moral dimension to leadership: categories of transactional and transformational leadership, developed by Burns in 1978. Transactional leadership is concerned with entry into agreements with persons or groups in return for co-operation with the agenda of the leader (Starratt, 1995). It is concerned with the accomplishment

of tasks and is raised to the moral level by a commitment to values such as "honesty, fairness, loyalty, integrity, [and] responsibility (Starratt, 1995, p.109). Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is described by Burns as a process by which leaders and followers elevate one another beyond self-interest to higher levels of morality and motivation. It emphasises participative decision-making and reduces the differences in status between leaders and followers. It is based on the idea of consensual or facilitative power manifested through other people rather than over other people (Burns, 1978). It is linked to charismatic leadership since the process appeals to strong emotions and is concerned with "large, collective values such as freedom, equity, community, justice, brotherhood, and sisterhood (Starratt, 1995, p.110).

Originally, people were thought to be either transformational or transactional leaders. As the theories became more clearly elucidated, it was accepted that one could be both. Transactional leadership is concerned with the skills and the tasks associated with leading (i.e. what leaders do), while transformational leadership is concerned with the process of leadership and how individuals use their abilities to influence people (van Linden & Fertman, 1998). With transformational leadership, the motivation behind the actions is considered as valuable as the actions themselves. Both are necessary constituents of good leadership. Researchers evaluating the two leadership modes support this view.

In evaluating the two leadership modes, it is clear there are strengths and weakness[es] of each. For effective leadership, a balance and flexibility in both modes may be necessary, especially considering the context of leadership.

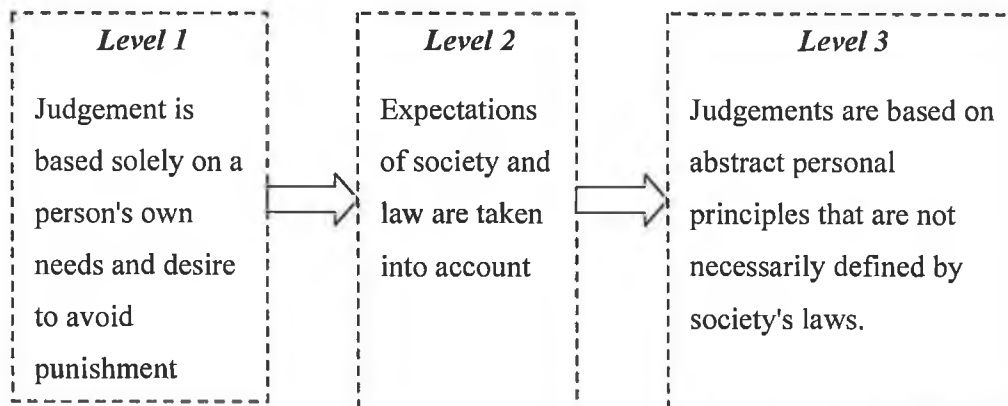
(Lyons et. al. cited in van Linden and Fertman, 1998, p.10)

Although Weber (1964) defines charisma in a value-neutral sense, it is vital that the exercise of such leadership is grounded in positive moral values and that such leaders have a high level of moral development, as described by Kohlberg (1963).

### Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

As mentioned earlier, leadership is primarily concerned with influence. In the context of this work, that influence is presumed to be of a positive nature. Yet the converse must also be considered. In society today, the rights and wrongs of situations are not always clear-cut. Kohlberg's work focussed on the moral development of the person and postulates that this development has three levels contained within it. The levels, illustrated in Fig.1.1, relate to the increasing cognitive and emotional development of the individual.

**Fig. 1.1 Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development**



Source: based on descriptions in Kohlberg (1981)

Level 1 is typical of children up to the age of nine, level 2 is characteristic of nine to twenty year olds and level 3 is usually reached after the age of twenty and then only by a small proportion of adults. This indicates the importance of ethics in leadership development since it defines the nature of the influence that a leader will exert over those whom they lead.

#### The work of Gilligan: Female Ethics and Morality

A dimension of morality not considered by Kohlberg is that of gendered moral development. Research conducted in this area by Gilligan (Head, 1997, Woolfolk, 1995) suggests that moral development for males and females differs because of different ways of viewing the self. Females define themselves in relation to others. Males, on the other hand define themselves as separate from others. This leads to different ways of meeting the needs of others. Females are concerned with responsibility to others and of doing something to meet the needs of others whereas males think of responsibility as "not doing something that would infringe on the rights of others" (van Linden and Fertman, 1998, p. 32). Therefore the task of the male is to move from an egocentric view to take account of others, while for the female, "the task is to contribute to the social matrix and emerge with some measure of autonomy" (Head, 1997, p.92). This adds another dimension to leadership and its development — the necessity to consider the gendered roles of society and to address these differences in any approach to leadership development.

The importance of the transactional and transformational natures of leadership can be seen in an examination of the English and Irish education systems. The English model places emphasises the accomplishment of tasks and the type of

leadership required in schools would reflect this (Portin, 1998). The Irish model emphasises both the achievement of academic goals and the development of the individual (Department of Education, 1995), thus requiring both types of leadership. Yet the development of educational goals in Ireland demonstrates something more than management of people, as evidenced by the National Education Convention in 1994. It also relies on the type of leadership that motivates and empowers those that are led.

### ***Leaders are...***

Constraints are placed on leadership development if the perception of leaders is based on characteristics such as gender, class, physical attractiveness, academic ability and age. Is it necessary for leaders to be adults or is it possible for adolescents to be leaders, not only within their own peer group but also within society? Societal perceptions of leaders based on gender and age will now be considered.

### **Women as Leaders**

In the film, *As Good As It Gets*, Jack Nicholson's character explains his understanding of women as follows; "I think of a man and I take away reason and accountability". In *My Fair Lady*, Professor Henry Higgins bemoans the differences between the sexes as he observes that

Women are irrational, that's all there is to that!  
Their heads are full of cotton, hay and rags!  
They're nothing but exasperating, irritating,  
Vacillating, calculating, agitating,  
Maddening, and infuriating hags!  
Yes. Why can't a woman be more like a man?

(Lerner, 1956, p107)

In both situations, the character of the female does not exist independently but is constructed by comparison with the character of the male. Such caricatures are unhelpful in the norm: when female leaders are caricatured, then it is difficult for them to be taken seriously as role models. Margaret Thatcher, Diana, Princess of Wales, Mother Teresa and Mary Robinson: each of these were women of influence and can therefore be considered leaders. Yet the public perception of each is very different. Both Diana and Mother Teresa were public icons while they were alive. Both were strongly associated with maternal qualities by the media; caring for the sick and the outcasts from society. Contrast this image with the public image of Margaret Thatcher. Popularly known as 'The Iron Lady', she was represented as strong, ruthless and inflexible. Certainly a leader, but does one think of Mrs. Thatcher as a charismatic leader? These two types of role model for female leaders are diametrically opposite. One caricature epitomises none of the characteristics associated with femaleness, the other displays the gentleness of the female with no indication of logical thought. Mary Robinson as President of Ireland came close to the middle of these extremities. Gestures such as the lighted candle in the window of Áras an Uachtaráin and strong links with local community groups epitomised qualities of caring and nurturing that are usually considered as being female characteristics. A background in law that allowed her to challenge the constitutionality of a proposed bill illustrated the logical, assertive side, more commonly associated with maleness. This presents a very different model of female leadership to those described above. High-profile female leaders that epitomise charismatic leadership are rare, thus reducing the availability of female role models as leaders.

## Age as an impediment to leadership

Irish society has, and continues to view young people in a paternalistic fashion (Devine, 1999). A brief examination of our legislation illustrates the contradictions in society's attitude towards young people.

If we consider working in a paid job as contributing to the economy, and by implication, to society, young people may contribute to society from the age of 14 but are inhibited from involvement in formalised leadership roles until the age of 18. The Constitution of Ireland (1937) allows for election to the Dáil and the Seanad three years after reaching the age of legal consent (at 18), signified by the entitlement to sign legally binding documents on one's own behalf and four years after achieving an age that allows one to join the defence forces, It would appear that one can defend one's country before one can decide on its fate.

**Table 1.1 Age of legal entitlements in Ireland (selection of).**

Age	Entitlements that...		
	...contribute to society	...are concerned with the individual's rights	...allow formalised participation in leadership roles
14	Work part-time during school term		
15	Leave school		
16		Consent to medical treatment Leave home	
17	Tried as an adult for criminal behaviour Join the defence forces		
18	Sit on a jury	Sign a contract Get married	Vote in elections Stand for election to a county council
21			Stand for election to the Dáil or Seanad
35			Stand for election for president

Source: National Youth Council of Ireland, 2001.

The attitudes of our society towards teenagers and children need to be examined for structural integrity and our beliefs about their capacity for self-actualisation and therefore for leadership need to be clear.

#### How adolescents view leadership

Adults and adolescents alike tend to define the concept of leadership in limited ways. There are certain characteristics that are associated with being a leader (Fig. 1.2) and these relate very closely to the characteristics listed for the trait theory earlier. Adolescents' understanding of how people become leaders is also quite traditional with many adhering to the trait theory, the great man theory and to the idea that leaders are therefore born, not made (van Linden and Fertman, 1998). This has implications for their belief in their own leadership potential and

**Fig. 1.2 Characteristics adolescents associate with leaders.**

<b>Physical Traits</b>	<b>Personality Traits</b>	<b>School or Work Traits</b>
Older	Honest	Well-behaved in school
Not overweight	Wilful (having willpower)	Hardworking
Tall	Popular	Intelligent
Physically fit	Self-confident	Possessing initiative
Male	Reliable	Having good study habits
Physically energetic	Persistent	Maintaining good attendance
Healthy	Extroverted	Having a sense of duty
Attractive	<b>Personal Background</b>	Desiring to excel
	Wealthy	

*Source: van Linden and Fertman (1998)*



in the leadership potential of adolescents, particularly female adolescents.

### Gender Differences in the Perceptions of Leadership Traits

Gender roles are the representation of the degree to which the behaviour of the individual conforms to social and cultural expectations concerning masculinity and femininity (Hunt, 1974). Although identity formation in the adolescent has a strong gender dimension, the roots of gender identity are formed at a much earlier age (Head, 1997). By the age of two, children can identify themselves as male or female and will opt for gender appropriate toys (Lodge, 1998). As the adolescent struggles to form identity, it must be noted that the primary concerns of the two gender groups are not the same. Western society stereotypes femininity as nurturing, docile and flirtatious while masculinity is represented by characteristics such as physical strength, aggressiveness, assertiveness and leadership (Woods, 1994 cited in Lodge, 1998). Adolescent males aim for strength, intelligence, athleticism and are strongly competitive. Those who do not reach these aims tend to have lower self esteem and consequently are less likely to see themselves as leaders. Appearance tends to be a major consideration for the adolescent female and conformity rather than individuality is an overriding concern (van Linden and Fertman, 1998). This concern with appearance and the equation of appearance with attractiveness may prevent females from regarding themselves as leaders, since they may not regard themselves as fitting the leadership profile. Adolescence is regarded as a time of psychological risk and increased vulnerability for females. The American Association of University Women reports that

What once seemed ordinary to girls - speaking, difference, anger, conflict, fighting, bad as well as good thoughts and feelings - now seem treacherous: laced with danger, a sign of imperfection, a harbinger of being left out, not chosen.

(AAUW, 1991 cited in van Linden and Fertman, 1998)

A female who takes on a leadership role goes against the typical female stereotype. Those who display the traits listed in Fig. 1.2 may be seen as bossy, pushy and unfeminine. The qualities regarded as strengths in males become negative in females.

Gender identity development during adolescence may come into direct conflict with leadership development during this time. If it is important for adolescents to exhibit socially accepted gender traits in order to conform, then males may feel pushed towards leadership roles and females may feel pushed away from them, irrespective of the leadership potential of the individual.

### ***Why develop Leadership Skills in Adolescence?***

Research indicates that leadership development begins at an early age and that the pattern set in adolescence will continue into adult life. Gardner (1987) showed that the skills of leadership develop strikingly in adolescence. However, there are few differences between adolescents identified as leaders and those who would not be considered as leaders. Therefore every adolescent has the potential to lead: whether their environment recognises and supports that potential is a determining factor in their future as leaders (van Linden and Fertman, 1998).

Developing leadership skills in adolescents has benefits for the young leader personally, for the school and for the community. For the student, these include

increased self-esteem, recognition from peers and a greater understanding of their place in the local community. The school develops an increased pool of student leaders and enhances the school climate while the community obtains an increased pool of informed, committed, young emerging leaders.<sup>4</sup> It also allows young people to meet their developmental needs for a personal identity, intimacy and a lifestyle ideology (Erikson, 1968 as described in Tuohy and Cairns, 2000). During this period, identity moves from a definition of what the adolescent can do and the skills they possess to what they would like to do. Intention becomes more important than what has actually been done. The lifestyle ideology moves from the ideal untested in reality through social activism to the formation of an ethical system, modified by their exposure to other views. Intimacy leads initially through the quest for independence from family and the comparison with peers. The development of a positive personal identity and a capacity for intimacy are contingent on the development of self-esteem, self-actualisation and a sense of belonging. These are among the needs described by Maslow (1970) in his hierarchy of needs.

#### Maslow and the hierarchy of needs

Maslow's work (1970) suggests that humans have a hierarchy of needs, ranging from lower level needs for survival to higher level needs for self-actualisation. The four lower level needs are 'deficiency' needs and when they are satisfied, motivation for fulfilling them decreases. Conversely, the three higher level needs are 'being' needs and when they are met, motivation for fulfilling them is

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<sup>4</sup> This list is taken from the following website  
(<http://www.fmchamber.com/youthlead/benefits.html>).

increased and further fulfilment is sought. Two aspects of Maslow's theory need consideration from the point of view of youth leadership:

1. if young people are to consider themselves as having leadership potential, then the deficiency needs must be met before this potential can be developed;
2. initial success in leadership will motivate towards further involvement and continued development of the being needs.

The development of a lifestyle ideology requires both moral development and a sense of control over one's future. Since Kohlberg's theory of moral development and its implications for the development of moral leadership have been considered earlier, Rotter's concept of the locus of control will now be examined.

#### Rotter's Locus of Control

One of the tasks of adolescence is that young people acquire a sense of control over their actions and thereby their lives. Rotter's work is concerned with the concept of the locus of control, dealing with where people locate responsibility for success or failure. External locus of control places the control of one's fate in people and forces outside of oneself whereas an internal locus of control assumes that a person is responsible for their own fate. As young people pass through adolescence, some will switch the locus of control from external to internal with a correlated sense of independence and self-esteem. "Strong leadership skills place an adolescent in charge of his or her life" (van Linden and Fertman, 1998, p.29) thus allowing them to feel that they are able to influence not just their own lives but also the lives of others.

### ***Why Youth Leadership Training is Important***

The review of the literature relating to leadership and adolescence has indicated many important points. Leadership skills can be taught provided that certain characteristics are already present. The characteristics considered as central by the author are those that relate to character and motivation rather than those that relate to physical appearance. It should be possible to work with people to develop their skills in the area of leadership. Educationally-based leadership training programmes should be grounded in strong moral values, involve the development of a vision that can be accomplished and contain both transactional and transformational elements.

The design and implementation of youth leadership training programmes requires a further dimension. Since the opportunities for formalised youth leadership roles in society are limited, a forum is needed where the skills of leadership can be put into action. Finally, in designing programmes for female involvement, the pervading culture needs to be considered and the barriers to female participation need to be addressed (Hart, 1992).

Earlier in this chapter, the advantages that youth leaders bring to the school and the community were noted. The provision of youth leadership to students in schools would benefit not just the students involved but the wider community of the school and society. A programme already involved in the provision of youth leadership training in schools is described in the next chapter.

### ***How society views young people***

What is the prevalent view of young people in our society?

If we believe the media, it would seem that young people lack morality, responsibility, self-discipline, and this view exerts powerful influences on the views of politicians and policy-makers.

(Foster and Fernandes, 1996 cited in Roker et al, 1999, p.2)

There is a saying that "children are the future of the world". If the implications of this presumption are considered, the following assumption can be made. If children are the future, then adults can legitimise making decisions on behalf of children "for their own good" since they do not really exist in the present society. When is a person capable of taking responsibility for themselves? As mentioned earlier, society dictates that one is capable of leaving home at 16 and voting at 18. Yet in England, one is culpable for criminal actions from nine years of age. We cannot expect that reaching the chronological age of 18 will confer upon an individual the ability to make informed legislative and electoral decisions if that individual has had little experience of a participative process prior to that.

Research into childhood in rural Ireland (Curtin, 1984) shows that the orientation towards children was highly functional and maintained the differential status between children and adults. Adults, particularly males, possessed authority derived from material resources and the passive role acceptance and respect for authority was instilled in children. Silence and passivity was insisted upon for all children in adult company (Devine, 1999).

The constitution of 1937 enshrined the rights of parents as the primary educators and carers of the child and protected them from undue influence by the state, thus

endorsing the concept of the child as property of the parents. This would have influenced the school climate resulting in a highly paternalistic approach to children, reinforcing the idea that children were to be seen and not heard.

With rapid changes in society in the 1960's brought about by industrialisation and an increased emphasis on educational qualifications as the definition for life chances (Breen, 1990), the traditional authoritarian structures within the family gradually broke down. This affected the relationship between parents and children, leading to the formation of emotionally supportive bonds. The needs of the child as they moved through the developmental stages of maturity (Piaget, 1970) became central to educational thought, although in practise the adult-centred framework that had existed in education still remained. Normalisation of children in terms of adult goals was still central to educational practise. "The discourse of the period then, failed to challenge status differentials between adults and children in any serious way" (Devine, 1999, p22).

The economic boom, currently enjoyed by Ireland, has affected the worker in the workplace and the student in the classroom. Indeed it could be argued that there is little difference between the two. Many young people hold part-time jobs in addition to attending school and the effect of this is felt in the school. The disposable income available to students as a result creates an interesting financial situation within the family in terms of the amount of control that parents can now exert on their children from a financial standpoint.

...young people attending second-level schools are increasingly financially independent. Greater material autonomy can provide a challenge to traditional relationships of domination and subordination.  
(Lodge and Lynch, 2000, p.53)

With the introduction of Transition Year, the average age of completion of the Leaving Certificate has increased. The Education Act (1998) has given parents more rights within and participation in the education system and this has created a sense of accountability by teachers to parents, a sense that filters back to the classroom from the home through the students. In some cases, students in senior cycle classrooms are legally entitled to vote. The Child Care Act (1991) and the Children's Bill (1997) have introduced legislation designed to protect the child. The publication of the National Children's Strategy (2000) outlines the objectives that will guide children's policy over the next decade and is grounded in the United Nations (U.N.) Convention on the Rights of the Child. It includes strategies such as the establishment of a Dáil na nÓg, an Office of Ombudsman for Children and provision for the representation of children's views on national and local fora. While this publication begins to address the debate at an ideological level, the question of their status with relation to adults and the general empowerment of children remain untouched.

In summary, despite major evolution in the perception of youth by adults, the "dominant/subordinate relationship remains intact with rights accorded on a concessionary basis, rather than on the principle of equality of respect and esteem" (Devine, 1999, p.25). This is particularly true of the education system.

#### School as an agent of socialisation

The term 'socialisation' refers to the process by which a person is taught to become a functioning member of a social group. It includes behaviour, social control, significance of objects as symbols, language and formal learning. It is



passed on through interaction with, and observation and imitation of, those around you. Culture as a concept arises from socialisation within a specific social group (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). Education is involved with the transmission of culture and socialisation both overtly and covertly, the former through the defined curriculum, the latter through the hidden curriculum. Bowles and Gintis argue that major aspects of educational organisation replicate the relationships of dominance and subordination in the economic sphere (Clancy et al, 1995).

Most societies remain stable except during war and revolution. Therefore the social relations of production are transmitted relatively unchanged from one generation to the next. It is unlikely therefore that the school, both an agent of socialisation and subject to the consequences of socialisation, would change its approach to power and to the traditional role of the child within the system without a major change in societal norms.

### **The Tradition of the Education System**

Within the education system there are different groups of people, each with a specific function or role. Three of the most obvious ones are the teacher, the principal/deputy-principal and the student. The function of one is to educate, another to administer and manage and the third to learn. Decisions concerning educational policy have been the domain of the Department of Education and Science and decisions concerning the individual school have been the responsibility of the principal or board of management. However, the nineties saw major changes in educational policy and the process for deciding those changes. These changes did not occur in a vacuum; they were the result of reflection, planning and consultation by Ministers and Department Secretaries

with people who had not traditionally been involved in policy-making in the Department of Education. Parents' groups, teacher unions, associations of principals and deputy principals, the Union of Students in Ireland and community organisations were all invited to a convention in Dublin Castle in 1993. This began to open up the education system in Ireland to more involvement and participation and precipitated a change in the traditional, hierarchical power relationship of the Irish educational system.

### Power Relations between Adults and Young People within Schools

From the very first moment of starting school, children are active participants in the construction of classroom order (Woods, 1990). They contribute to the smooth running of the classroom through the preconceptions they bring to school with them. This traditional mode of teaching regards authority as a concept respected by the students and maintained by the teacher (Oyler, 1996). It allows the teacher to decide not only what is taught in the classroom but also the process employed in teaching. This tends to be primarily narrative (Freire, 1972) and contributes to the notion that knowledge is power. The teacher tightly maintains control through a variety of techniques, including a class-differentiated form of address, their adult status in society and their position as knowledge providers (Lodge and Lynch, 2000).

The physical organisation of the classroom, the allocation of the right to speak, the evaluation of students' answers and teacher domination of classroom talk all contribute to a classroom that limits the participation of students. Dewey (1963) describes the typical classroom as limiting students' movement by its structure and limiting their participation by signals, such as indicating the wish to speak.

The exercise of power by an organisation such as the school is evident if one examines institutional practises common in schools. Groups of students are governed by the ringing of a bell to indicate the beginning and end of class and of school. Adherence to the ringing of the bell is necessary to avoid punishment as a result of lateness. The scene outside school each morning is reminiscent of Pavlov's dogs as the bell rings and sauntering students suddenly turn into Olympic sprinters.

Indeed, how the school perceives students is tellingly revealed in the fact that in some schools classrooms are locked during lunchtime (Lodge and Lynch, 1999). These institutional structures also disempower students with respect to issues of personal space, privacy, lack of self-expression through personal appearance and lack of voice within the system (Lukes, 1977 in Lodge and Lynch, 2000). Swain (2000) describes the power techniques used by the school such as surveillance (by both teachers and other students), classification (by differentiating groups from one another) and normalisation (by comparing to a perceived norm).

