



**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**An investigation of school improvement:
A case study of David Rattray
Foundation partner schools in rural
KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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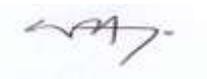
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Abstract

Schools within South Africa are not performing as they should be due to a variety of issues within the school system. It is for this reason that there has been an increased interest in the field of school improvement. This research study is an articulation of a case for school improvement. In the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area of KwaZulu-Natal the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) implements school improvement projects at partner schools within the area with an aim to bring about school improvement.

This qualitative study entailed the researcher conducting semi-structured interviews, a document analysis, non-participant observation with the use of a checklist, a preference analysis, and Participatory Action Research (PAR) to formulate a case study of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF). There were three main themes that emerged from the data of this research, namely (a) school improvement, (b) partnerships and (c) wider system issues.

Within this study the researcher identified a shift from a charismatic approach to school improvement to one that is more systematic and business like on the part of the foundation. An interesting approach to whole school improvement is articulated by the manner in which the foundation operates. With the complexity of the school system, the researcher has identified that the DRF uses business principles to counter the problems that arise with the implementation of school improvement interventions, thus within this study the researcher presents a business model of school improvement.

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Chapter One: Introduction and background to this study

1.1 Introduction

Education is regarded as an important aspect in an individual's life because it is seen as a panacea to all social ills. Education opens doors to many opportunities and in turn gives people a place within society. However, when one examines the education that is provided within the South African context, one begins to realise that the education system is not doing justice to the people of South Africa (Bloch, 2009). South Africa is regarded as having one of the worst performing education systems when compared to other systems globally (Bloch, 2009). It is for this reason that there has been an increased focus on improving the quality of education that is provided to South African schools.

This research study provides an insight into the David Rattray Foundation (DRF), an organisation which has implemented various school improvement interventions within a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This study is an articulation of how a foundation from the private sector has stepped in to provide support to schools so that an enhanced quality of education can be provided to the learners that attend these schools.

Within this qualitative study, a case study of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) was formulated with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the school improvement interventions that the foundation has carried out. The researcher provides an indication of how the foundation came into being and how it has progressed over the years.

The dynamics of change are outlined in this study, with initiatives for school improvement characterised by the charismatic approach adopted by the late David Rattray prior to the establishment of the foundation and a more systematic and businesslike approach to school improvement adopted after the establishment of the DRF.

In this study a focus is placed on the South African context and on the literature which addresses the project of school improvement. The study explores the DRF's unique approach to school improvement within the schools in Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana, with reference to the literature on school improvement.

1.2 Background to this study

Since the demise of apartheid in the year 1994, South Africa has seen various changes in the education sector that aim to bring to the fore a system of education that is beneficial to all learners and that promotes their continued development (Christie, 2008). Despite these initiatives (Christie, 2008), there has been a relatively slow progress in terms of school improvement in South Africa as a whole, with a few exceptions (Manyano Community Schools Conference, 2010). There is a large difference in performance between South African schools due to factors that include historical disadvantages and poverty (Taylor, 2008). The schools that are the lowest performing within South Africa at present are African schools (Christie, 2008). Consequently, there has been an increased focus on ways in which school improvement can be achieved in South Africa in order to bring about better learner outcomes.

The complexity of the school system and the various factors that contribute towards an effective school does not make this an easy task. Although South Africa has come a long way, attempts continue to be made to improve the education system so that optimal learner outcomes can be achieved (Manyano Community Schools Conference, 2010). Within the South African system there has been a focus on whole school improvement (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005), which addresses all factors that are believed to have an influence on learner outcomes.

The David Rattray Foundation (DRF) is a school improvement initiative that has been around since the year 2007. The foundation has implemented various school improvement interventions in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area, which is a rural and underdeveloped area in KwaZulu-Natal. The foundation has formed a partnership with the local Department of Education in the area and has selected a number of schools in which to intervene and assist, so that the learners within these schools and area can be exposed to an education that is of a good quality all round.

The DRF has established partnerships with a total of seventeen schools in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area since the initiation of the project. While it has been rumoured that there have been improvements in learner performance at these schools, there has been a need to further investigate the DRF and its interventions at these schools.

1.3 The rationale behind this study

The researcher of this study was introduced to the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) by a former lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. After learning about the school improvement projects that the DRF has carried out in the Rorke's Drift/ Isandlwana area in KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher had developed an interest into the DRF and its work in the area. The researcher was intrigued by the fact that an organization such as the DRF which is from the private sector was involved in school improvement projects, which according to hearsay had been successful. Therefore the researcher developed an interest in the foundation and its work to determine what