Decisions relating to timetable, subjects, new programmes, development of the school, changes in the rules, new uniforms, tutors, school-based examinations to name but a few are generally made by the management of the school, the assistant principals or by the staff council, either formally or informally. Formal consultation with the students about such matters is not considered.

It must be stated that the practises mentioned above are not pursued by the school in order to diminish the student or from any desire to be cruel or unfair to them. There are logical reasons behind each example given above. Rules are there to ensure the smooth running of the school. Bells and timetables exist to provide organisational structure to the educational system. Yet these practises may contribute to the perpetration of power inequality within the school and do not contribute to the creation of self-control, merely to adherence to outer forms of control. They also demonstrate the many missed opportunities to increase the degree of participation by students in their own education.

### Sharing Power — or are we?

If one considers the changes in Irish education in the last decade, there appears to be a move towards increased participation by students in their own education. The expansion of the partners in education in conjunction with the Education Act has led to a change in structure. The change in curriculum and pedagogy require a change in teachers' attitudes. These changes may be deep and lasting or they may be surface changes only. Without a change in perception, change in structure will have limited success. The required paradigm shift occurs in the area of power sharing and the understanding of this as an educational model will now be considered.

### Education for Democracy — Dewey's ideas.

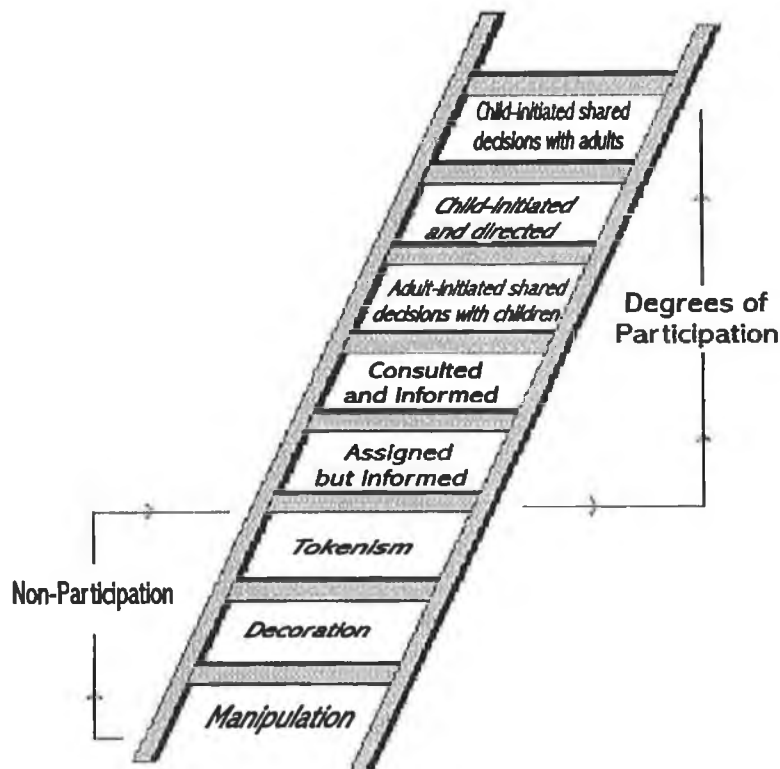
The notion of power sharing today is probably most commonly associated with the Northern Peace Process. It has connotations of compromise, of partnership and of the need for delicate handling. As diverse groups with different agendas attempt to carve out a niche for themselves in the new system, onlookers watch

the almost tightrope spectacle of delicate balance. It is fundamentally a question about power, who has it, who shares it and how that can be done in a fair manner. However, the question which must be asked in this entire debate is not so much how to give students a voice in the life of the school but rather why do so. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child considers the right to freedom in Articles 12,13, 14 and 15, expressing the right to freedom of:

- Opinion
- Expression
- Thought, conscience and religion
- Association (United Nations, 1989)

Dewey (1963) also expressed these rights in his description of freedom as the power to make decisions and judgements. In his reference to the consequences of actions, Dewey highlights the responsibilities attached to those rights. While Ireland has ratified the convention, its implementation has been less than adequate. The U.N. Committee were concerned that "the views of the child are not generally taken into account, including within the family, at school and in society" (January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1998). Rights may be enshrined in principle but unless implemented in the spirit intended, then they remain mere token gestures. In the Innocenti Essays No. 4 sponsored by UNICEF, Hart (1992) defines levels of participation in the form of a ladder (Fig. 1.3). The degree of participation is defined by the initial input of the child into the construction of the structures as well as their involvement in the structure itself. Within this model, structures initiated by adults without any consultation are deemed non-participation. Yet this is the model for much change within the education system. Although

Fig. 1.3 Hart's Ladder of Participation



Source: Hart, 1992.

participation has become a major word in education, the main participants in the system are not being consulted. If change is proposed and implemented without consultation and with every good intention, then it is rooted in a model that is non-participatory and thus has little credibility. A brief study of the Education Act's proposal for student councils illustrates this point clearly.

#### The Student Council and the Education Act

The purpose of a student council within a school is defined by the Education Act as a group which will "promote the interests of the school and the involvement of students in the affairs of the school, in co-operation with the board, parents and teachers (Government of Ireland, 1998). The Education Act considers the

creation of such councils within the school as the responsibility of the Board of Management of the school. Although the principle of student involvement in the school is served here, the manner in which it is done is non-committal. There is no real indication of how such councils could and should work, no compunction upon the school to implement the council and no clearly defined guidelines as to the degree of involvement which would be both appropriate and desirable within the school system.

It is possible for schools to have such participatory structures in place and yet to contravene the principle of democratic involvement within those structures. Consider Hart's ladder of participation. Manipulation, decoration and tokenism are correctly identified as non-participation. The presence of a student council within a school may indicate a democratic approach by the school: yet the brief of the council and the conditions under which it may meet may be non-democratic.

In "Essays on Schools," the authors describe an attempt by the teachers to set up a student council. This attempt was essentially boycotted by the students because of the lack of consultation in its setting up and its functions, not through lack of desire for or of necessity for one.

Many were interested in having either a Student Council established or in the existing Council being given real authority, rather than just being allowed to carry out activities (such as running discos) which they regarded as unimportant. (Lynch and Lodge, 1999, p.221 )

A student council that exists to represent the views of the students may find that only certain issues are acted upon such as toilet cleanliness and school uniforms.

These are areas that school management teams feel are safe for pupils to debate, whilst wider issues such as teacher-pupil relationships, curriculum content and delivery or issues of sexual or racial harassment are rarely discussed. (Holden and Clough, 1998, p.56)

This may be due in part to a lack of understanding by school management and by teachers of how such structures could work.

Many students who had no involvement in exercising authority in the schools seemed to be genuinely interested in being a part of the institution, and in having the opportunity to dialogue with the teachers on a partnership basis about these issues. They did not wish to take complete control or "wreak havoc", yet some of the teachers expressed fears of such occurrences; the teachers seemed to lack a clear understanding about how such participatory democracy would work in schools. (Lodge and Lynch, 2000, p.55)

Setting up a student council is one way of improving student participation in a school. At worst, it is tokenism: at best, it provides a forum for the voice of the student to be heard. A much more radical concept involves the entire school having a voice in the affairs of the school. This concept is known as democratic education.

The notion of democratic rule implies that the citizens of that democracy determine how the future citizens of that democracy will be educated (Gutmann 1987). If education is a method of socialisation, then the chances of affecting the status quo through educational change are slim. For democratic education to be used in Irish society, the population of Ireland would also need to be educated about democratic principles, the level of involvement in the democratic process would need to increase and the number of voters at election time would need to increase substantially. Currently the level of voter turnout is so low that the views of all are not being represented at government level. If "a sense of



community is at the heart of any democratically run organisation" (de Marrais, 1999), then this raises a further question about the participative nature of the school as an organisation for students.

Power and charisma appeal to people. The concern for leadership is the presence or absence of moral centre to power and charisma. If the student strikes during the school year of 2000 — 2001 have shown us anything, it is the level of disenfranchisement felt by students in the education system. The situation is poised for the emergence of young charismatic leaders. The moral orientation of the leaders that emerge and the analytical ability of their followers are areas that need attention.

### ***Conclusion***

The literature reviewed in this chapter was chosen in order to better understand the underlying factors and reasons for the development of leadership in students. For example, a student who is involved in leadership in school will be more likely to be a leader in their adult years (van Linden and Fertman, 1998).

The literature offers convincing rationales for the development of student leaders in schools. There is evidence to suggest that this can improve the school and the students. However, care needs to be used in relation to the gendering of leadership and the type of leadership promoted. If schools are to implement leadership programmes, it appears vital to assess where they stand on such issues. For example, placing a high level of importance on transactional leadership will result in a different outcome for students than will placing a high priority on transformational leadership. Consideration of the stages of

adolescence will suggest the appropriate approaches to leadership development for different age groups. An examination of the underlying assumptions about youth and the power structures operational within the school will indicate the type of participation possible and desirable within the system.

In this way this chapter has highlighted the positive and negative factors that the research literature suggests may contribute to leadership development.

## ***Chapter Two***

### ***Tobar: A Leadership Training Programme***

#### ***Introduction***

Chapter One concluded with an overview of adolescent involvement in the school and society. It also described the advantages of leadership development in adolescents. Before detailing the methodology employed by the researcher in the pursuit of this research topic, further background information is essential. The research into adolescent leadership development described here was conducted primarily among participants in a youth leadership training programme. In order to contextualise the findings of the research, it is necessary to paint the background picture to the training programme.

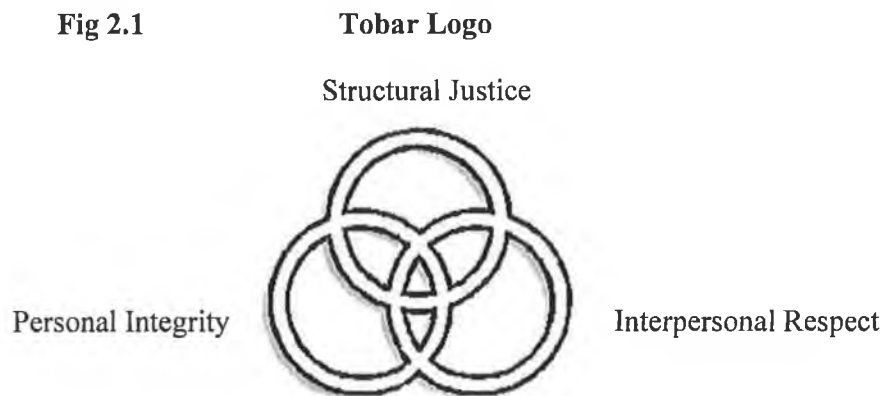
The chapter begins with a consideration of the vision that informs the programme and examines the history of the programme. It then considers the initiation of the programme, using interviews with the current principals of the initial schools as corroboration with the researcher's memory of events. The middle section of the chapter examines the structure of the programme, paying particular attention to the selection method employed, the role of the co-operating teacher in the process and the structure of the training event. Again the researcher is aided in the description by consultation with training manuals and information booklets from files. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the operation of the programme within the school, including the financial management of the programme

### ***Tobar: The Vision***

The programme is not overtly religious and has no links to any church: nonetheless it is fundamentally Christian in its outlook<sup>5</sup>. It has been inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (1972), Donal Dorr (1990) and Hope and Timmel's Training for Transformation (1984). The motto for the programme is taken from the Old Testament Book of Micah.

He has shown you what is good: to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

The logo is three overlapping circles representing three aspects of the individual.



Source: adapted from Dorr, 1990

The personal dimension of recognition of talents and gifts is captured by the phrase "to walk humbly". The interpersonal nature of human relationships is represented by the concept of 'loving tenderly'. The public dimension of equality and inequality in society is summed up in the concept of 'acting justly'. The programme aspires to create groups where young people develop personally by allowing them to become more aware of their identity and confident in their

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<sup>5</sup> This does not limit participation in the programme to those of Christian denomination. Rather it indicates the values upon which the programme is based.

programme aspires to create groups where young people develop personally by allowing them to become more aware of their identity and confident in their uniqueness. It also encourages participant to develop socially by working with others from different social backgrounds in an equal way and to develop spiritually through times of reflection and quietness that respect the many denominations that participate in the programme.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Historical Context***

In 1989, the Kildare and Leighlin diocese launched a youth leadership-training programme. The idea behind the programme was to gather a group of ten senior cycle students and to train them for a week during the summer to work in their school for the following year. The aim of their work was to make the school a more caring place for all students. In order to fulfil this aim, they would assess the school, determine the felt needs of the students and draw up an action plan to respond to those needs. The author worked on this programme in its initial years and, in 1995, implemented an adapted version of this programme in two schools in the geographical area in which she is now working. For the purpose of this research, the new programme is referred to as Tobar.

Tobar began in 1995 in two schools in a large urban area in the east of Ireland (See Table 2.1). Since 1995, seven training events have taken place, 287 students have begun the training process although not all have completed the

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<sup>6</sup> This material is taken from the information document for the programme

process due to a variety of reasons such as leaving school, moving, having difficulty working with the others in the group or losing interest. Since its inception, the length of time for training has increased as the number of schools participating has grown. To date, 19 teachers have worked as co-operating teachers on the programme and 31 young people have been selected as chairpersons by their peers.

**Table 2.1 Overview of the Schools Involved in the Programme**

School	Initial Year of School Involvement in Programme	Total Number of Students Who Attended Training Event	Valid Number for the Study	Number of Co-operating Teachers Involved
St. Anne's	1995	69	38	5
St. Brigid's	1995	56	33	5
St. Conor's	1996	60	40	3
St. Darragh's	1998	38	18	2
St. Enda's	1999	25	9	1
St. Felim's	1999	29	11	2
St. George's <sup>7</sup>	2001	10	0	1
Total		287	149	19

The principals of the first two schools, St. Anne's<sup>8</sup> and St. Brigid's recalled the introduction of the programme into their schools.

*It was basically through the contact with our chaplain in the school with yourself...he would have made me aware of what was involved in Tobar... my understanding was that it involved students in a leadership role with other students... and I would have been interested in promoting any kind of positive involvement of students in the overall organisation of the school.*

<sup>7</sup> This school is not included in the study since no students from the school have completed their training year.

<sup>8</sup> All of the names used, including the names of schools, principals and participants have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

*(Thomas, Principal of St. Brigid's)*

*There were three reasons... the school was seeking a means of integrating 5<sup>th</sup> years into the provision of leadership to 1<sup>st</sup> years... the means of providing a formal answer to the needs of the school in the form of Marie<sup>9</sup>... suggestions of a prefect system and a strong reaction against that.*  
*(Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)*

In both instances, the principals referred to the importance of the presence of a key person in the school who was a strong advocate of the programme. The above quotes also indicate the timeliness of the introduction since both schools were seeking some way of including students in a meaningful way. The formal training also appealed to both principals since it provided a structure or framework to work in. Both support for and need for a leadership role for senior students also existed in the schools. This parallels Fullan's (1993) findings that the presence of a strong advocate and a clear implementation plan as initiation factors vital for effective change. The introduction of Tobar was linked to a felt need, a clear model was available and a strong advocate was present, in the person of the two teachers mentioned by the principals.

The support of the principal, at both a practical and a philosophical level, is considered vital by the author to the introduction of Tobar into a school. The principal may influence the success or failure of an initiative. Ultimately the responsibility for the school rests with them and they have the power to encourage or stifle developments within their school. Thomas noted that life could be easier by refusing to allow student involvement in the school since

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<sup>9</sup> Marie is a teacher in this school with experience in the area of youth leadership training.

involving students requires work. Both principals' own philosophy of inclusive educational principles was also evident from their responses.

*... because I think that that's what real education is about... for people to be involved in a meaningful way in various tasks... that's how they develop and that's how they learn, in a structured way.*

*(Thomas, Principal of St. Brigid's)*

Sean felt that

*... the junior school was about helping students in developing a knowledge of the world around them; transition year was an exploration of self...*

He saw fifth year as a time when students were

*... developing towards actually giving to others... seeing the needs of others... part of their growing maturity... contributing back to the school... identifying in these young people those parts of the philosophy of the school such as caring about each other, wishing to see the school develop, wishing to see the young persons we bring into the school developing as whole persons.* *(Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)*

Both expressed a strong commitment to consultative education with Thomas expressing the lack of democratic potential within the system. He observed that not everyone has, or can have, decision-making powers within the existing system. He therefore felt that the term 'consultative education' was probably a more accurate representation of what was possible in the current situation.

### **Structure of the Leadership Training Programme**

The programme is annual in nature, beginning in March and ending with an achievement night in March of the following year. The timeline for the year's process is listed below.



March

*Launch:* The programme is advertised to the appropriate year group by the co-ordinator of the programme. Application forms are given out and students complete and return the forms by a specified date.

*Interview:* All students who apply are interviewed. No shortlisting takes place. The interviews are conducted by a team of volunteers in accordance with a protocol designed by trainers on the programme. A team of ten students and two reserves are selected, based on the criteria for selection.

*Students Informed:* The ten students selected are informed by letter and given information about training. The names of the two reserves are given to the co-operating teacher but they are not personally informed<sup>10</sup>.

*Parents informed:* An information night is held for parents prior to training. This facilitates the answering of parent's questions by the co-ordinator of the programme and increases parental awareness of what is involved in the programme.

<sup>10</sup> Applicants within each school are called together by the co-operating teacher, thanked for their interest and the names of the successful candidates are read out. The unsuccessful candidates are not informed by letter due to both the large numbers that apply and the lack of resources available in terms of personnel and time. Reserves are called upon prior to training if one of the ten initially selected cannot attend.

April

*Training:* Students arrive on Sunday morning for residential training that lasts until Thursday morning. This training is scheduled to take place in the week prior to Easter, thus minimising the time that students are absent from school. At the end of training, the students are commissioned to work within their school to promote a more caring environment for students in the school.

*May to March Implementation:* Students return to school after the Easter holidays and begin to implement their plans from training. Each week they meet to plan and review their work. Once a month they hold a maintenance meeting to review how the group is developing. Work carried out has included First Year initiation, trips away with First Year students as well as introducing new facilities such as drinking fountains and vending machines.

*Ongoing Support:* During this time three meetings are held involving the 70 participating students from the seven schools. The first two meetings serve for support and further training. At the third meeting, each school presents their achievements for the year, focusing on what they have done and what they have learned. Parents, principals and teachers are invited to this meeting. A certificate of participation is presented to each of the

students involved. The next group of students selected for training in April is also invited to this meeting.

Three areas listed above require further explanation. These are:

- the role of the co-operating teacher,
- the criteria for selection of students,
- the structure of the training week.

These will now be considered in more detail.

#### The role of the co-operating teacher

Each school has a co-operating teacher for the programme. The role is a voluntary one in the seven participating schools. The co-operating teacher usually undertakes his/her duties for two years and it is the responsibility of the outgoing teacher to find a replacement before finishing the second year. This prevents stagnation of the programme within the school, allowing staff to become more intimately involved with the programme and to learn about the programme through direct experience. The role of the teacher in the group is to be a supportive adult. He/she advises the group about the workings of the school and informs the staff about the activities of the group. The teacher takes no active role in the school meetings. However, his/her support and advocacy is invaluable.

#### The Selection Criteria

The programme is aimed at people who are at least one year post-Junior Certificate. This may mean fifth or sixth year, depending on whether the school

has compulsory Transition Year or not. The initial programme was not designed for those who are special needs or for those who require specialised counselling.<sup>11</sup> The qualities that are sought are a positive attitude, a respect for others, enthusiasm and a proactive approach.<sup>12</sup> Thomas, the Principal of St. Brigid's, mentioned these as qualities of "*students around the place that you would identify as having great potential to influence others and to be leaders*" and also identified a second category who would not be involved in the school but "*would have the potential to be channelled when given the opportunity*". The interviewers do not request the student's academic history in the school. Sean considers the use of external interviewers as a very positive step since

*... it actually may add to the respect that these young people receive in terms of their being chosen, respect on the part of teachers but certainly respect on the part of their fellow students.* (Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)

He also felt that the selection process resulted in a good cross-section of the school population.

### Structure of the Training

Each day of training has a specific theme and each day is structured in a similar fashion. The themes are: *Getting to know you, Team Building, Tools for Action, Putting It All Together* and *Evaluation*. A typical day is listed in Table 2.2.<sup>13</sup>

As can be seen from the outline, there are three leader teams, each with its own co-ordinator. The three leader teams are largely made up of former participants

<sup>11</sup> The programme has since been reviewed in light of reading difficulties experienced by some participants. In light of the Equal Status Act, more review and change would appear to be necessary. Areas of training that require physical activity need to be reviewed to ensure that people with physical disabilities are not excluded from participation.

<sup>12</sup> The criteria are taken from the guidelines for interviewers for the programme

of Tobar who have undergone extra training in facilitation skills after leaving school. The members of the leader teams all work voluntarily on the programme. Two of these teams have responsibility for training the school groups and the third team has responsibility for reflection, entertainment, night duty and food. Each school group is allocated two trainers, one from team A and one from team B at the beginning of the training week and these work with the school group

**Table 2.2 Outline of a Typical Training Day**

alternately. This allows for clear division of tasks and ensures that there is always a group on duty with the participants.

Time	Team on Duty	Theme: Team Building
7.15	Team 1	Morning Call
7.30	Team 1	Light Exercise
8.15 - 8.45	Team 1	Breakfast
9.00	Team 1	Thought of the Day - Focus Exercise
9.30	Team 3	Team Building Exercise A
11.00	Team 1	Coffee Break
11.30	Team 2	Team Building Exercise B
1.00	Team 1	Lunch
2.00	Team 1	Energiser
2.15	Team 3	Team Building Exercise C
3.00	Team 1	Coffee Break
3.30	Team 2	Vision Exercise
4.30	Team 3	Affirmation Exercise
5.00	Team 1	Reflection Time
5.30	Team 1	Dinner
6.15	Team 1	Games
7.30	Team 2	Journalling for 45 minutes
9.00	Team 1	Entertainment
11.30	Team 1	Bedtime
12.00	Team 1	Lights Out and Night Duty

Training is an active learning process that sets tasks for the school teams to complete and then debriefs with the school teams to describe the learning for the

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from the training manual with alteration to exclude names of specific exercises

group. The tasks are enjoyable and achievable and the schools work independently of each other, thus reducing the competitive aspect of inter-school work. Each school prepares a feedback chart that is presented to the large group of 70 students at the end of most training sessions, thus increasing the peer learning and building up the sense of co-operative work. The students are trained in the skills of listening, problem-solving, decision-making, needs assessment, planning and evaluation. The reflective aspect of the training helps students to develop a sense of team and a vision of what their school could be. Comments from the participants' evaluations<sup>14</sup> at the end of training highlight these points.

*Reflection... is vital and very important. Every evening people left it determined to do their best for the group. (17 year old male)*

*Our group got into a bit of difficulty and everyone was fighting, however we managed to sort out the problem as a group. We didn't get others involved. (16 year old male)*

*Learning that everybody has a voice that needs to be heard so I need to learn how to compromise. (16 year old female)*

*I've never had so much fun and I was actually in pain with lafter [sic] most times. But to know I learned so much its just deadly. I can't wait to get back to school, so we as a team, can change it. (16 year old female)*

Learning through active methods was enjoyed and very positively commented upon, "best fun a learning experience can be" (19 year old male), as was the lack of a hierarchical structure within the programme. Even though some of the leaders' teams contain teachers from the participating schools, participants quickly lose the sense of formality around methods of addressing teachers and a sense of equality is notable. This is encouraged by the absence of rules but the

<sup>14</sup> At the end of every training event, an evaluation is conducted. The comments come from the archive of evaluations.

presence of positive guidelines (Appendix A) that apply to all, whether they are trainers, participants or co-ordinators. A positive attitude is strongly encouraged by the co-ordinators and trainers and again participants have noted this. One participant of the training event commented that it was the first time in his experience that people had tried to catch him doing something right so that they could praise him for it rather than looking for what he did wrong.

Training strongly encourages decision by consensus as opposed to majority vote. One of the final tasks of training is the selection by the school group of a chairperson, a secretary and a public relations officer by consensus. The people who fill these roles take on the responsibility of planning and chairing meetings for the year and representing the group in the public arena, e.g. meeting the principal.<sup>15</sup>

#### Within the school

One respondent using the poem, "Excelsior", described the operation of the programme within the school by Longfellow.

The shades of night were falling fast  
When through an Alpine village passed,  
A youth who bore, 'mid snow and ice,  
A banner with the strange device:  
Excelsior!

Longfellow.

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<sup>15</sup> The roles of chairperson, secretary and PRO are detailed in the training manual.

The alpine village represents the school, the youth represents the Tobar group and the banner represents the work of the group for the students. The group is seen as passing through the school community bearing a standard that speaks of aiming highly. The group leads collectively within the school, taking decisions jointly and implementing their plans as a group.

The programme is funded by the participating schools and by the students involved, with each party paying 50% of the cost.<sup>16</sup> The amount charged is directly related to the cost of the training event and the majority of the income is used to pay for accommodation and food for participants and the three training teams. What remains is used for administration tasks during the year. As stated earlier, all members of the leader teams work voluntarily on the programme.

Although the programme advertises itself as a youth leadership training programme, this author would argue that it has a dimension of education for citizenship contained within it. The formative nature of the programme on attitudes of young people towards leadership, the benefits to the participants and to their schools and the effects of participation on adolescents are the main topics for the research undertaken in this research project.

<sup>16</sup> This percentage is negotiated within the school so that the financial aspect of the programme does not become a deterrent for participants.



## ***Chapter Three***

### ***Methodology***

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter focuses on the methodological approaches taken in the pursuit of this research along with the rationale behind these choices.

The study will investigate how youth leadership-training programmes affect those who participate in them. Particular focus will be placed on the attitudes towards leadership and the perceived benefits of such programmes by the participants.

This chapter begins with a description of the method of selection of the schools and the participants. It examines the reasons for their selection and the ethical considerations involved in working with adolescents, specifically in an educational context.

The second section details the design of the study, describing both the methods used and the rationale for each method. It acknowledges the predilection of the researcher with reference to youth leadership training and illustrates the methods employed to balance any possible bias.

The chapter concludes with a portrayal of the methods utilised to analyse the information gathered and an assessment of the reliability of those methods.

### **Selection of Schools**

The schools selected for the study are representative of the three current major providers of second-level education in this country (Table 3.1)

**Table 3.1 Schools that Participated in Study**

<b>School</b>	<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Size of School</b>	<b>Location of School</b>	<b>Leadership Training Provided</b>
St. Anne's	V.E.C.	Large	City Suburb	Yes
St. Brigid's	V.E.C.	Small / Medium	City Suburb	Yes
St. Conor's	Secondary School (Boys)	Large	Satellite Town	Yes
St. Darragh's	V.E.C.	Large	City Suburb	Yes
St. Enda's	V.E.C.	Small / Medium	City Suburb	Yes
St. Felim's	Community School	Small / Medium	City Suburb	Yes
St. John's <sup>17</sup>	V.E.C.	Medium / Large	City Suburb	No

The researcher has strong links to the leadership-training programme in the six schools. These schools were a natural choice for inclusion in the research since a relationship had already been developed with students and principals in the schools. The school with no involvement in leadership training was selected because of its similarity to some of the other schools in the programme, in terms of both type and size. The researcher also had contacts in the school, thus allowing for ease of administration of the research material. In reality, any school could have been chosen as the seventh school, since its purpose is to act as a control group against which responses from Tobar participants could be assessed.

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<sup>17</sup> This school functioned as a control for the study.

### ***Selection of Participants***

Forty-eight people from Tobar were selected for participation in the study as follows. Sixteen groups were chosen from the twenty-four groups that have been involved in the programme. The selected groups had all completed the programme and were not involved in the initial pilot year<sup>18</sup>. The names of the ten students in each group were listed and each name was allocated a number from one to twenty, with males receiving numbers from one to ten. Three numbered cards were then drawn and the matching name was noted. If there was no name assigned to the number drawn, another number was drawn. In order to preserve the gender balance, the numbers for the co-educational schools were drawn alternately from the one to ten series of numbers and the eleven to twenty series. The resultant list of names was checked again for balance and resulted in a sample size of 32% of the original population of which 62.5% was male and 37.5% was female. This corresponds to the ratio of males to females on Tobar.

The questionnaires (Appendix B) were posted to the survey population with a covering letter (Appendix C) explaining the purpose of the questionnaire. Stamped, addressed envelopes for reply were included with the questionnaire. A follow up postcard was sent to those who had not returned their questionnaire within a month.

<sup>18</sup> At the time of selection of the participants, six groups were still active in their schools and thus would not have completed the programme.

Twenty fifth-year students were selected from a school not connected with the researcher. These students were asked to fill out an abridged version of the survey (Appendix D) during a study class. A teacher in the school administered the questionnaire.

The selection of the focus group was determined by membership of the leaders' team on Tobar in 2001 and previous participation in the programme. The focus group followed leaders' meeting and eight of those who attended at the meeting met the criteria outlined and were available to stay.

The choice of principals for the interviews was determined by the length of time that the school had been involved in the programme. The two initial schools were chosen since both principals were deputy-principals at the time of initiation of the programme and both had the longest involvement in the programme. Therefore the dual purpose of the interviews was satisfied (i) to validate the data regarding the initiation of the programme, mentioned in chapter three and (ii) to compare with the results of the open-ended questions from the questionnaire.

### ***Ethics of Research***

There are ethical considerations in the conduct of any study. These involve permission and confidentiality and the right of those selected to decline to participate. In the conduct of this survey, certain procedures were followed to ensure that people participated through their own choice. After selection of the sample group from Tobar, many were approached informally, informed about the study and their co-operation was requested. All those who were approached

expressed a willingness to participate. Information about the study was also given to the principals of the schools as a matter of courtesy, although the vast majority of those surveyed had already left school. As Woods explains

It is necessary, for example, as a basic position, to have all the permissions to undertake the lines of inquiry involved - this establishes one's legal and moral rights.

(1986, p.69)

A letter indicating the purpose of the study and ensuring the confidentiality of the responses accompanied each questionnaire. That same assurance of confidentiality was given to the principals interviewed and to the members of the focus group. Both the venue and the time of the interviews were left to the interviewees to decide as this gives them control and confidence (Woods, 1986). The focus group was arranged to coincide with a meeting already scheduled, thus minimising the inconvenience to the participants. In addition, all names, including the name of the leadership programme, and identifying details have been changed to render anonymous the participants and the schools involved.

### ***Overview of Research Method***

The research method consists of five steps:

1. a review of the current literature on leadership, adolescence and school,
2. design of a questionnaire based on issues arising from the literature review,
3. selection of a sample population for completion of questionnaires,
4. formulation of a focus group to discuss issues arising from the questionnaires,
5. interviews with principals to verify data from questionnaires.

The selection process employed has already been discussed. What follows are a description of the methods employed and the rationale behind their use.

### ***Rationale for the study***

Many of the reasons for undertaking this study have already been mentioned in chapter two. The changing climate of Irish education allows for increased participation by many of the partners in education in the system. The Education Act (1998) allows for students to become involved in the affairs of the school but provides little indication of how this could happen effectively. The student strikes in schools this year indicate the presence of student leadership in the schools but the nature of and morality of that leadership is unclear. Leadership skills develop strongly in adolescence (Gardner, 1987) prompting questions about their development and purpose. The literature points to benefits for the young leader and for the school from the development of leadership skills. Attitudes towards leadership range from the notion of the charismatic leader, the transformational leader and the manager leader to name but a few. The views of Irish adolescents on these subjects have not previously been sought, as far as the researcher can determine. There is timeliness to this study, concentrating as it does on the opinions of adolescents, involving both those who have experienced leadership training and those who have not.

The next section considers the rationale for the use of a questionnaire. It explains the criteria for the design and content of the questionnaire, the piloting process used and the method of selection of the population.

### ***Rationale for use of the questionnaire***

The choice of questionnaire as a tool for data gathering was made because it allows information to be collected from a wide range of respondents quickly. In addition, it allows for a more considered response to be given as "it gives time for thought, reflection, memory, and composition" (Woods, 1986, p.115). Since the questionnaire has a standard set of responses, it allows the answers from individuals to be compared across the sample population. The anonymity provided by the questionnaire allows the respondent to answer more freely, an important consideration in the research since a large proportion of the sample population are known to the researcher. The use of the questionnaire also allows for the data to be analysed more easily. One drawback to the questionnaire is its lack of flexibility and the inability to delve deeply into the answers given and the reasons behind them. In order to minimise this, many of the closed questions in section B of the questionnaire allowed for expansion of the initial yes/no answers. Another drawback is the distribution and collection of the data since it depends on the co-operation of those who are selected to complete and return the questionnaires. Finally an attitudinal questionnaire requires that the person knows what his/her attitudes towards the topic are (Tuckman, 1972).

### ***Questionnaire Design and Content***

The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A considered the attitude of the respondent towards students and leadership. Section B comprised a series of open-ended questions that elicited information about their participation in a leadership programme. Section C gathered personal information about the respondents that allowed the responses to be grouped. The structure of the

questions and the resultant need for different instructions was the reason for the use of the different sections.

## Section A

Section A is a Likert-type attitudinal scale.

A Likert scale is a five-point scale in which the interval between each point on the scale is assumed to be equal... used to register the extent of agreement or disagreement with a particular statement of an attitude, belief, or judgement.

(Tuckman, 1972, p.197)

By inserting a tick on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the sample group responded to statements about their attitudes towards leadership. Certain subtopics were identified within the area of leadership, mainly concerned with perceptions about who can be a leader and different styles of leadership. Attitudes towards these were also tested within this section. The types of leadership tested were

1. transactional leadership;
2. transformational leadership.

The second question again used an attitudinal scale, although this had a seven-point scale. By placing a tick in one of seven boxes along a continuum from a leadership characteristic to its opposite, the sample group responded to possible characteristics of a leader. The closer the tick was placed to a characteristic, the more important the characteristic was deemed to be. The twenty-three characteristics of leadership were sometimes placed on the left side of the scale and sometimes on the right side. This reversal of the direction of some items helps to protect against a bored or disinterested respondent who might simply mark the same response choice for each statement. The inclusion of a 'no



opinion' response was designed to discourage respondents from leaving a section blank. The construction of this section of the questionnaire was informed by the work of van Linden and Fertman (1998) who compiled a list of characteristics that are associated with leadership by adolescents. The questionnaire began with this section since it is easy to complete and would also cause the respondent to think about the topic before answering the more open-ended middle section of the questionnaire.

### Section B

Section B dealt with the experience of those involved in the Tobar Youth Leadership Training Programme. The majority of the questions were yes/no followed by an open-ended question to allow for expansion of the initial answer. The questions covered the following areas.

1. motivation for application for the programme;
2. skills learned;
3. changes to the individual;
4. benefits to the individual and to the school ;
5. changes in relationship between participants and the teaching staff, classmates and other students;
6. involvement in school prior to and post involvement in Tobar;
7. change in opinion of the school;
8. current or previous parental involvement in community activities.

### Section C

The third and final section asks for personal information including gender, age group, school attended, year of participation in Tobar, chairperson of group (to

allow for verification of year of participation), current occupation and parental occupation. This factual information would allow the comparison of reported attitudes with each of these variables. This factual section was left until the end of the questionnaire as recommended by Babbie (1990) since it is easy to complete. The questionnaire layout was designed to be uncluttered, easy to read and easy to answer. Efforts were made to ensure that the questions and instructions were as clear and unambiguous as possible. Appropriate emphasis helped to draw the respondent's attention to instructions and key words.

### *Piloting*

The questionnaire was piloted with six people who had previously participated in Tobar. This was done in order to ascertain the length of time required to complete the questionnaire, to check that all questions and instructions were clear and to enable the researcher to remove any statements or questions which did not yield usable data (Bell, 1993). Minor adjustments in the language used and the clarity of the instructions were suggested and changes were made. A suggestion to reduce the number of characteristics of a leader was also implemented.

### ***Interviews***

The researcher had noted the need for corroboration of the research material for some time, prompted by the close personal involvement of the researcher in the area of the research and the need to retain impartiality and eliminate proclivity as much as possible. Two interviews were therefore included in the research design. The purpose of these interviews was to provide structural integrity to the research by ensuring two things

1. that the background information relating to the initiation of the programme was accurate;
2. That the views of the participants in relation to the school were crosschecked with an independent source.

Again it must be noted that since both principals had been involved in the initial stages of the programme implementation, and both have supported the programme over the years, there may also exist a degree of proclivity.

A semi-structured format was chosen for the interviews since it allowed a greater degree of flexibility within the interviews.

...semi-structured interviews...are guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. (Merriam, 1988, p.72)

A copy of the proposed questions<sup>19</sup> were given to each principal ahead of the interview, to allow time for responses to be formulated. However the order of the questions was not determined ahead of time. This allowed the researcher to respond to issues as they emerged and to follow a more natural progression of acquiring information. The structure allowed the analysis to be conducted more easily, an important consideration since the study was limited in terms of time (Bell, 1993) The interviews were conducted on site with both principals, with the length of the interview varying from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes. At the outset of each interview, the interviewees were asked for permission to use a tape recorder. They were assured of confidentiality and that they would have the option of amending any quotes used at a later stage. This served the dual role of

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<sup>19</sup> The areas covered in the interview are listed in Appendix E

assuring the interviewee of confidentiality and of checking the report was an accurate reflection of the views of the principal.

A tape recording was made of each interview as this allowed the interviewer to concentrate fully on the text of the interview while it was in progress and to have access to direct quotes when the interview had concluded. Although the questions had been decided upon before the interview, some deviation was undertaken during the interview as answers were deemed to require elaboration or clarification. This is one of the benefits of using interviews as it allows for explanations to be obtained easily or answers to be probed. This gives a depth of understanding not possible with questionnaires. However, some of the restrictions mentioned earlier with respect to questionnaires also apply here.

Bogdan and Biklen suggest avoiding the situation

When the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, when the subject cannot tell his or her story personally, in his or her words... Good interviews are ones in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view. Good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent's perspectives.

(1982, p.136)

In short, the interview process was designed to ensure that as far as possible the qualities of a good interview were satisfied.

### ***Focus group***

Following analysis of the questionnaires, certain issues were identified and these formed the agenda for a focus group. The advantages to the use of a focus group

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<sup>19</sup> The areas covered in the interview are listed in Appendix E

are similar to those already considered for both the questionnaire and the interviews. Issues raised may be examined at greater depth than that allowed by questionnaires. The semi-structured format of the discussion allows for interaction between the participants as can the physical arrangement of the group. There are inherent disadvantages in the use of a focus group as more vocal members may monopolise the discussion. If respondents are particularly strong in their viewpoints, they may inadvertently influence or intimidate other members from expressing their opinion. Nevertheless it provides an opportunity for clarification of issues arising from methods of data gathering such as the attitudinal scales utilised in the questionnaire.

The focus group comprised eight people, five males and three females. Five of the members of the focus group had been involved in the initial questionnaire, three had not. The proceedings of the focus group were recorded with the consent of the participants. Recordings were made using audiotape and videotape and a scribe was also used.

The focus group was conducted in accordance with the guidelines given by Krueger (1994) and the overview is given below.

1. Introduction and clarification of terms;
2. Questions, moving from easy to more difficult;
3. Summary and accuracy check;
4. Closing statement including confidentiality assurance.

The researcher initially welcomed the members of the focus group and indicated its purpose and guidelines for the interview. Permission was sought and granted for the use of audiotape, videotape and a scribe. The audiotape in

the centre of the group allowed for interaction between the participants while the videotape allowed for clear identification of contributors later. The scribe noted the main points made by participants, thus allowing for ease of access to topics during the analysis. Participants were asked to state their names and the year of involvement in Tobar. This served two purposes since it set the participants at ease by giving them the opportunity to speak in the group and allowed them to be identified on audiotape later. Since all of the participants in the focus group are currently involved in Tobar, the timeframe of answering was determined to be their opinion while at school rather than their present opinion. Therefore the questions were couched as "what would have been your understanding of ... while still at school?" This had been explained to the participants in the establishment of the terms.

In the initial section of the focus group, the participants were given a collated copy of the attitudes towards leadership and asked to comment on what struck them about the results. This non-directive approach allowed an easy non-threatening response from the participants. The same approach was taken to the characteristics of a leader. Specific questions about the results were then put to the group and the participants' views were sought.

The concluding section of the focus group included a brief summary of the major themes and this was checked with the participants for accuracy. Finally the participants were thanked for their involvement and permission to use the

results of the interview was again sought. Confidentiality of responses was assured.

### ***Data Analysis***

The initial analysis of the questionnaire data took place while the researcher was still in the field. The questionnaire was analysed using a computer package (SPSS). This allowed for the large numbers of responses on the questionnaire to be analysed accurately. Since Section A had over two hundred response possibilities, some form of mathematical analysis that would also allow for cross-tabulation of results was essential. The computer package allowed for the responses from each questionnaire to be inputted directly using the numbers on the Likert scale for Section A. The data obtained in the open-ended questions in Section B was not coded into the programme since it was primarily qualitative.

As a result of reading and re-reading the answers, the data obtained in the open-ended questions in Section B was divided into categories for each question. Some questions were analysed in conjunction with other questions if a natural link existed between them. For example, the questions concerning changes in relationships were grouped together since the subject matter for these questions was quite similar.

### **Focus Group and Interview Analysis**

Although the rationale behind the use of the focus group and the interviews with the principals was different, the process for analysis for both was very similar.

The tape recordings were listened to repeatedly and significant quotes were extracted. The analysis of the focus group was mainly concerned with deepening the analysis of the questionnaires by discussing some of the results with participants in the programme. The analysis of the principals' interviews focussed on areas of corroboration of Section B of the questionnaire and also on providing information for the background to the programme outlined in Chapter Two.

### ***Triangulation***

The results obtained in this study, particularly in the qualitative area of the study are not solely dependent on section B of the questionnaire. Nor was the data confined to that obtained from the interviews or from the focus group. Various documents relating to the programme including the training manual, mission statement, information documents and minutes of meetings were used as a source of data. The researcher's own observations in the field were also used to validate responses. Sections of this thesis were shown to key informants and perspectives were checked with subjects as recommended by Bogdan and Bilken (1982). Thus a variety of methods were used since "the use of three or more different methods or bearings to explore an issue greatly increases the chances of accuracy" (Woods, 1986 p87). This is a concept known as triangulation. It allows a more complete view to emerge since different perspectives of the same situation are taken. In addition, no information about the results of the questionnaires had been given to the principals prior to the interviews, thus allowing for independent triangulation of the data.



### ***Reliability of the Process***

Statistical reliability indicates that another researcher would obtain concordant results on another occasion. This researcher has had the opportunity to observe participants on Tobar training and in operation within a school setting for the past seven years. This has served to confirm much of the evidence offered by respondents to the questionnaire. For example, many respondents spoke about an increase in confidence in public speaking. Each year at the launch of the programme and at the achievement night, these young people make verbal presentations to the assembled group, which may number more than two hundred people. One respondent noted that she "spoke to a large group of students" at the launch of the programme in a new school, something that she would not have done before. This student had never been observed addressing a group of students before; so observation authenticates the data in this case.

In addition, the triangulation of data mentioned in the previous section assists in presenting an authentic account of the data. Therefore the researcher believes that another researcher studying this area at this time would have collected similar results. The researcher does not suggest that these results are valid for other adolescent populations at this time, due to the small numbers that participated in the study and to the specific nature of the leadership training programme.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter, a description has been given of the methodological approach used in the research. It began with an overview of the research process, initially detailing the selection methods employed. It considered the ethics of such research. Both the method employed and the rationale behind the choice was

considered next. The relationship between the researcher and the majority of the participants was noted as important to the study. The chapter concludes with a look at procedures used for data analysis and a discussion on the reliability of this piece of research.

## ***Chapter Four***

### ***Results and Initial Analysis of the Study***

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter presents a selection of the results obtained in this study. The volume of material gathered prohibits all but the most significant results from being presented here.

The chapter begins with an examination of the effects of participation in the Tobar programme on those surveyed. Reasons for participation are given, key learnings and changes in relationships are noted and the personal development of the participants are considered. Much of the section is composed of quotes from the questionnaires, allowing the voices of the young people involved to be heard. They are the best advocates of the benefits of youth leadership programmes.

The second section of the chapter looks at the quantitative results and examines the characteristics of leaders as viewed by the young people surveyed. It considers the differences between respondents who have participated in Tobar and those who have not. The section concludes with an examination of the gendered view of leadership characteristics.

A brief analysis of the material is conducted throughout the chapter. However, Chapter Five will consider the issues raised in more detail.

## **Why Tobar?**

In the seven years since its inception, over 300 young people have trained as youth leaders on Tobar. In order to participate, they actively applied for the programme and stated their reasons for application. Why would sixteen and seventeen year old males and females choose to apply for a place on a leadership programme? Those surveyed were asked to recall their reasons for application. The responses included a desire for involvement in the school.

*Tobar helped me a great deal in 1<sup>st</sup> year and I hoped to help others like I was helped.*  
(17 year old male)

*I thought it would be good fun to work on some project that I had an interest in and get things done, rather than hope someone else would get them done.*  
(20 year old male)

Some acknowledged the benefits to the individual.

*It sounded interesting, fun and would look good on my C.V. I lacked in confidence so this was a big step for me and I never regretted it.*  
(19 year old female)

*Before I went away on Tobar, I had confidence in my own abilities but could not express myself in front of a large group and I felt if I could overcome this problem, I would be able to help others.*  
(18 year old male)

*Honestly, the few days break from school but ended up getting really involved and interested.*  
(19 year old female)

*I wanted people to hear my opinions.*  
(19 year old male)

*To experience what leadership and responsibility are like.*  
(19 year old female)

*Heard it was good fun from people who had already done the programme.*  
(20 year old female)

Whatever the reason given, the responses revealed much about the altruistic nature of the young people surveyed.

*The programme seemed to offer the opportunity to give something back to the school in return for what I had received from it. (19 year old male)*

*I had been bullied before and I wanted to help other people through it.  
(18 year old female)*

*Probably because I needed to be part of something useful at that stage of my life.  
(19 year old male)*

One theme that emerged from the responses was the limited nature of the extracurricular experience available in schools.

*I also wanted to get involved in an extra-curricular activity in the school which suited me and this did.  
(18 year old female)*

*I like the idea of being involved in the school in something that wasn't sport related.  
(20 year old female)*

*Probably because I needed to be part of something ...that was more of a team than your average football team.  
(19 year old male)*

This theme has also emerged during the interviews for the programme over the years. A number of males have commented on the level of exclusion they felt as a result of their lack of ability on the playing field, thereby ensuring that they never represented the school on a sports team. Even casual games during break-times became points of exclusion because of a lack of skill in retaining the football. If a school is perceived to place a high value on sports, then those who are not naturally skilled in sports can find it difficult to contribute to the school in a way that they consider meaningful<sup>20</sup> (Drudy and Lynch, 1993).

*It gave me a sense of achievement and participation in the school (I didn't get on any of the school sports teams!)  
(20 year old male)*

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<sup>20</sup> Drudy and Lynch cite examples of boys' schools prospectuses and school magazines highlighting the quality of sports facilities available and the sporting achievements of the school. The same does not appear to be true of single sex girl's schools but may be true in co-educational situations.

Research has shown that achievement in sports is stereotypically associated with masculine achievement and that competency in football "went a long way in helping to establish one as a 'real' boy" (Swain, 2000, p.107). If this is the case for males, then the lack of opportunities for significant female participation may be greater, depending on the type of school attended and the relative value of sports to other extracurricular activities.

The desire for a real involvement in the school is also highlighted. Respondents wanted to be taken seriously and to feel that their contribution would be seen as important. Their concern with genuine participation in the creation and development of their school rather than with token involvement is evident in the responses below, as is the strength of their feeling on this subject.

*The fact that there was interviews made me think that it was something thought out and serious. Something worthwhile. (20 year old female)*

*...to have something to do with actual things in the school and maybe make an impact. I have to say the 'power' appealed to me or feeling I was part of something. (17 year old male)*

*I felt frustrated at the lack of any student involvement in the creation of the school environment and especially by the complacent attitude on both sides to that status quo. (21 year old male)*

Their participation in the programme gave them an opportunity to meet this need for belonging. Memories of their involvement included meetings held and tasks accomplished. For some, the meetings were positive events; others remember them as difficult times.

*Meetings [were good] because we held them so often and they almost always went right. We had some major achievements but I definitely remember the meetings the best. (19 year old male)*

*Argue. [at meetings] (20 year old male)*

*Wasted meetings talking.*

*(21 year old male)*

The tasks varied from those requiring high levels of organisational skills to impromptu actions that united the group.

*We put on a table quiz which resulted in chaos but the bowling trip was a success.*

*(18 year old male)*

*Assembling the framework for a student council in the school. Developing its rules and seeing the wheels for it set in motion.*

*(19 year old male)*

*The Christmas disco we held when we didn't have enough money so the lads shaved their legs.*

*(18 year old female)*

*...when we brought a group (large) to the ice rink. It was great seeing them all helping each other, the so called "bullies" helping their victims up from falling. It was great.*

*(20 year old female)*

The tasks achieved are not just important within themselves but also for the message they send to the other students.

*I look at the fountain<sup>21</sup> [drinking] as a symbol rather than an object, which others can see and say its possible to achieve their goals with effort and opinion.*

*(20 year old male)*

But what shines through is their pride in their achievements and in their team.

*Even though it<sup>22</sup> [painting the toilets] was much tougher than originally thought, we were proud of our work.*

*(21 year old female)*

*...when we discovered there was a bullying problem in the school. It made me think when someone actually trusted us to tell us that there was a problem and asked us to do something.*

*(18 year old female)*

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<sup>21</sup> This group raised funds to install a drinking fountain in the school. The unavailability of drinking water for students has been a serious issue for at least three schools in the initial years of Tobar.

<sup>22</sup> The group decided to clean and paint the toilets during their mid-term break. Their rationale was that the condition of the toilets sent a message to the students about how they were regarded by the school. Clean, freshly painted toilets indicated respect for the students. Tobar groups in at least three schools have focused on the condition of school toilets. This appears to have a symbolic meaning for students about respect.

*The best thing was when the students said they enjoyed themselves and thanked us very much.*  
*(19 year old male)*

Based upon the answers to the initial two questions, it is unsurprising that the rest of the answers are also very positive. Participants saw changes in themselves, in their relationship with the teaching staff and with the junior students. Their personal and interpersonal skills increased. They felt that their school and the students benefited from their presence. They developed a more positive opinion of the school.

The next section will consider the results to the questions about participation under the three areas of development indicated by the vision of Tobar: acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly.

### ***To Act Justly - becoming more aware of the surroundings.***

The vast majority of students developed a more positive opinion of the school during their involvement in Tobar. Those whose opinions did not change already appeared to see the school in a positive light. The two areas that displayed most change were the attitude towards staff, including the principal and an understanding of the complexity of change in a school.<sup>23</sup> Students displayed insights into the structural organisation and working of the school as evidenced by their comments below.

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<sup>23</sup> The change in attitudes towards staff will be considered under the 'Love Tenderly' heading.



*... I learned to understand the different things that had to be discussed before decisions were taken. I learned how simple decisions affects everyone, students, teachers, parents etc.* (18 year old female)

*I gained a great understanding of the conservatism and inertia that tends to pervade the school at times. On the other hand, I learned that the school was quite willing and able to proceed in partnership with students where it could not otherwise.* (21 year old male)

*I began to see why decision making was so tricky and slow in schools.* (21 year old male)

*Began to see all needs of students within the school more and realised how much more involved students needed to be.* (18 year old female)

*You see that suggestions from the students are listened to, and if commercially viable and for the schools benefit will be carried through.* (21 year old female)

The importance of student and staff involvement and commitment to change was evident from the responses, as were the factors that influence these changes (financial, parents, teachers, students, commitment, and inertia). Respondents saw themselves as central to that process of change.

*I thought we were more than students, we were between teachers and students and really felt involved as the teachers trust us.* (17 year old male)

*I felt as the year progressed that I as well as the team were part of the school team.* (17 year old male)

*It provided a student body that can present cases in an organised fashion to the administration.* (20 year old male)

They also recognised that they needed to work in conjunction with the staff in order to effect change.

*It made me realise that the school (teachers) do want to improve students life @ [sic] school and to listen to them - the fact that teachers are willing to help out and get involved changed my view of some teachers.* (19 year old female)

*I respected teachers more because they treated us like adults, not kids!* (18 year old male)

*A lot can be accomplished when students and teachers work together to improve the school which they are part of. It can only be done with co-operation between both sides.* (19 year old male)

It especially drew their attention to the support of the principal.

*Especially the way we would explain an idea to (the principal) and he would listen and always let us go ahead with things.* (19 year old female)

*I found the principal ...to be extremely co-operative and helpful and made things possible for the Tobar team so that left a very good impression of the school as a whole on me.* (19 year old male)

One respondent noted the wider purpose of education.

*I realised that the school was becoming not just a place to learn but to help discover your goals, and help you realise the reality of life after school.* (20 year old female)

Others saw how the core values of the programme had an influence on the school ethos.

*It was very important for the school to internalise these values; (i) the selection of people without prejudice (ii) the ability and propriety of students acting in the school environment without direction by a teacher/parent.* (21 year old male)

*I feel that the group was/is a great forum for the students to voice their opinions (which can only create a positive, respected body of students, which can only improve the moral, the integrity of the school which is a benefit).* (20 year old male)

This increased sense of understanding links to the benefits experienced by the school as indicated by the students. Most spoke of the effect that they had on the junior students, especially the first year students.

*Young kids see us as friends not 5<sup>th</sup> years or 6<sup>th</sup> years. They liked talking to us.* (19 year old female)

*The first years benefited the most as we helped them settle in.* (19 year old female)

*We helped the students relax and changed their attitudes to school. We let them see that school could be enjoyable.* (19 year old male)

The benefits extended beyond the first year students, to include the teachers and other students.

*The school has a leadership not attributed to teachers. It's a type of leadership students can relate to.* (19 year old male)

*Tobar created a real sense of community spirit within my school.* (18 year old male)

*They got to see the best side of the kids and what they are capable of.* (19 year old male)

*Students involved are trusted and responsible.* (19 year old female)

*Tobar also had an impact on the spirit of the first year and sixth year students. The first years had people leading them that were more of their own age and could maybe identify with them more easily.* (19 year old male)

A sense of being part of something bigger than oneself and one's group was evident. This was also mentioned by Thomas, Principal of St. Brigid's, who spoke of Tobar as a resource within the school that helps "to create a general better air of maturity among the senior students and that has a knock-on effect for the junior students". The benefits were attributed to the work undertaken by previous groups as well as those currently working in the school, indicating a sense of continuity to the vision of the programme and a sense of community between the groups.

## Summary

The awareness of the world around them increased for the participants. The world of the school became less mysterious and alien and more of a place that they could contribute to. Some began to see the web-like structure of influence in the school, where the consequences of decisions were often more far-reaching than initially supposed. Others observed the orientation of staff towards students as positive, compared to previous assumptions. In most cases, the sense of belonging and ownership increased significantly. Responses also indicated a sense of the continuity of the programme throughout the years. Respondents mentioned previous groups and their achievements, or the effect that those groups had on the school. The idea of building on the work of others also comes through, indicating a sense of community within the Tobar programme as well as within the school.

### ***To Love Tenderly - changes in interpersonal relationships.***

The respondents expressed changes in a variety of relationships. These included relationships with the teaching staff, with other students and with their own self-image. The majority of change is positive, with the exception of some peer relationships.

#### Relationships With Teachers

An increase in mutual respect and a greater appreciation of teachers as generous people were the hallmarks of the change in this area. Respondents were appreciative of the commitment of the teachers to the students.

*We started to see how they were people doing the best they could in a tough job. We did not have too much confrontation because there was a lot of mutual respect there, and both sides were willing to come to a compromise if necessary.*  
(20 year old male)

*I got to know the teachers as people and not someone who is 'waiting to take my journal'. I realised that they were willing to commit a lot of their time to help us in our activities. I have a lot of time for them.*  
(20 year old female)

Participants commented upon the positive development of student/teacher relationships as their understanding of the human aspect of the teacher grew.

*I found that once one had demonstrated a commitment to the school, a sincerity, the teaching staff became very enthusiastic, much more flexible, much less cynical.*  
(21 year old male)

*I would say that within the year we almost felt level with teachers as we both tried to help 1<sup>st</sup> years. We weren't looking up to them as students but instead working with them as people.*  
(17 year old male)

*We became close to the staff because of their kind involvement. Also we were slightly more mature and this contributed to the relationship.*  
(18 year old female)

Not all relationships changed and some respondents felt that they had to prove themselves to the staff before there was an increase in respect.

*At first, it went bad because some staff felt it was interfering with our school work. It changed when they saw how well we were doing, and how the students changed.*  
(19 year old female)

*Some teachers became our main ambassadors when dealing with less co-operative members of staff.*  
(19 year old male)

One acknowledged the different responses from staff depending on their attitude towards student involvement.

*Some teachers liked the idea of students being involved...and we got on well but the teachers who did not like the idea were the ones who we crossed badly.*  
(18 year old male)

Sean, the Principal of St. Anne's felt that while there were members of staff who did not know what the Tobar group were doing, contact between the group and the staff was a key factor in attitude formation. Contact with the first year tutors

through the tutor system brought with it an appreciation for the hard work of the group. The co-operating teachers saw the changes in the individuals. He felt that the vast majority of the teaching staff regarded them very highly, even though they might not be aware of the specifics of the work undertaken.

*They are actually contributing towards students in the way that teachers best understand...that its about giving of oneself to the students and hoping to goodness that something will come of it in the future for them.*  
(Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)

### Relationships With Classmates

The change in relationship with classmates, where a change was observed, divides into three categories. The members of the Tobar group were all classmates and as the group developed, people saw different sides to the members, relationships deepened and unlikely friendships grew.

*They liked me more, because they didn't know me before Tobar. They only knew me as a messer but found out I was OK. (18 year old male)*

*We, the Tobar team, got to know each other very well. We would not have got together as a group of friends any other way. They weren't a bad bunch either.*

*(20 year old male)*

*I established deeper relationships with team members.*

*(21 year old male)*

Within the year group, many felt that relationships improved because of their awareness of the representative nature of their position.

*I felt I opened up a lot more and got to know my year better. I felt I was representing them and needed to know them better. (18 year old female)*

*I started to see many of them differently, my attitude to them changed and vice-versa. Many of those whom I disliked in early years of school became good friends. I felt they could approach me with a matter they saw as important. I don't think they ever could/would have before.*

*(19 year old male)*

*The relationship with classmates improved because we required their support and input regarding certain issues. (18 year old female)*

The reaction varied, depending on the group and the classmates.

*They changed with people, in some cases for the better, in some cases for the worse and some of the people I knew better just stayed the same. (19 year old male)*

However, the interview and selection process, while impartial, creates its own difficulties. Those who are not selected are also the classmates of the working Tobar group and can experience natural feelings of disappointment. Occasionally, team members leave the group when they return to school. These situations can be expressed in a number of ways.

*Most of our classmates put the group down and didn't support us. Even though they applied themselves for Tobar, they still acted childish towards the group that was picked. (18 year old female)*

*There was like an anti-Tobar group within the year. What I found hard and pathetic was the fact that people who left the group began to slag off myself and other members just to show...they were not associated with the group anymore. (18 year old male)*

*Some students thought it was stupid staying back after school to organise things. Others couldn't help more and wanted to help us. (18 year old male)*

*My friends sometimes asked me if they wanted something and they jeer us saying that only swots were picked but I wasn't a swot so they understood. (18 year old female)*

A combination of disappointment at non-selection and the initial focus of the group on the first year students can lead to classmates feeling that the group does nothing for its own peers, a comment that the author has heard from senior students on many occasions. Yet some groups manage to involve large numbers of their peers in their activities by enlisting the help of friends and classmates in running discos, refereeing football leagues and accompanying them on trips with

the first year students. This widening of the influence of the group serves to increase the sense of participation and ownership beyond the ten team members.

### Relationships With Other Students

Since the Tobar group spend a lot of time working with the first year students, helping them to settle into the school, it is unsurprising that the relationship with this year group experiences much change. Tobar members felt admired and respected by the junior students, much more than by their peers.

*I noticed that the younger students looked up at us as if we were gods!  
We were their role models and a link between them and the teachers,  
allowing them to feel more comfortable. (21 year old female)*

*I think it gave them a lot of self-confidence when they could say "hello"  
and we said "hello" even when they or we were amongst friends.  
(18 year old male)*

*They felt at ease talking to us. Lots of the younger students placed their  
trust in us and admired us. (18 year old female)*

This opinion of the influence that they have had on the junior students is a real one and is confirmed for the researcher upon visiting the schools to launch the programme each year. At launches in the initial two schools involved in the programme, students can remember the names of their Tobar leaders from when they were in first year. Many cite the example of their Tobar leaders as their main reason for application to the programme. Many Tobar leaders who have completed their secondary schooling report incidents of meeting "their first years" on buses, in queues and of being greeted enthusiastically by these young people. The impact that they made on the junior students is clearly evident from such anecdotal evidence. But it goes much further than this.



*There is a huge extra dimension there in the fact that young people are given this responsibility and they show themselves capable of taking it on...they're a living example to the rest of the school of what one can do for others and for one's school...it sounds like an extra layer but it's actually an extra depth to the school's spirit.*

*(Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)*

## Summary

Change in relationships is strongly linked to a different type of interaction with teachers and younger students than has previously been experienced. Working together for a common purpose allows the person rather than the role to emerge, in the case of the teacher and of the student. However, some peer relationships are disrupted due to a variety of reasons, indicating the operation of another form of leadership influence among this age group. The necessity for a leader to have strong willpower becomes apparent here and the responses would suggest that those involved recognised the negative attitude but did not let it affect their work. Others included their peers in the process, thus increasing the sense of belonging to the group and the school.

## ***To Walk Humbly - personal development***

Awareness of, and confidence in, their abilities are the two major themes running through the responses in this section. Skills were developed and those skills continue to be important in the participants' lives. Confidence increased, evidenced by the manner in which respondents were able to express opinions about themselves, indicating also a high degree of self-awareness.

## Skills Development

Respondents listed over fourteen skills that had been learned from participation in Tobar. These included organisational skills such as running meetings, planning and decision-making, teamwork skills like effective communication and co-operation and interpersonal skills such as diplomacy and assertiveness. The skills were learned not just on training but in the ongoing process in the school. The skill of active listening was highlighted by a large number of respondents as central to the process and listening was expressed as an active concept rather than a word. The development of the interpersonal skills was necessary since people often ended up working with others that they would not naturally have chosen. The skill of being a group member was commented upon by Thomas, the Principal of St. Brigid's as were the organisational skills learned. The skills listed also illustrate the reality of working with others.

Participants spoke of increased sense of authority.

*I learned how to talk in front of a large crowd when before I'd be scarlet.  
(19 year old female)*

*Well as soon as I returned to my school I noticed and others did that I had more confidence within myself. I noticed that I began to start willing others to make decisions that they were unsure of and I was beginning to motivate others as well.  
(18 year old male)*

The level of responsibility felt for others expanded.

*I love to care for others and Tobar brings out the strong skills you need to have to look after people. You have to make wise decisions.  
(19 year old female)*

Their meetings taught them how to share verbal space.

*The ability to come to agreements with others and getting consensus by giving a little and taking a little.  
(19 year old male)*

*Listening and participating with others and learning to be a part of something.* (18 year old male)

*We had a particularly quiet person in our group and everybody not only me had to learn to make sure everybody gets their say not just the loud people.* (20 year old female)

*I learned to listen. Normally I would just talk, talk, talk, and if someone else would talk, I wouldn't listen, just look for a gap where I could butt in. I learned to listen.* (17 year old male)

Task skills such as planning and management increased.

*I became more informed of the decision-making process and the politics behind schools which make me look now to the politics in everything before becoming involved in things. And I realised for this reason and due to politics that some things just can't be changed.* (21 year old male)

*I saw how being in a group with structure e.g. chairperson made teachers trust us with responsibility and treated us with respect. It helps in later life in the work place when the same problems come up and you can use all the tools you learnt to deal with them.* (20 year old female)

*Primarily diplomacy and various planning skills. This has proved invaluable in college.* (21 year old male)

But development of skills is only a small piece of the picture. Although the participants value these skills, it is the transformative aspect of their leadership development that is more important.

*I think Tobar gave me an understanding of each person's unique value and intrinsic worth. The skills I learned have proven very useful but it is this sense of faith in other people's basic integrity that I think was the greatest benefit.* (21 year old male)

### Self-Assurance and Self-Expression

Involvement changed how the participants related to others. As they became more self-aware and more confident, their ability to look beyond themselves increased. Maslow's hierarchy of needs which indicates that basic needs must be met before higher needs can be considered, may explain this development. As the

esteem needs are met through positive feedback and a personal sense of accomplishment, then knowledge and understanding become important, as does self-actualisation.

Levels of self-confidence increased, as did the assurance to try out new things.

*I became much more confident in myself and was able to communicate better with i.e. the teachers, without feeling like student to a teacher, but as 2 adults.* (21 year old female)

*Placed in a situation where you either make new friends or talk to the wall, I surprised myself by saying hello first or something and thus making good friends. I almost cried when I got home from training from missing the others.* (17 year old male)

Participants became more aware of themselves and others.

*I feel that I learned how to appreciate people for who they are rather than their image, background or personality.* (20 year old male)

*I have matured a lot and I feel I can handle difficult situations without any hassle. I also listen to people more when before I'd do all the talking.* (19 year old female)

Even those who would be considered as 'messers' by their peers became more aware of the effects of their behaviour.

*I was more considerate to other people and I only gave ideas when I knew they were genuine instead of messing* (18-year-old male)

Thomas, the principal of St. Brigid's concurred with the sentiment behind this statement. He spoke of a story he had heard about a student involved in Tobar that would have a reputation as

*a bit of a mouth and a messer but in taking part in training, at the end of it...he was saying things like 'oh sorry, I interrupted and I have to take my turn'...Now if that carries on into that child's life, not just in school but elsewhere...that's a very positive thing.*  
(Thomas, Principal of St. Brigid's)

He agreed with the development of maturity and mentioned incidents relating to group members calling to his office to speak with him. He highlighted how adult and mature the participants were in their interactions with him, particularly when he expressed reservations about plans. The group was very open to the rationale behind the reservations. This was echoed by Sean, Principal of St. Anne's, who spoke of the naturalness and effectiveness of the chairperson in dealing with him. Suggestions were "*put in very down to earth and very utilitarian language and yet in a very, very effective way*". In addition, Thomas felt that they had an increased commitment to their studies because "*it makes them think about things and makes school more meaningful to them*".

### Summary

Skills development are a very large part of the Tobar process of youth leadership development. Those skills ranged from organisational to interpersonal skills and were learned and developed as a result of their engagement in the process. Respondents gave a lot of detail about personal development and by their answers, indicated a degree of comfort and openness with self-expression.

The analysis to date has considered the experience of those involved in Tobar and looked for the benefits of involvement in such a programme. A number of issues emerge from the analysis such as the importance of offering a diversity of extra-curricular activities that are team-based. Issues arising will be considered in more detail in Chapter Five.

The qualitative section of the questionnaire looked at attitudes towards leadership, including the characteristics of leaders. Some of the results of this section are presented below.

### ***Characteristics of Leadership - Who is a Leader?***

The trait theory described in Chapter One listed a number of characteristics of leaders as defined by both researchers and by adolescents. These characteristics formed part of the questionnaire and the results are given in this section. The sample group accepted a number of these characteristics. An examination of those that were rejected, sometimes emphatically, paints an interesting picture of the leader. The results of the characteristics of leaders are presented under three sub-headings: physical traits, personality traits and academic traits.

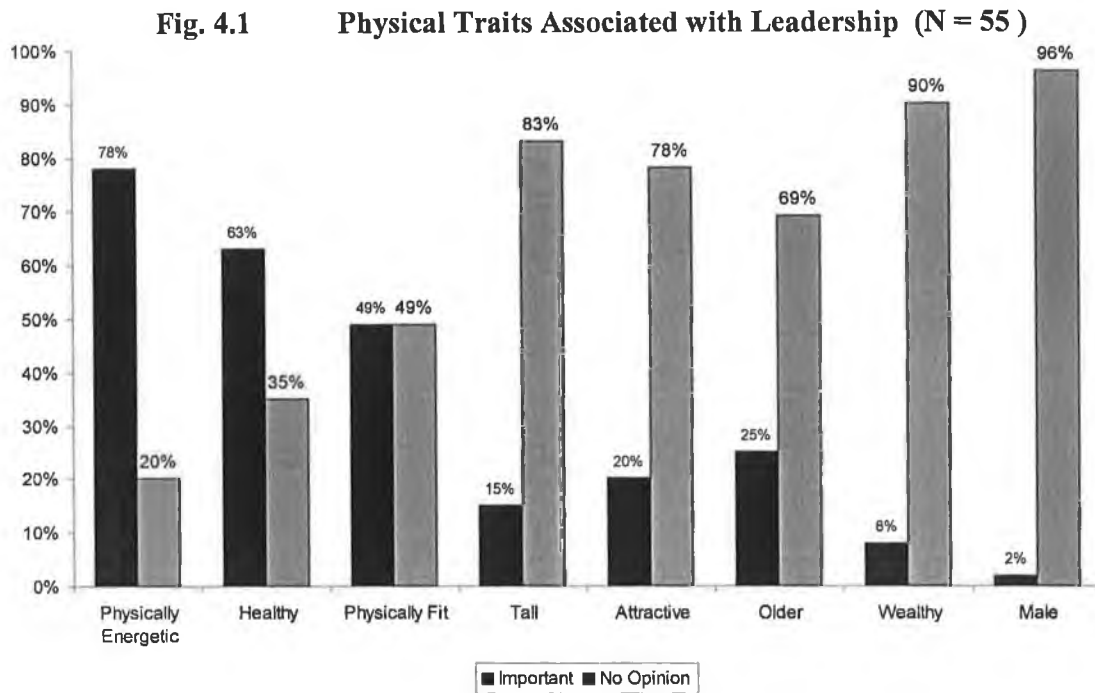
#### **Physical Traits**

The sample group considered very few physical traits important. Only health and physical energy were considered important by more than half of the sample. This would indicate that teenagers consider leadership to be a physically demanding process. It also indicates that there does not exist a picture of the typical leader, as far as appearance is concerned. When the results are contrasted with the no opinion results, the following picture emerges (Fig. 4.1<sup>24</sup>). Very few strongly disagreed with the physical characteristics listed. The vast majority placed no importance on those traits.

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<sup>24</sup> Results for 'unimportant' are omitted. Consequently, percentages do not add up to 100%.

This would indicate that those surveyed believe that physical appearance is not a major factor in determining leadership characteristics.

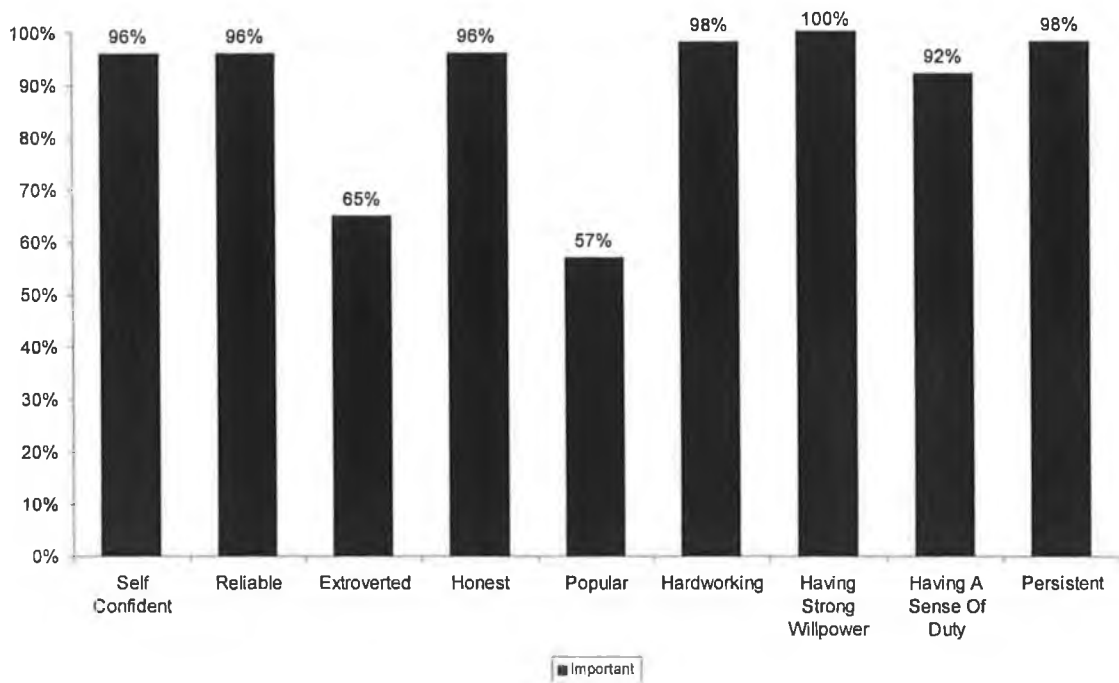


One interview question in the selection procedure in recent years has asked the interviewees to describe a public leader that they admire. Out of a group of 20 respondents, 18 selected male leaders as the leader that they admire most. The two female leaders selected were teachers in one of the schools in the programme. Whether the respondents had no exposure to a strong positive female model of leadership or whether the gender of the respondents (16 males and 4 females) was an affective factor cannot be determined from the information available.

## Personality Traits

The response to personality traits was much stronger, indicating that those surveyed have a clearer opinion of what type of person a leader is. This section scored the highest clear responses in the results, with very few availing of the 'no opinion' option.

Fig. 4.2 Personality Traits Associated with Leadership (N = 55 )



The possession of strong willpower was considered important by all, achieving the only full score in the survey. Being extrovert and popular obtained the lowest scores on this section, yet both were above half indicating that they were considered more important than unimportant. These also scored the highest percentages in the 'no opinion' section, again indicating a level of unsureness as to their importance. Interestingly, no respondent felt that introversion was an important characteristic, matched by 'lacking willpower' and 'dishonesty' in receiving no score. Whether this indicates a lack of understanding of introversion

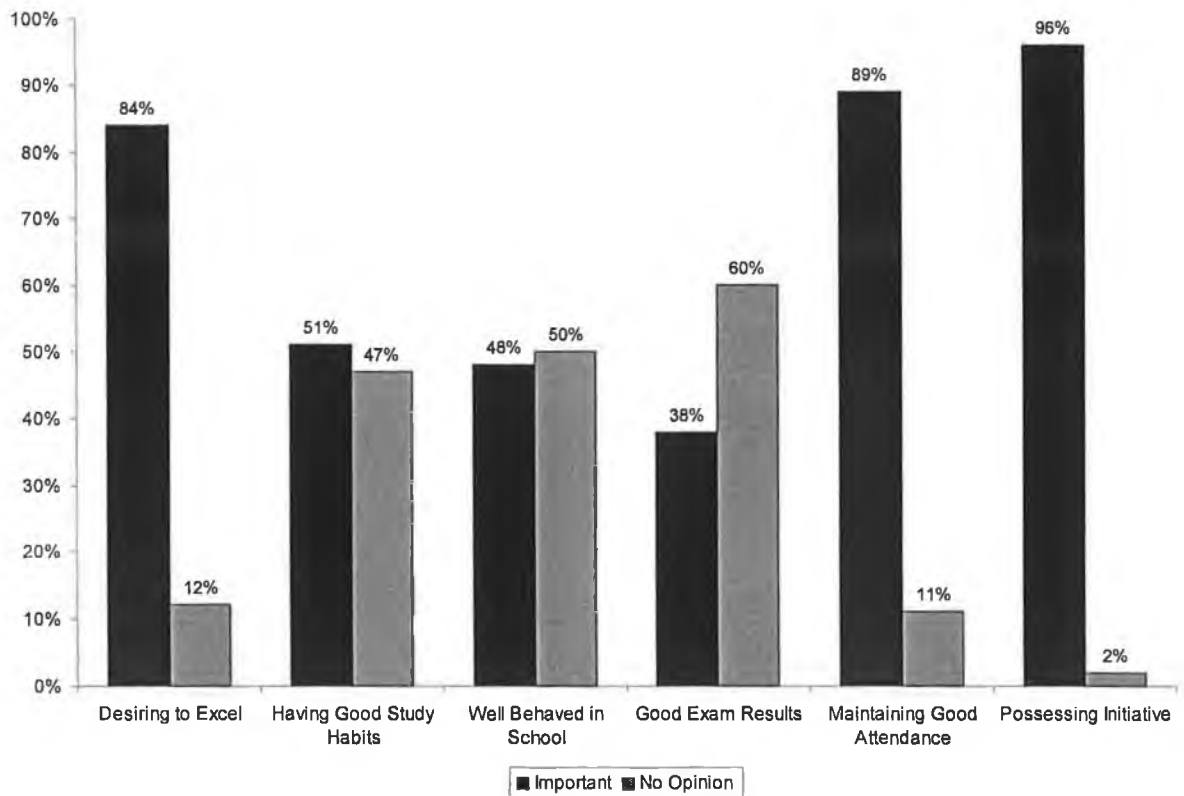


as a trait or an indication of the importance of contact with people cannot be determined from the results.

### Academic Traits

The traits associated with leadership in relation to school could also be considered to be personality traits. Initiative, a desire to excel and good attendance are seen as extremely important while the results for study habits, exam results and behaviour show opinion equally split between those who think them to be important and those who have no opinion on the subject (Fig. 4.3)<sup>25</sup>.

**Fig. 4.3 School / Academic Traits Associated with Leadership (N = 55)**



<sup>25</sup> Results for 'unimportant' are omitted. Consequently, percentages do not add up to 100%.

This could be explained by the existence of the different types of leadership among adolescents, irrespective of performance in school. Some of the strongest leaders may not be those who perform well in school. It demonstrates the unimportance placed on school performance by the group as an indicator of leadership potential.

### Summary

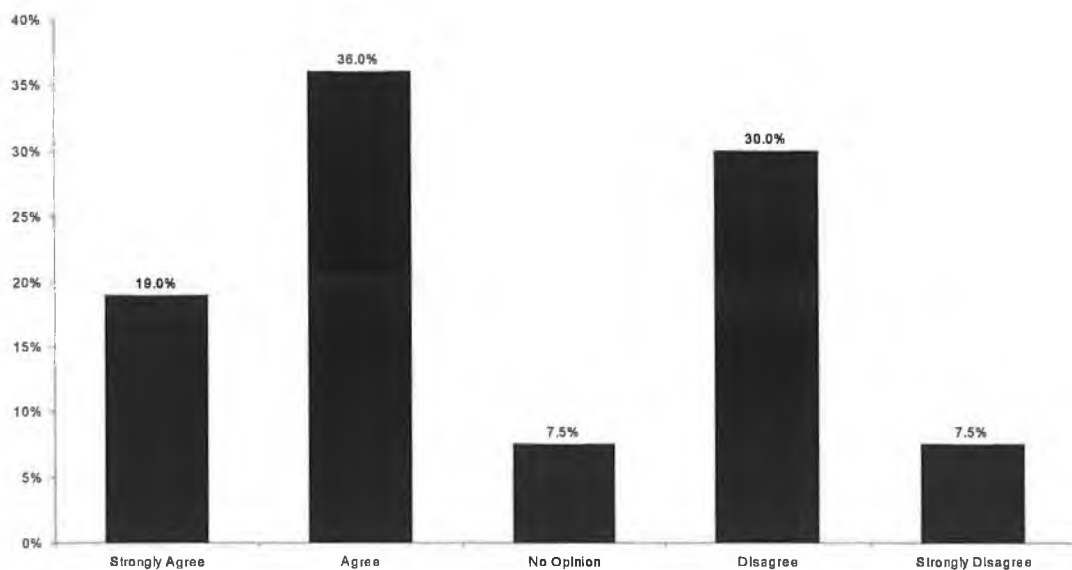
The picture that emerges of the leader from the analysis of this section is of an energetic, fit and healthy person who is hardworking, persistent, honest and self confident, reliable and possessing initiative. They have strong willpower, a sense of duty and a desire to excel. This would match with the some of the characteristics from the trait theory and with some from the characteristics of leaders indicated by van Linden and Fertman (1998). It is congruent with them in terms of the personality of the leader but differs fundamentally in terms of the physical and academic traits.

Whether one is born with the traits of leadership, excluding the physical traits that are genetically determined, or whether one acquires them as a result of circumstances was an issue raised in the study.

The theory that leaders are born, not made, was disagreed with by over three-fifths of the sample (Fig. 4.4). Of the remainder, one-quarter agreed with the statement and over one-tenth had no opinion on the statement. People tended to disagree or agree with the statement without using the strongly agree/disagree

option. The results suggest that this is not a strong issue for young people. However an analysis of the characteristics of a leader paint a very definite picture of the personality of the leader. This raises the evolutionary question about nature and nurture. If traits that relate to personality are genetic, then leaders are born. However, if personality is developed as a result of the environment in which one grows up, then leaders can be made by circumstance. These are two extremities of the argument. The author believes that the truth lies somewhere in the middle of the continuum. Certain physical traits are inherent in a person and may develop or not as a result of the environment in which they live.

**Fig. 4.4 Leaders are Born, not Made (N = 55)**



Discussion in the focus group highlighted the desire to learn the skills of leadership and the availability of training to develop those skills as vital to leadership development. The skills, many of which are social are learned from an early stage and are very dependent on the environment. As Michael, one of the focus group participants, put it

*But it's not a case of a parent turning around and saying that my son or daughter is going to be a great leader ...its things that you learn, the person you become, it's all based on your environment...you become a leader.*

indicating the significance of not just the home environment but also the school and the community. The same is possible for personality traits also.

### **What is Leadership?**

The existence of different styles of leadership was strongly acknowledged with the response to the statement that leadership is flexible and adaptable. Over three-quarters of the sample agreed with the statement with one quarter of those who agreed choosing the 'strongly agree' option. This indicates recognition of the situational nature of leadership and the appropriateness of different styles in different situations.

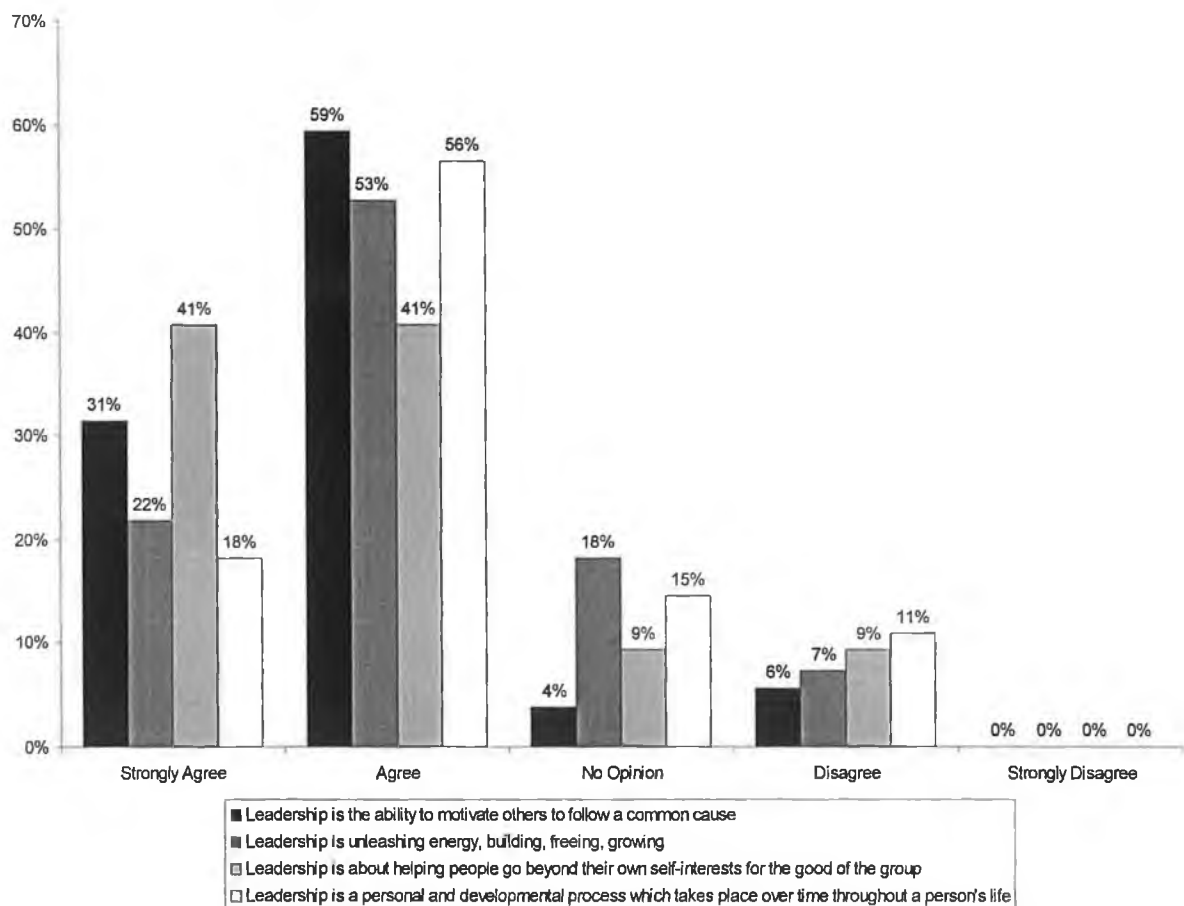
A concept of leadership as 'helping others to go beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group' was agreed with by over four-fifths of the sample. Yet the definition of leadership as the ability to influence the actions of others was agreed with by over half of those surveyed. Of those who agreed, one fifth agreed strongly with the statement. However, two fifths disagreed with the statement, leaving a somewhat ambiguous result. This is one of the disadvantages of the questionnaire as a tool for gathering information. However the analysis of the statement by the focus group indicated a difference in the definition of the word 'influence' that may explain the ambiguity. Peter, a member of the focus group, points to the interpretation of the word 'influence' as critical to the answering of the question. Influence as a positive concept, for the

betterment of the person would yield a strong agreement whereas influence as control would be rejected. The strong acceptance of the moral dimension of leadership as influence for the common good supports Peter's interpretation of the results.

### Views on Transformational Leadership

The majority of the respondents agreed with each of the four statements that relate to transformational leadership, as can be seen in Fig. 4.5 below. This indicates a view of leadership that involves motivation, personal growth and its development does not have a distinct lifespan. Respondents felt most strongly

**Fig. 4.5 Leadership as a Transformational Process (N = 55)**

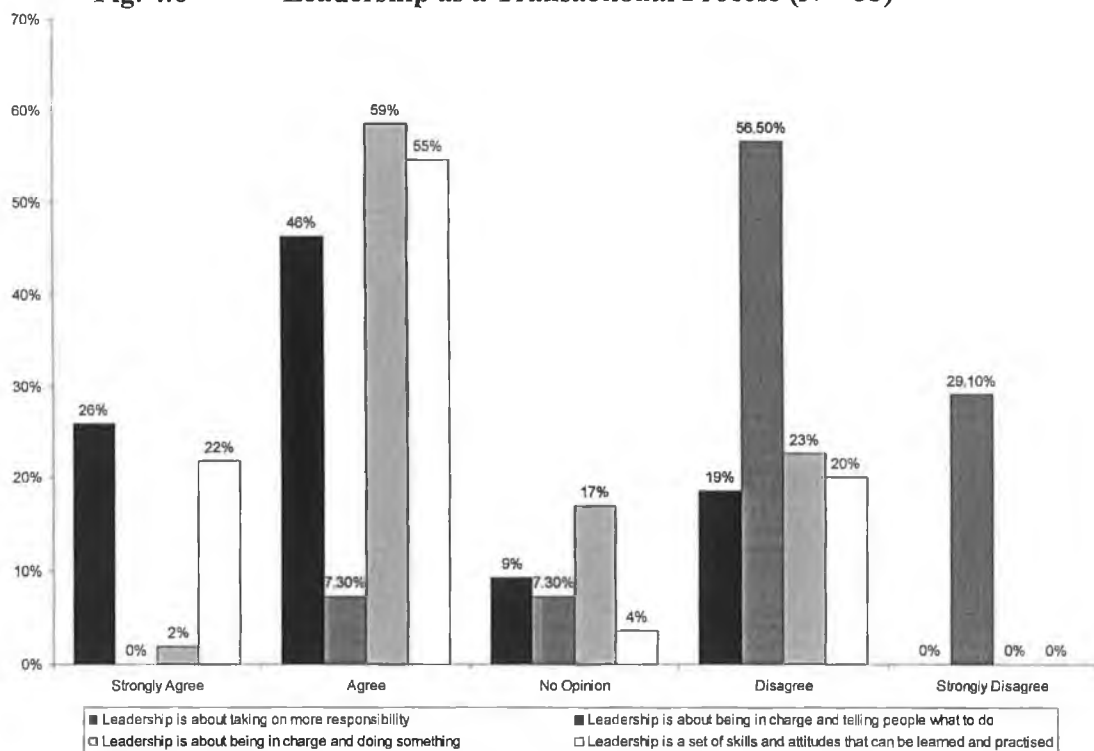


about the motivational and selfless aspects of leadership, indicating a degree of idealism common among adolescents. This facet of leadership identity links strongly to the visionary aspect of leadership. Although the common cause is not specified, the good of the group is seen as very important.

### Views on Transactional Leadership

The strongest response in this category was to the statement that leadership is about being in charge and telling people what to do (Fig. 4.6). Almost nine-tenths disagreed with this statement to some degree. The duality of the statement may be responsible for some of the strength of the reaction. It is unclear as to whether the negative response is to the notion of 'being in charge' or the notion of 'telling others what to do'. The response to the next statement, also dual in nature, suggests that the latter part of the statement is the reactionary section, since only one-fifth disagreed with the statement

**Fig. 4.6 Leadership as a Transactional Process (N = 55)**



that leadership is about being in charge and doing something. These statements were discussed by the focus group with the following results. Both Michael and Peter, participants in the focus group, identified 'being in charge' as an emotive phrase that people react against. Linda (focus group participant) also thought that the concept of 'being in charge' was influencing the rest of the statement. She felt that the result would have been very different if that phrase had not been included in both statements. She raised the question

*Which part of the question are they reacting to? Is it the part about being in charge or the part about doing something?*  
(Linda, focus group participant)

A distinction was also drawn between telling people what to do and doing something. John (focus group participant) thought that the result was a reaction against a situation "*where some people plan and get other people to carry it out*".

The statement about taking on more responsibility was strongly agreed with, as was the suggestion that leadership skills could be learned. This is congruent with the response to the earlier statement that indicates that leaders are made rather than born.

#### Are Young People Considered to be Leaders

Not surprisingly, almost all respondents disagreed with the statement that teenagers are better off if adults make decisions on their behalf. Over nine-tenths felt that all students should be involved in decisions that affect them with almost half strongly agreeing with the statement. With respect to senior student's only being involved in the school's decision-making process, over three-fifths disagreed while one fifth were in agreement with the statement. This would

appear to contradict the previous statement to some degree although the previous statement does not explicitly mention school.

Over half of the sample agreed that anyone could become a leader with the proper training and seven-tenths of the population felt that all teenagers have the potential to lead.

### Summary

The picture that emerges from the analysis of youth as leaders is as follows. Leaders are flexible and adaptable people with some degree of influence on the actions of others. The results in the sections on transactional and transformational leadership suggest an understanding of leadership as a combination of both styles. The method employed is seen as motivational rather than highly directional. A high degree of altruism is evident in the answers as well as an appreciation for the developmental nature of the leadership process.

Decisions should be made by those affected by the decisions or at the very least in consultation with them. This links to the viewpoint that people support what they help to create. It also indicates the importance for individuals to have an influence on decisions that affect them in order to consider themselves as leaders. How can you hope to influence the actions of others if you have no influence over decisions affecting your own life? This view has important implications for the introduction of changes in schools and the involvement of young people in those changes. It also backs up both the UN charter for the rights of the child and the National Children's Strategy which states that "children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity". It also indicates that the potential for



leadership is there in adolescence and can be developed through training in leadership skills.

It must be noted that the results obtained come from a sample of 55 adolescents and that three-fifths of that sample had participated in the Tobar leadership programme. In the section following, the attitudinal results are analysed separately in order to determine if there are differences between those that have and have not been involved in a leadership-training programme. The results for leadership characteristics are then analysed using gender as a criterion to determine if there are significant differences between the female and male perception of leadership characteristics.

#### ***Tobar / Non-Tobar: Differences in Perception***

There are seven areas in which there is a significant difference in results between the two groups. For the purpose of this analysis, a difference of one-fifth or greater between two comparable scores was deemed significant. These statements are:

1. Leaders are born, not made
4. Senior students only should be involved in the school's decision-making process.
6. Anyone can become a leader with the proper training.
10. Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others.
13. Leadership is unleashing energy, building, freeing, growing.
14. Leadership is about being in charge and doing something.

15. Leadership is about helping people go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group.

Again analysis of the seven statements show that the areas of least commonality are areas that relate to the initial questions regarding the type of person most likely to be a leader; whether one was born to it or grew into it by virtue of age. Some statements were concerned with the transformational nature of leadership as a process that changes people and situations. The results of these statements were made available to the focus group and comment was requested regarding possible explanations for the discrepancies. The next section analyses these results including the analysis by the focus group of the issues involved.

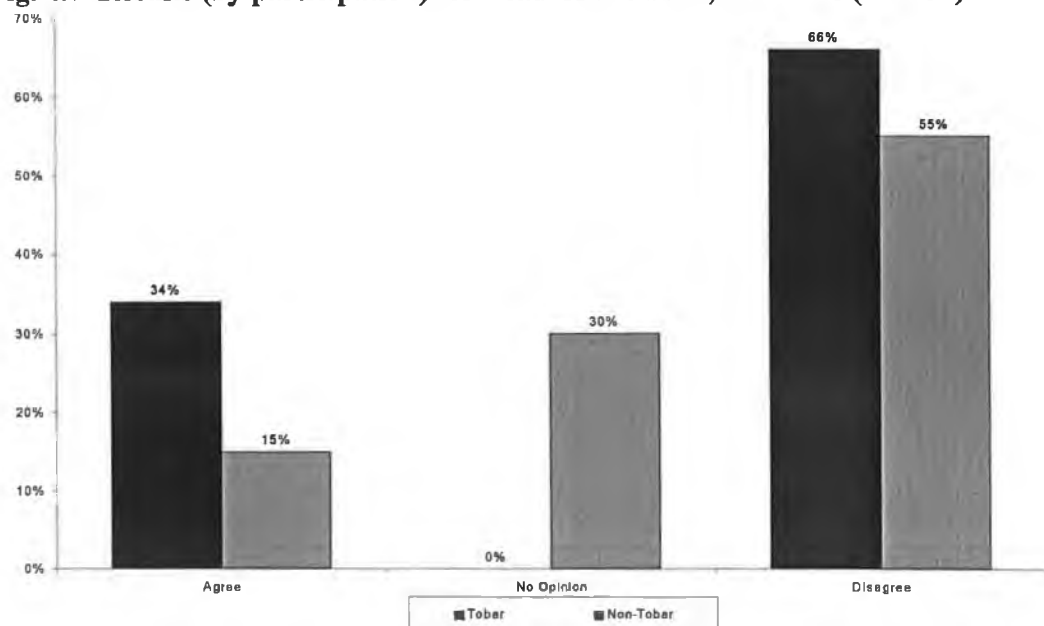
#### Characteristics of leadership - Who is a Leader?

There is very little overall difference between the two groups concerning the traits associated with a leader. In the area of personality, the differences are negligible. There is one difference in the physical traits. Those involved in Tobar consider physical fitness to be more important than those not involved. The effect of the training programme may be seen clearly here as each training day begins with a half-hour of light physical exercises. Analysis over the years of participation shows an increase in the importance attributed to physical fitness as the years progress. This increase directly correlates with the introduction of the morning exercises to the training programme. The purpose of these exercises is to energise the participants for the training; yet it seems to have influenced their perception of leadership characteristics. Although this phenomenon was only observed and analysed in this instance, it points to an area that would benefit from further research. In the academic area there is a difference of almost one-

fifth between the groups regarding the characteristic 'desiring to excel'. This was interpreted by the focus group as the desire to change and was seen as an important characteristic by John who noted that "*being content with the status quo is not a characteristic [he] would associate with being a leader*".

The theory that leaders are born yielded an interesting result, the most striking being the high use of the 'no opinion' option by those who had not been involved in Tobar. Equally striking is the high number of those involved in Tobar who feel that leaders are not born but can be made.

**Fig. 4.7 Results (by participation) for Leaders are born, not made (N = 55)**



As mentioned earlier, discussion in the focus group highlighted the desire to learn the skills of leadership and the availability of training to develop those skills as vital to leadership development. In addition, Linda felt that, while the basis for skills are learned at a very young age, there are

*outside forces that are kind of coming down on people which stops them from becoming as good as they could, stops them from realising their potential*  
(Linda, focus group participant)

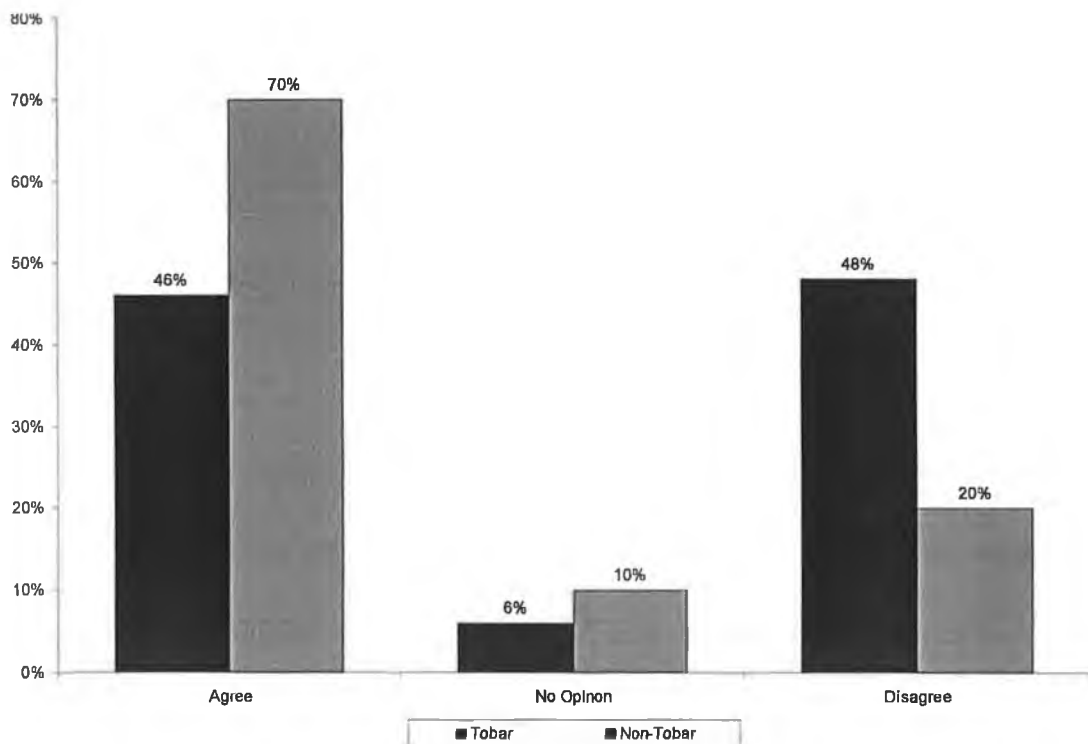
but did not elaborate on what these outside forces might be. The interview and selection process for Tobar was seen by Linda as an indication that some are more suited to be leaders than others since the interviewers were obviously looking for particular traits. This was concurred with by Peter (focus group participant) who expressed the opinion that people involved in Tobar had leadership potential *"because they made it through the interview process"*. This could also account for the higher agreement among Tobar with the statement.

The model of leadership employed by Tobar was seen as the reason for the strong agreement with the statement concerning senior students and involvement in the school's decision-making process. Training highlights the importance of involvement in decisions by those affected by the decisions and employs the use of a needs survey, as part of training in needs assessment. Since information on the existence and nature of senior student involvement in the schools was not made available to the focus group, little analysis could be conducted on this result. The non-Tobar school has a prefect system. The prefects are chosen from the fifth year students and many of those surveyed were prefects. The discrepancy between the Tobar and non-Tobar disagreement with the statement may be enlightened by this information. It suggests yet again that the model used to involve students in the school has a direct effect on their opinions vis-a-vis leadership.

Higher numbers from Tobar agree that anyone can become a leader with the proper training. The nature of the programme in which the group had been involved was seen as a significant influence on this result by the focus group and reflects the development in leadership ability that they would have observed through their own involvement in the training programme. The discrepancy between the above statement and the statement that all teenagers have the potential to lead was explained as "*maybe they might be just thinking of the Tobar programme rather than any other sort of [leadership] training you could have*" (Susan, focus group participant).

The overall results for the definition of leadership as the ability to influence others were ambiguous, as mentioned earlier. Further analysis indicates that the

**Fig. 4.8 Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others (N = 55)**



ambiguity exists mostly for those involved in Tobar, with the results almost evenly divided between agreement and disagreement. The interpretation of the word 'influence' was regarded as critical to the answering of the question. Influence as a positive concept, for the betterment of the person would yield a strong agreement whereas influence as control would be rejected. This is supported by the comparison of the results for Tobar, which show opinion relatively evenly returns for strongly agree/disagree opinions and agree/disagree statements with the non-Tobar results, which show a much stronger leaning towards agreement. It was not possible to discuss the results with the non-Tobar school so no clarification of their interpretation of the word 'influence' is available.

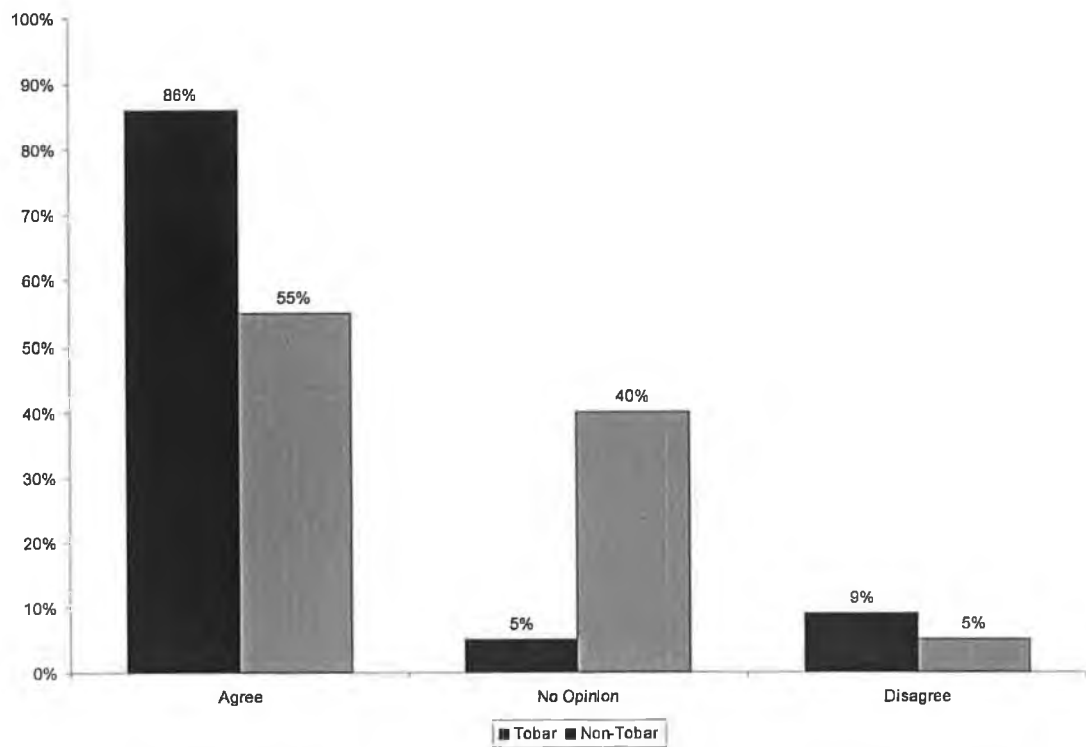
Members of the focus group regarded the contextualisation of words as important in responding to the statement that "leadership is unleashing energy, freeing, building, growing". According to John (focus group participant), it is important to "*put words in a context*" since "*these words have no meaning independent of taking part in Tobar*". This was taken up by the majority of the group expressing such concurring opinions as

*in training them words come into...especially like well I think energy and growing cos you're learning new things and bettering yourself...I think that's the reason why.*  
(Susan, focus group participant)

The words had a different meaning outside training.

*...those are words that politicians use frequently and they never, hardly ever follow through on them like building bridges ... they use those words to win elections.*  
(Peter, focus group participant).

Fig. 4.9 Leadership is Unleashing Energy, Freeing, Building, Growing (N = 55)



People can either see those words as positive concepts or as words associated with jargon. For those involved in Tobar, "building is team-building" (Anne, focus group participant) and training involves "putting those words in context" (Anne) because "you hear all these words and are asked to think about them" (Susan, focus group participant). The distinctly different gender response was then raised. Significantly more males who had participated in Tobar agreed with the statement compared to males who had not been involved. This raised a very amused response from the males in the group. Their reaction is summed up by Peter's comment

*Energy, building, freeing, growing. It sounds like something you'd see on a health video or something. Its not words that guys would use ... as it might seem like some arty-farty words that people just throw out there. It just makes no sense to guys, I think.*

This drew laughter from the group and grinning nods of agreement from the males present.

The concept of leadership as 'being in charge and doing something' was more strongly agreed with by those surveyed in the non-Tobar school. This may be influenced by the school situation. The main responsibility of the prefect system in the non-Tobar school is to monitor the implementation of the clean-up rota. The rota applies to junior students only and is designed by the senior management of the school. Therefore the leadership experience of the non-Tobar respondents is one of being in charge of a group of junior students who are doing a specific set of tasks.

Far more Tobar participants regarded leadership as 'helping people go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group'. Influence of the programme was again highlighted as a reason for this result, although opinion as to the nature of the influence was divided. The question of ethical leadership was raised by John (focus group participant) who pointed out that self-interest was not always a bad thing and that if people felt that their own needs were unimportant compared to the needs of others, then manipulation and control of people was possible. Peter (focus group participant) took a different interpretation of the statement. He thought that the participants on Tobar would associate leadership aspirations with their chairperson and referred to "*meetings where it was very, very hard to get consensus*". He saw the task of the chairperson as "*helping the group to come to a compromise and to get the goal*" by leaving aside their own self-interests or ideas and recognising the merits of the ideas of others. All who spoke on this



issue also agreed that working as part of a team encouraged them to see themselves as part of a group that went beyond their own personal interests. It was also regarded as a fundamental principle of the training programme.

### Summary

In terms of the attitudes towards leadership, an analysis of the information from those who participated in Tobar compared to those who had no involvement in a leadership training model in their school yields the following picture. In the vast majority of responses (13 out of the 16) to the statements about leaders, the percentage using the 'no opinion' option is greater among those who were not involved in Tobar than those who were involved are. Although those involved in Tobar did not always concur with each other in reference to the statements, they were much more definite in their answers. This has an implication for involvement not just in leadership but also in citizenship. How can we expect adolescents to become active citizens at the age of 18 if there is no previous model of democratic involvement in which they may begin to formulate their opinions?

Another striking factor from this section is the importance of the leadership model used in terms of influencing the opinions of adolescents. The Tobar model incorporates both transactional and transformational components of leadership in its training programme while the non-Tobar school appears to have a more transactional approach to leadership. Analysis of the scores on the statements relating to both types shows a strong correlation between both groups on statements concerning transactional leadership. However, the responses to the statements relating to transformational leadership are much higher from those

involved in Tobar than from those who are not. Is leadership something you do (transactional) or something you are (transformational)? Those involved in Tobar appear to see it as both while those not involved view it as something you do.

The openness of adolescents to opinion formation with relation to leadership concepts is also notable from the research results. This led to the comment that *"there is a severe lack of opinion formation prior to their experience of the programme [Tobar]. I would question why they haven't already formed opinions of leadership"* (John, focus group participant). However, Michael (focus group participant) disagreed with the comment, maintaining that his involvement in interviewing for the programme had left him with the view that the students who applied for Tobar were clear on the traits of a leader. This may be due to the existence of the programme in their school for the previous seven years and the embedding of the programme into the school.

### ***Females and Males: Different Understandings?***

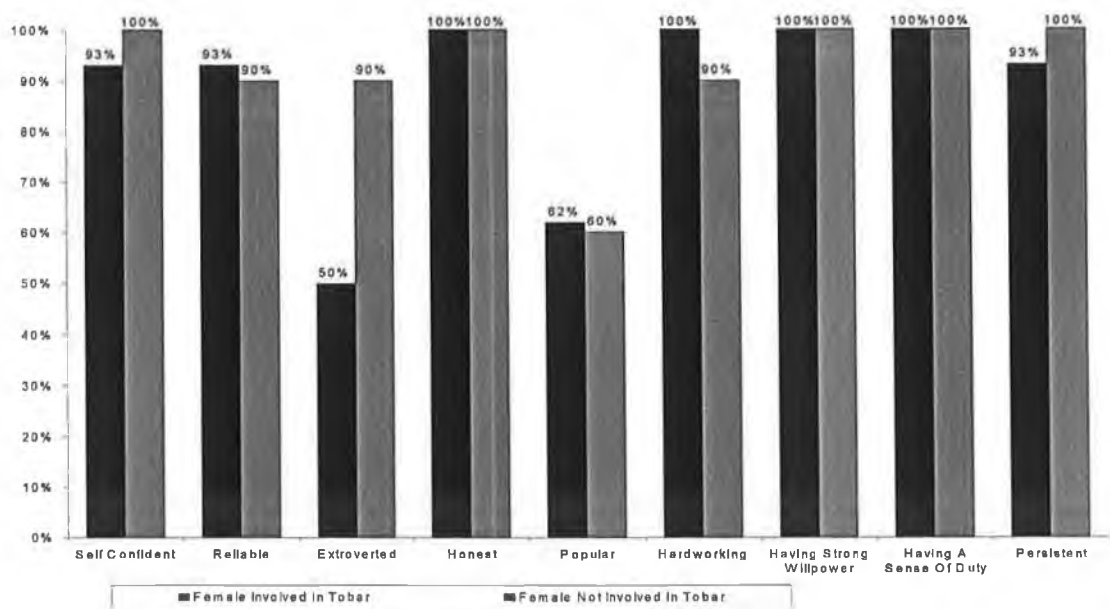
In the section that follows, a gender comparison is drawn between the views of the participants and non-participants regarding leadership characteristics. It begins with an analysis of the data from the females and then presents a similar analysis for the male respondents. The aim of the analysis is to examine the data for points of correlation and for points of divergence.

## The Female Viewpoint

### Personality Traits

The majority of personality traits associated with leadership show strong correlation across the two groups. The only point of divergence concerns the importance of being extroverted, where the non-Tobar result was almost twice that of the Tobar result.

Fig. 4.10 Gender (female) Comparison of Personality Traits (N = 25)



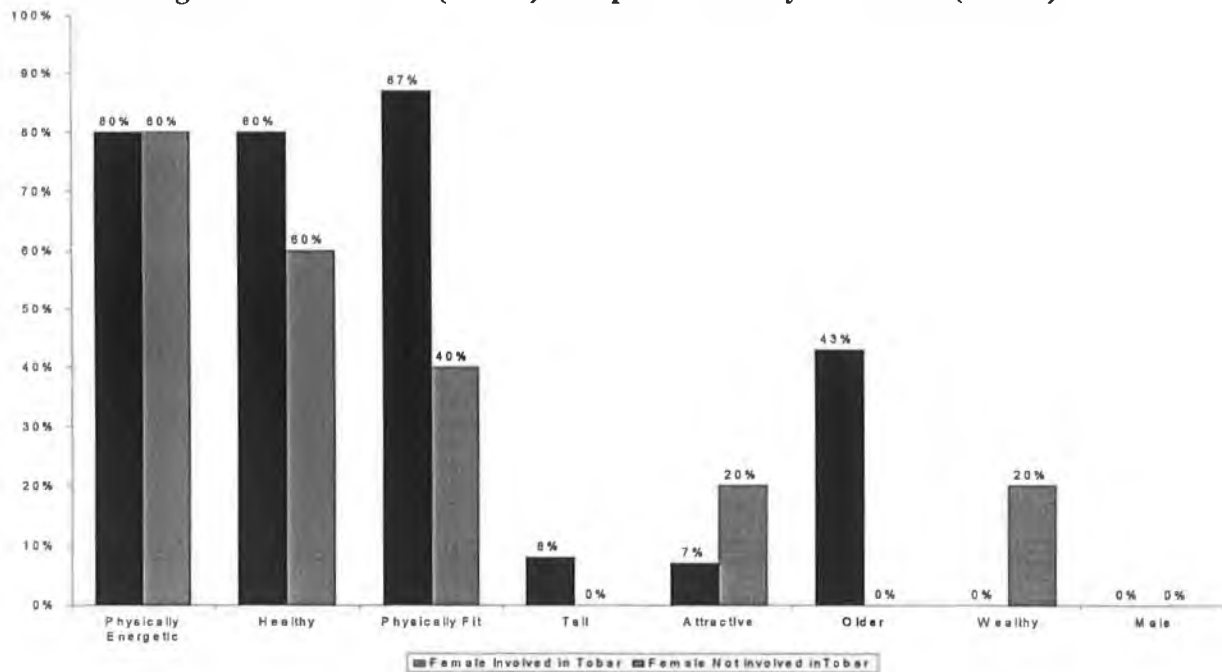
Females involved in Tobar did not rate being extrovert as important. This contrasts with the result obtained for males involved (see Fig. 4.13) and indicates the reality of leadership for females. One of the concerns of female adolescents is conformity rather than individuality. It has already been noted in Chapter One that a girl who takes on a leadership role goes against the typical female stereotype. A female who is trying to conform and yet is already going against the female stereotype may not wish to have high visibility, such as that associated with being extroverted. The other possibility is that females involved

had seen the value of the contribution of more introverted Tobar participants and therefore did not see being extroverted as a major factor, although this is not supported by a similar finding from males who participated.

### Physical Traits

Four areas of response show significant differences between the two groups in relation to the physical traits of a leader. Being older, healthy and physically fit were seen as important by Tobar participants whereas wealthy, although not considered hugely significant by either group, was considered more important by those who had not participated in Tobar than by those who had. This raises the question about the message about leadership that is culturally influenced. Current media information about the large amounts of money involved in maintaining the lifestyle of some politicians may influence this result. The importance of being older than those who are led may be attributed to the model of leadership. However, the desire to fit in may also influence this result. The female leader

**Fig. 4.11 Gender (female) Comparison of Physical Traits (N = 25)**



may find it very difficult to be a leader among her peers and remain part of the social group to which she belongs. Therefore it is easier to be a leader away from her peer group.

The contribution of a female participant in the focus group best describes the importance placed on health and physical fitness. She spoke about the early morning exercises.

*The getting up early and going for a jog would have been a major factor when we were down there (on training) anyway and we're seeing lads who are doing football all the time and I never did sports in my life [laughs] and they're running off ahead of us and we, god love us, we couldn't get to the gate [60 feet away] and we were out of breath.*

*(Anne, focus group participant)*

She recalled one group training exercise that can be physically demanding to participate in.

*...when the lads are able to pick up certain people and bring them around where the girls couldn't do that sort of thing so people would think that that would affect the way their training went because all of those activities are part of the training.*

*(Anne, focus group participant)*

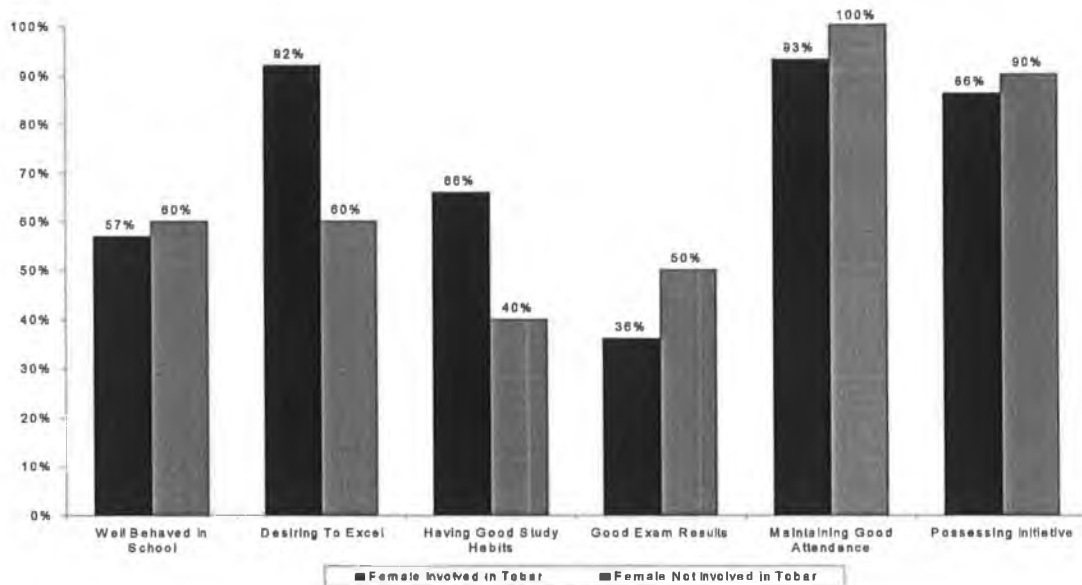
The influence of leadership training on perceptions of leadership as stated earlier is clear here. The messages unconsciously given by the programme about traits of leaders need to be examined more closely, particularly when they appear to promote gender specific traits such as physical strength and athleticism. It also has significance for the involvement of students with special needs.

#### Academic / School Traits

There was very little difference in the results for academic characteristics. Those that were involved saw both study habits and a desire to excel as more important

than those that were not involved. This may indicate a higher level of ambition among those involved in Tobar although this characteristic was more likely their reason for applying for the programme than a result of their involvement in it.

**Fig. 4.12 Gender (female) Comparison of School / Academic Traits (N = 25)**



### Female Perspectives on Leadership

The leadership picture that emerges from this section is of a self-confident, reliable, honest, hardworking individual with strong willpower, persistence and a sense of duty. He/she is energetic, healthy and fit, possesses initiative and are good attendees. Furthermore, female Tobar participants consider a leader to be physically fit and healthy, have good study habits and a desire to excel. They do not rate being extroverted as an important trait but consider age to be one. The training programme appears to affect female Tobar participants perceptions of the importance of motivation and of physical fitness in leadership. It also affects their perception of the importance of the age of the leader, relative to the followers.

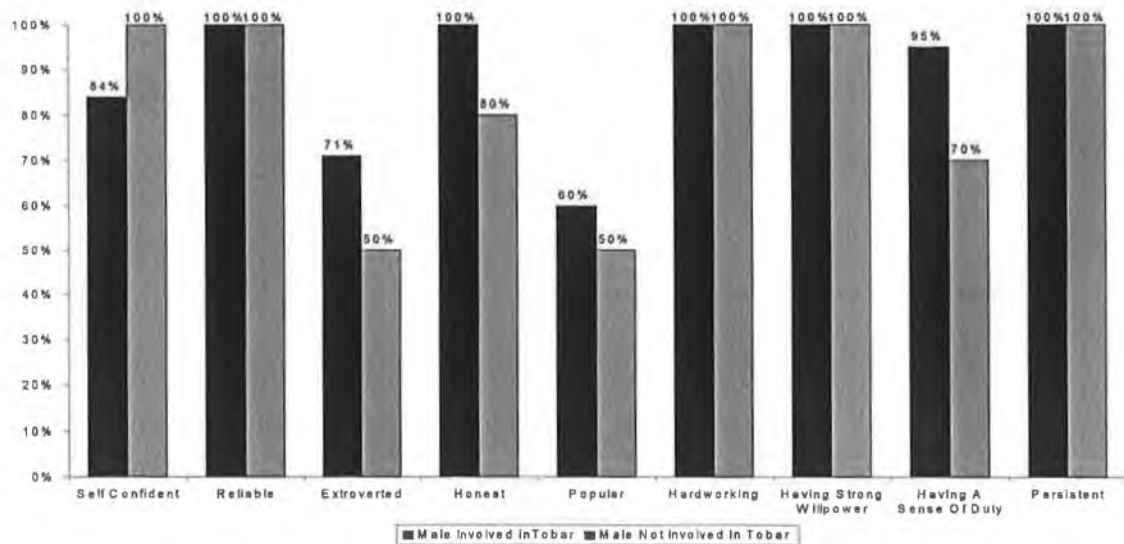
### **The Male Viewpoint**

Each section analysed, personality, physical and academic traits, showed three points of difference between those who had participated in Tobar and those who had not. The largest differences occurred in the differing opinions about the physical characteristics necessary for leadership.

### **Personality Traits**

The main difference between males is seen in the section relating to personality. Those involved in Tobar differed from the non-involved in three areas; sense of duty, honest and extroverted. Males involved rated these traits more highly than those not involved. Since males involved have had an experience of taking on responsibility in a serious way, this may account for their high scoring in this category. In the matter of 'honest', the researcher suggests a link to the tribunals taking place in Ireland concerning payment to politicians as a possible explanation for the lower numbers among those not involved in Tobar.

**Fig. 4.13 Gender (male) Comparison of Personality Traits (N = 30)**

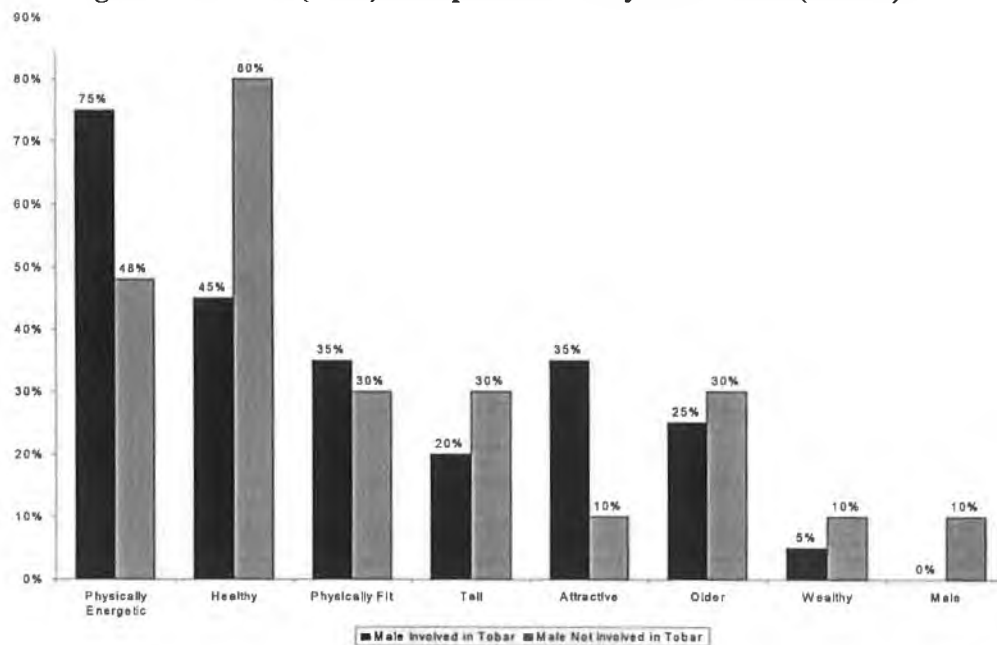


Additionally, those involved would have come through a process that placed a strong emphasis on honesty as an important leadership quality, through example from the trainers, exercises in the programme and evaluation /reflection exercises throughout the year. The higher result for 'extrovert' may also be linked to the work that is done in the school and the need to interact with a wide variety of people. Members of the focus group also linked it with self-confidence and a positive self-image.

### Physical Characteristics

The results for physical traits differed in three areas. Males involved in Tobar rated 'physically energetic' and 'attractive' as more important than their non-involved counterparts and those not involved gave a higher rating to 'being healthy'. The higher results for 'physically energetic' and 'attractive' were also associated with a positive self-image by the focus group. The influence of the training programme on this opinion has already been dealt with.

**Fig. 4.14 Gender (male) Comparison of Physical Traits (N = 30)**



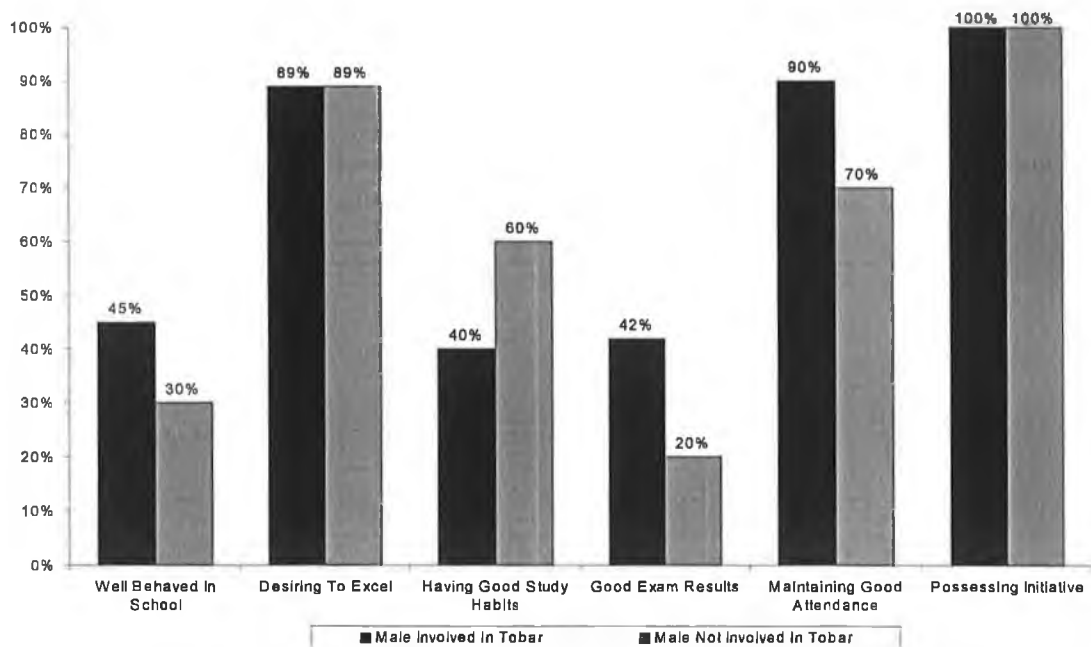


Concerning physical fitness and health, members of the focus group felt that there is a strong male association between sports and leadership. This would correlate with the importance of being healthy, seen by non-Tobar as very significant. Whether there is a major difference in understanding between the terms 'healthy' and 'physically energetic' is not clear. A clear distinction is made between 'physically fit' and 'physically energetic', indicating the active nature of leadership as viewed by those involved.

#### Academic / School Characteristics

There are three main areas of difference between the two groups. Tobar participants see attendance and examination results as more important while those not involved consider good study habits to be important. Consider the

**Fig. 4.15 Gender (male) Comparison of Academic / School Traits (N = 30).**



responses for exam results and good study habits. Since the non-involved group is in fifth year and those involved are either in sixth year or have left school, the focus of the respondents may play a role in explaining these results. The fifth year focus has not yet switched to the Leaving Certificate, unlike those who are currently sitting or have recently sat the Leaving Certificate. These results may indicate the necessity of intelligence for leadership; they may also indicate the need for ambition. Again it should be noted that these are male indicators of attractiveness. The importance of attendance was noted by the focus group as vital for making decisions. Members of the group recalled meetings at which decisions could not be taken because of the absence of a large portion of the group. The mood of the discussion was captured by John (focus group participant) who noted that *"you have to be present to lead, you can't lead in your absence"*.

#### Male Perspectives on Leadership

All of the males surveyed agreed that leaders are persistent, hard working and reliable. They have strong willpower and possess initiative. They are honest, self-confident and want to excel. In addition, those males involved in Tobar thought that leaders should be totally honest, extroverted, energetic and have a sense of duty. The training programme appears to affect their opinions regarding the physical nature of leadership in terms of the energy requirement and of being extroverted. A leaders responsibility to others in terms of duty and attendance also appear to be influenced by the programme.

## Similarities and Differences by Gender

The results for personality traits show strong correlation across both genders, with all of the characteristics returning very high percentages for importance. Thus leaders are seen as self-confident, reliable, honest, hard-working and persistent individuals that have strong willpower and a sense of duty. A desire to excel, initiative and attendance are also seen as important. There are some gender similarities in the perceived characteristics of a leader. Respondents regarded physical traits such as height, attractiveness, age, wealth and gender unimportant<sup>26</sup> and identified areas relating to physical well-being as important.

Interestingly, both females and males regard leaders as intelligent, athletic and strongly competitive. This correlates strongly with the adolescent male's view of leadership as strong, intelligent, athletic and competitive. It raises the question: why is there not a clear model of female leadership or are these traits non gender-specific? Perhaps they are non-specific but the perception of them when exercised by males and females is different. Persistent can be seen as pushy, initiative can be interpreted as bossy and extroverted can mean loud. These characteristics, while applauded in the male, are not presented as attractive qualities in females.

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<sup>26</sup> These traits were considered important by less than 50% of the respondents.

## Similarities and Differences by Gender and Participation in Tobar

Females involved in Tobar rated physical fitness as far more important than any of the other three groups<sup>27</sup>. The influence of the training activities on this result has been considered already. Females involved in Tobar also ranked health much higher than their male counterparts, again linked to the athletic nature of the training programme and the need to be healthy to participate. The programme's association of such traits with leadership needs to be reviewed.

Males involved in Tobar rate attractiveness more highly than any of the other groups. How males identify attractiveness differs from the female notion of attractiveness. Males associate attractiveness with power, females with appearance. Most males in co-educational schools involved in leadership roles would have received positive attention from younger females as a result of their involvement and this would increase their self-esteem, making them feel more attractive. Therefore there would be a natural association between leadership and attractiveness for them. In addition, being extroverted is a leadership trait according to males involved in Tobar but not females, raising the question about the message given to female participants of Tobar.

### Summary

This chapter has considered the attitudes of young people towards leadership and the effect of a youth leadership training programme on adolescents. Some

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<sup>27</sup> The four groups are Female Tobar Participant, Male Tobar Participant, Female non-Tobar Participant, Male non-Tobar Participant

analysis has been carried out on the results in this chapter and issues have been raised as a consequence.

Benefits of participation in Tobar include benefits for the individual, for the school and for other students. In general, relationships with other students, teachers and the principal have improved as has the understanding of the school as an institution. Participants report a sense of belonging and genuine participation in the school and an increase in awareness of the world around them. In addition, respondents indicated an increase in interpersonal and organisational skills. The necessity of providing an extra-curricular activity that assists in the development of these skills is indicated.

Leadership characteristics are viewed mainly as personality and career traits that are developed over time. This links strongly with the concept of the charismatic leader. There is an acknowledgement of different styles of leadership and of its ability to influence others. However those who participated in Tobar place a stronger emphasis on transformational leadership than those who have not.

The 'no opinion' option is used more frequently by those who have not participated in Tobar, highlighting a possible absence of opinion formation among some young people. The importance of the development of a lifestyle ideology grounded in idealism is indicated. Paternalistic attitudes towards young people and issues of control are topics for discussion and for action. Parental importance in modelling involvement for their children is also implied. The

influence of Tobar on opinion-formation, particularly among young women, needs to be strongly considered.

The final chapter will look at some of the issues raised in more detail and will outline the implications that this study has for student participation in schools. A possible model of collaboration within the school will be presented in the final chapter, drawn from the results indicated by the study.

## **Chapter Five**

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations.***

#### ***Introduction***

If the research undertaken is likened to a jigsaw, then this is the chapter in which the final picture should become clear. It is not the author's intention to complete the picture; many gaps remain and will be filled by the work of others in this area. But the 'why' in this study behind adolescent leadership emerges. The importance for the development of young people who are critical thinkers, capable of analysis of issues that affect them, of responding to the needs of others and of being active participants in the construction of their world is clear. Consider the alternative.

#### ***'I Have No Opinion On This Issue'***

In the section on attitudes towards leadership, an analysis of the information from those who participated in Tobar compared to those who had no involvement in a leadership training model in their school yields the following picture. In the majority (13 out of the 16) of statements about leaders, the use of the 'no opinion' option is greater among those who were not involved in Tobar than those who were involved. Although those involved in Tobar did not always concur with each other in reference to the statements, they were much more definite in their answers. Why do so many of the young people surveyed have no

opinion? The lack of opinion may be explained by the absence of a participative model on which to base an opinion. It may be due to a lack of opportunity to consider the question previously. This has an implication for involvement not just in leadership but also in citizenship. Sir John Newsom wrote the following about the importance of social and political education in 1963.

A man [person] who is ignorant of the society in which he [or she] lives, who knows nothing of it's place in the world and who has not thought of his [or her] place in it, is not a free man [person] even though he [or she] may have the vote. (Newsom, 1963 as quoted in Lynch, 2000)

How can we expect adolescents to become active citizens at the age of 18 if there is no previous model of democratic involvement in which they may begin to formulate their opinions? Chapter One referred to the satirical portrayal of the followers in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* as a group of people unsure of their identity and undiscerning in their choice of leader. Education in leadership has much to do with education in followership. It includes the development of critical citizens, participating in their democracy in an informed manner rather than abstaining from involvement or being easily swayed by charismatic leadership that has little moral centre. It is also concerned with increased moral development as one moves towards morality level three (Kohlberg, 1963), able to formulate judgements based on personal principles, not ones that are defined by society. Finally it is concerned with the formation of an ethical system (Erikson, 1968 in van Linden and Fertman, 1998) as a lifestyle ideology develops.



### ***Idealism versus cynicism***

At 16, the age of application to the programme, many teenagers are on the brink of cynicism, brought on by an inability to effect change in their environment. Idealism, linked to vision of how the world could be, has given way to reality. What happens if adolescents are given the opportunity to regain idealism by visioning the dream and working to make it a reality? One Tobar participant described himself as an "*idealist with a well informed cynical history*" (21 year old male) and spoke of the renewal of his faith in the integrity of others through his involvement with the programme. He was given the opportunity to dream the dream but also to share that dream and to work towards making it a reality. If the lifestyle ideology is modified by exposure to other views (Erikson, 1968 in van Linden and Fertman, 1998)), it is important to provide views that are both realistic and optimistic. Opportunities for idealistic discourses are rare in the average classroom; yet there is a need for the idealistic nature of adolescents to be expressed. Otherwise the view of young people as immoral, irresponsible and undisciplined (Roker, 1999) will continue to be the accepted norm. As mentioned earlier, a lifestyle ideology develops during adolescence and it is important that the ideology is not rooted in cynicism.

### ***Is Sports The Only Extra-Curricular Activity That Matters?***

The desire to be involved in some form of team that is not sports related is raised by a number of respondents. What is it about the notion of team that is so appealing? In adolescence, developing a sense of community and belonging is vital to personal development (Maslow, 1970). Disenfranchisement leads to early school leaving and poorer academic results (Smyth, 1999) and will also impact

on participation in society as a whole. Membership of a team that works towards a common goal allows adolescents to make their contribution to society and to see that contribution as valuable and valued.

Habits formed during school years will carry on into adulthood. Yet the intervention of Tobar may already be too late. Of those surveyed who participated in Tobar, almost one-third were not involved in anything prior to Tobar or since Tobar. In the vast majority of those cases, parents had no previous or present community involvement. Is this a gateway to participation? This has an implication not just for community organisations and voluntary work but also for participation as citizens. Tobar may need to consider if and how it encourages participants to become involved in their local communities. It may also need to consider how strongly parental involvement is encouraged.

### ***'No Tokenism Please'***

Young people need to be taken seriously and to be given real responsibility. Unless the structures for participation are considered to have real power, then many students will not become involved. Setting up a student council in schools is now an educational requirement due to the Education Act (1998) and the assembly of Dáil na nÓg is part of the children's strategy (2000). Yet no detail about the decision-making authority of these groups exists. Without power, these structures will be cosmetic exercises that reduce young people rather than empower them. Hart's ladder (1992) indicates the degrees of genuine participation that are desirable, beginning with information about the tasks assigned and reaching a stage where the action is initiated by the young person.

This does not mean that structures to facilitate involvement and participation should not be set up by adults; it implies that the direction and development of such structures should be student-led rather than adult-led. While the concept of a student council in a school indicates a desire to involve students, its implementation can be an adult-initiated decision that is made without consultation with students. The converse may also happen. One student in the programme has this as his strongest memory.

*Assembling the framework for a student council in the school. Developing its rules and seeing the wheels for it set in motion. (19 year old male)*

It is possible for students to be involved in setting up structures for their own participation, provided that the school, particularly the principal, gives them the power to do so. This study and others (Lynch and Lodge, 1999; Lodge and Lynch, 2000) indicate a desire by students to have their voice heard in a genuine way and to feel that their contribution was important. Applicants cited reasons for involvement as knowing that it was taken seriously because of the interview system. They mentioned the necessity of proving one's good intentions to staff members and of being treated in a manner that made them feel respected and equal. All of this comes from a model of working that has respect for the individual, irrespective of age, at its centre. All of these are rights, as defined by the United Nations Convention (1989) and are central to freedom (Dewey, 1963).

### ***'Mol an Óige agus Tíocfaidh Sí'***

Participation cannot exist in isolation. Training is essential to provide young people with the skills and the vision required for genuine participation. Part of

that training involves feedback and affirmation. This requires a paradigm shift for the adult view of adolescents. The way in which the school views the students and communicates this to them is vital. One respondent remarked that *"the school views the students as having behaviours rather than opinions"* (21 year old male). But for a change in behaviour to happen, the opinions of those involved need to change. This is true of staff and students within the school. It is true of adults and adolescents in society. The paternalistic attitude that has pervaded our culture needs to be addressed and changed. If young people are viewed within an adult-centred framework (Archard, 1993; Devine, 1999), then their achievements will always fall short of expectations. Erikson's identity formation and Maslow's hierarchy of needs indicate the importance of forming a positive personal identity in adolescence. It has already been shown that positive feedback increases academic performance (Rutter, 1979; Smyth, 1999) and that adolescents tend to conform to adults' expectations of them (Head, 1997). Opportunities to 'find you doing something right and praise you for it' need to be sought out not just academically in the classroom but in the school and in society. The basic goodness and idealism of adolescents needs to be fostered and acknowledged.

### ***'But Why?'***

The school system needs more openness with respect to its decision-making strategies and the rationale behind decisions. Students do not know how or why things are done. Therefore they put their own construction on them. If students make a suggestion to the principal in the form of a petition, what feedback do they get? Is the rationale behind the refusal explained? The principals

interviewed both mentioned the ability of Tobar groups to negotiate for change. They also mentioned the reasonableness of the group when reasons for not pursuing a course of action was explained to them. Would this not be true of the majority of students?

### ***'I Will Survive'***

The preoccupation with drinking fountains and clean toilets by Tobar groups can be seen as an issue of control. In this case, the focus is control of one's personal well-being. There is an issue of respect for students here also, involving the "recognition of autonomy, privacy and the right to self-development (Lukes, 1977 in Lodge and Lynch, 2000). The availability of a water fountain allows students to get a drink when they need one, rather than having to knock on the staffroom door. This indicates a degree of self-control in a system that is controlling. Respect for the individual is shown by the condition of the hidden part of the school. Visitors to the school and staff have no reason to see the inside of the student toilets. Therefore it is one of the few places in many schools that is even partially the domain of the student. An interesting contrast in orientation is observable here if one considers the complaint in Holden and Clough (1998) that the only issues acted upon as a result of student council meetings were toilets and uniform. Hart's participation levels may indicate why the issue of the clean toilets becomes a moment of pride for some Tobar groups. It is not so much a reflection on the task as on the empowerment felt by the participants.

## ***Gender Differences in Understandings of Attractiveness:***

### ***Implications for Young Women***

The different gendered understanding of attractiveness from the research is striking. It indicates the need for a healthier female approach to the idea of attractiveness. However this difficulty with image for females is linked strongly to the stereotypical female image. Additionally the stereotypical leader that emerges from both literature and media is male, charismatic and attractive in the masculine understanding of the word (Handy, 1976; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991). If young women are struggling with a concept of attractiveness that is strongly bound up in appearance, then it is difficult for them to regard themselves as charismatic or as able to influence others. The lack of attractive female leader role models for adolescent females is probably a contributor to the situation.

So much of this stereotype is bound up in socialisation into gender roles. As mentioned in Chapter One, the characteristics that are seen as positive in the male are portrayed in a negative fashion when exhibited by the female. The construction of a female identity that is not based on a deficiency model when compared to the male identity (Head, 1997) is essential. This would require a rethinking, re-educating and redefining of what it is to be female; perhaps the development of an 'Exploring Femininities' programme for females!

### ***'What Do We Want? Change!'***

Students want change! They want their voice to be heard, to be allowed to contribute in a meaningful way and to be involved in the creation of their school environment (Devine, 2000; Lodge and Lynch, 2000; Holden and Clough, 1998).

Yet there is no sense of anarchy or a desire to cause chaos within the school. Instead there is a request to dialogue with those who currently hold power in the system so that they can participate in their own development and be involved in the decisions that affect them.

*...to have something to do with actual things in the school and maybe make an impact...feeling I was part of something. (17 year old male)*

The contribution made by these young people to their school had benefited not just themselves but the life of the school, improving relationships in some cases and improving teachers understanding of what student involvement could be.

*They [the Tobar group] are actually contributing towards students in the way that teachers best understand... (Sean, Principal of St. Anne's)*

*... some staff felt it was interfering with our school work. It changed when they saw how well we were doing, and how the students changed.  
(19 year old female)*

Lodge and Lynch (2000) point to the lack of understanding among teachers about the operation of democratic structures in schools as a reason for the fear of allowing student involvement in the school. Models of involvement that work in a collaborative manner are critical to changing those viewpoints.

### **Tobar Changes**

The study also indicates areas within the Tobar programme that would benefit from further examination. The leadership traits promoted by the programme need to be considered for inclusiveness and for gender concerns. The physical activity on the programme appears to be biased towards the physically fit and strong (primarily males), causing a participative problem for those who are neither fit nor strong. Training exercises involving such activities need to be examined and

altered, to allow for the inclusion of those who are physically challenged in any way. Since this has not been raised as a concern through the programme's evaluation systems, the modes of programme evaluation need to be reviewed.

While there is an increase in the self-esteem of those involved, young women participants do not consider attractiveness or being extraverted as leadership characteristics. There is a need to emphasise the non-gendered nature of these traits and to promote strong leadership beliefs in these young women.

The sphere of influence of the Tobar groups in the schools should be extended to include the peer group of the participants. The programme would benefit from the design of a participative model within the school for those who applied for the programme but were not selected. If these students are applying to the programme, it is important that their need for participation is also considered.

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of parents in community activities appears to be a gateway to their children's participation upon leaving school. Participants whose parents are not involved may be limited in their access to or knowledge of voluntary organisations. The establishment of links between Tobar and voluntary community groups could help to bridge the gap between school participation and involvement in the wider community.

### ***Educational Implications***

According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), reform has failed because of a difficulty in sharing power at each level of the education system. Therefore



teachers need to share power in the classroom, principals need to share power with their teachers and students and the Department of Education and Science needs to share power with the principals, the teachers and the students. Opportunities for power sharing need to be created and in order to do this, certain attitudes and practices need to change.

Society needs to value our young people, not as the future of the country but as the present, capable of being involved in decisions that affect them. Society also needs to provide opportunities for the voice of youth to be involved in an appropriate and meaningful way in our country. While a Dáil na nÓg would allow the voices of children to be heard, one wonders who would listen to them? Who will be empowered to implement the policies and decisions of this Dáil? Without the power to cause change, one is involved in tokenism or decoration. If structures for involvement are desired, then they should begin at local level and grow from there. Thus, the voices of all young people could be represented.

The structural integrity of our institutions with reference to age and participation needs to be considered. If the involvement of young people is dependent upon age, does this not presume that maturity is age-specific? The moral development of the individual may never be completed, yet this does not preclude individuals from making moral decisions. Is it not more responsible to develop opportunities where maturity and development can happen by involvement in and experience of the decisions that affect the individual from an early age. Again, the paternalistic view of young people by adults needs to be challenged.

Schools need to examine their institutional practices and analyse those practices against democratic principles. School leaders hold a responsibility to the staff of the school to provide in-career development on the principle of sharing power in a realistic and just way and to lead by example in the matter of power sharing. They also hold a responsibility to students to create genuine opportunities for participation and to ensure that those who undertake leadership positions in the school are trained in the necessary skills and have the support necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Teachers need to examine their classroom practices and to make any changes necessary to create a more democratic climate in the classroom. Teachers also need to dialogue with their students about power in a genuine way and to be prepared to trust in their students and to develop with them. If we wish to teach leadership, citizenship and participation, then new ways of teaching and learning need to be explored. The introduction of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) into Irish schools is indicative of the international growing concern at dropping rates of participation in democratic structures (see Holden and Clough, 1998; Mc Clave, 2000). The methods of teaching such programmes may be in direct contravention with the subject matter that is being taught. In order to learn about participation, it is necessary to have an experience of it (McClave, 2000; Lynch, 2000). This is not just about changing how subjects are taught: it is about a deeper change. It involves a change in the attitude towards teaching and learning and a move towards shared authority in the classroom. This has a profound implication, not only for the teacher but also for the student and the school as an institution.

Young people need to learn about the principles of participation and to be allowed to put those principles into action with facilitation from the adults in their lives. They need to be familiar with the concept of responsibilities that come with rights and to consider the consequences of their actions. They need to know that the decisions they are taking are real ones and have real consequences. They need to learn through doing, sometimes getting it wrong but allowed to try again, having learned from those mistakes. Opportunities need to be created that allow for genuine participation and independent thought. Opportunities already present need to be highlighted and encouraged. It is not just schools that need to be aware of this but other groups that work with young people. Youth clubs and sports clubs provide excellent opportunities for leadership development and need to be supported and encouraged in what they do.

Parents need to recognise that school as they knew it is already changing and that their participation is essential in the continuing dialogue. Parents also need to be aware of the importance of their contribution as a model for their children's involvement. Consideration needs to be given to the development of a strategy to break the cycle of non-involvement. The study indicates the importance of parental example for the continued involvement of young people in Tobar. Whether this carries through into other areas of participation merits further research.

Chapter One spoke of the visions of others. Chapter Five concludes with the author's vision.

### ***The consultative school***

The vision of a consultative school is one in which structures are put in place to allow for the students to dream their ideal school into existence. It would have training in the skills of facilitation and of leading for all students. These students would work in small groups and the opportunity for those skills to be practised and evaluated would be provided. It would begin with first years and fifth years and then gradually filter through the school with the movement of these year groups. Senior students would play a major part in the development of this approach with the junior students. Tutorial classes in schools would be used to raise issues, identify needs and plan actions to meet those needs. Class groups would have representatives that would meet with the other representatives in their year and with their year head and tutors to inform each other of the issues raised and the actions undertaken. The class representatives would be encouraged to approach the principal and deputy principal with their suggestions for action. They would feed back the results of those meetings to their classes. But before any of this would take place, they would dream their dream, ensuring that they were travelling together and that they would know when they reached their destination. For the vision is to the group what light is to the plant (Starratt, 1995). It provides the energy for everything that happens within. Martin Luther King had it, so did John F. Kennedy, Oscar Romero and Mary Robinson. It is Longfellow's Excelsior, the banner carried through the alpine village.

### ***Findings and Recommendations***

- There was a relatively consistent opinion across the survey group concerning leadership characteristics, irrespective of participation in Tobar. Personality traits were considered to be the most important characteristics, followed by traits relating to a work ethos. Respondents considered most physical traits unimportant. The importance placed on charismatic personality as an indicator of leadership potential is evident in these responses.
- Participation on Tobar was a factor in the formation of definite opinions concerning different leadership styles. The experience of a transformational form of leadership, in addition to a transactional form, gave those students a wider understanding of the potential of leadership for influence and personal change, rather than just the completion of tasks. Any training programme for youth involvement in schools would benefit from the inclusion of this transformational dimension.
- The provision of opportunities for student participation in schools is vital. While this participation increases belonging and esteem, it also provides a model of 'respectful consultation' that is a preparation for citizenship and democratic involvement. Opportunities for participation in the community need to be highlighted for those who have no family history of such involvement.
- Training programmes have formative influences on the opinions of those who participate in them. Youth leadership programmes in schools have an impact on the self-esteem and the sense of belonging of those involved in them. It is vital, therefore, that such programmes are aware of the type of formation given and the leadership characteristics that are advocated. It is the ideal

opportunity for the promotion of independent thinking, problem posing, problem solving and analysis of issues among those who will participate in society's democratic structures in the future.

- Participation must be genuine and needs to respect the right to self-development of all individuals involved. This development should not be gender-biased and participation should not be limited by age, gender or special needs. National policies and societal structures need to be respectful and consistent in their attitude towards of young people.

Democracy in education is a slow and difficult process, made more difficult by the power differentials within the system but the creation opportunities for youth participation in education is possible. If it is to be genuine, it needs commitment, time and above all, faith in people's basic integrity.

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## Appendix A: Training Guidelines

### **Respect & Courtesy:**

Treat others well. Listen to them with respect.

When you go to bed, please be quiet. Some people want to sleep.

Private means just that! Please respect it.

Please switch off mobile phones during the training.

### **Honesty:**

Alcohol or illegal substances are absolutely forbidden. Break this rule and you go home.

### **Responsibility:**

Be on time so we can get the work done.

Cleaning up is on a rota. Please do your share.

Everyone cleans up at the end.

### **Safety:**

Keep to main areas during the day. You'll get to know more people that way.

Stay in the grounds. If you must leave, notify a leader.

*The guidelines are for everyone. They help us all to get the most out of training. Please follow them.*

## Appendix B

## Questionnaire

### Section A

This section asks you about your attitude to students and leadership.

Please tick the box under one of the numbers in each row to show whether you

1. **strongly agree**
2. **agree**
3. **have no opinion on this issue**
4. **disagree**
5. **strongly disagree**

with each statement given below.

		Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Leaders are born, not made.					
2.	Teenagers are better off if adults make decisions on their behalf					
3.	All students should be involved in decisions that affect them					
4.	Senior students only should be involved in the school's decision-making process.					
5.	Leadership is a set of skills and attitudes that can be learned and practised					
6.	Anyone can become a leader with the proper training.					
7.	All teenagers have the potential to lead					
8.	Leadership is a personal and developmental process which takes place over time throughout a person's life					
9.	Leadership is the ability to motivate others to follow a common cause					
10.	Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others.					
11.	Leadership is about taking on more responsibility					
12.	Leadership is about being in charge and telling people what to do.					
13.	Leadership is unleashing energy, building, freeing, growing					
14.	Leadership is about being in charge and doing something					
15.	Leadership is about helping people go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group					
16.	Leadership is flexible and adaptable					

Tick the items on the following list of possible characteristics of a leader. The closer you place your tick to the characteristic, the more important you think it is. "4" means you are undecided or have no opinion on that characteristic.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Tall								Small
Physically unfit								Physically fit
Lacking in confidence								Self-confident
Reliable								Unreliable
Plain								Attractive
Possessing initiative								Lacking in initiative
Discouraged easily								Persistent
Extroverted								Introverted
Younger								Older
Dishonest								Honest
Popular								Friendless
Poor								Wealthy
Well behaved in school								Poorly behaved in school
Lazy								Hardworking
Healthy								Unhealthy
Female								Male
Physically energetic								Physically inactive
Content with average achievement								Desiring to excel
Having good study habits								Having poor study habits
Poor exam results								Good exam results
Maintaining good attendance								Maintaining poor attendance
Having strong willpower								Lacking willpower
Not answerable to others								Having a sense of duty

**Section B -**

*This section asks you about your experience of Tobar.*

1. Why did you apply for the programme?
2. What is your strongest memory of what your group did in school?
3. Have any other members of your family participated in Tobar?

*If you answer yes to any of the following questions, please give details.*

4. Did you learn any skills from your participation in Tobar?

If **YES**, name the skills.

5. Did you notice any changes within yourself that you would attribute to your participation?

If **YES**, describe these changes.

6. Do you feel that you have benefited from your involvement in Tobar?

If **YES**, describe how?

7. Do you feel that your school benefited from Tobar?

If **YES**, what were the benefits?

8. Did your relationship with the teaching staff of the school change during that year? If **YES**, how?

9. Did your relationship with your classmates/year group change during that year? If **YES**, how?

10. Did your relationship with other students in the school change during that year?

If **YES**, which students and how?

11. Were you involved in any other school structures prior to Tobar?

If **YES**, what were they?

12. Were/are you involved in any other school, college or community structures after Tobar? If **YES**, what are they?

13. Did your opinion of the school change during your involvement in Tobar?

If **YES**, how?

14. Are your parents currently involved in any community activities?

15. Have your parents ever been involved in any community activities?

If you answered **YES** to either question 14 or 15, please give details.

16. Any other comments?





## Appendix C      Covering Letter

School Address

2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2001.

Dear

I am currently engaged in research as part of a postgraduate degree, in NUI Maynooth. I am trying to find out more about people's experience of being involved in Tobar. As a first stage, I am asking a randomly-selected group to help me in my work by completing the attached questionnaire as accurately as possible. I would be very interested in *your own* views to the questions that follow.

Depending on the patterns of responses, in some cases I will be following up your comments with a request for an interview (hence the code at the top of the first page). The good news is that I will not need to bother most of you again! Confidentiality of your individual answers and of the school is assured and the primary audience of the research findings will be the academic staff in NUI Maynooth.

Could you please return the completed questionnaire to me during the next week. I am enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. If you need to contact me, the Tobar phone number is (0000000).

Thank you for your help. Your co-operation is very much appreciated.

---

*Rose Dolan*

## Appendix D Abridged Version of Questionnaire

Gender: Male  Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

This section asks you about your attitude to students and leadership.

Please tick the box under *one* of the numbers in each row to show whether you

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. have no opinion on this issue
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree

with *each* statement given below.

		Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion on this issue	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Leaders are born, not made.					
2.	Teenagers are better off if adults make decisions on their behalf					
3.	All students should be involved in decisions that affect them					
4.	Senior students only should be involved in the school's decision-making process.					
5.	Leadership is a set of skills and attitudes that can be learned and practised					
6.	Anyone can become a leader with the proper training.					
7.	All teenagers have the potential to lead					
8.	Leadership is a personal and developmental process which takes place over time throughout a person's life					
9.	Leadership is the ability to motivate others to follow a common cause					
10	Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others.					
11	Leadership is about taking on more responsibility					
12	Leadership is about being in charge and telling people what to do.					
13	Leadership is unleashing energy, building, freeing, growing					
14	Leadership is about being in charge and doing something					
15	Leadership is about helping people go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group					
16	Leadership is flexible and adaptable					

Tick the items on the following list of possible characteristics of a leader. The closer you place your tick to the characteristic, the more important you think it is. "4" means you are undecided or have no opinion on that characteristic.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Tall								Small
Physically unfit								Physically fit
Lacking in confidence								Self-confident
Reliable								Unreliable
Plain								Attractive
Possessing initiative								Lacking in initiative
Discouraged easily								Persistent
Extroverted								Introverted
Younger								Older
Dishonest								Honest
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Well behaved in school								Poorly behaved in school
Lazy								Hardworking
Healthy								Unhealthy
Female								Male
Physically energetic								Physically inactive
Content with average achievement								Desiring to excel
Having good study habits								Having poor study habits
Poor exam results								Good exam results
Maintaining good attendance								Maintaining poor attendance
Having strong willpower								Lacking willpower
Not answerable to others								Having a sense of duty

*This section asks for some information which will help me to group your responses to the previous sections. The information will be confidential.*

9. *Does your mother work in a paid job? Yes No*  
*If YES please describe the job.*
  
10. *Does your father work in a paid job? Yes No*  
*If YES please describe the job*

## **Appendix E      Questions for Interviews with Principals.**

1. How did Tobar begin in your school?
2. Why did Tobar begin in your school?
3. What s your understanding of the criteria for selection to the Tobar group?
4. What is your understanding of the purpose of Tobar?
5. What is your strongest memory of the groups in your school?
6. What skills were learned/demonstrated by the members of the group?
7. Did you notice any changes in students and if so, what changes?
8. Have there been benefits to the school and if so, what benefits?
9. Was the relationship between the students and the staff altered and if so, how?
10. Was there a discernible effect on the other students in the school and if so, what effect?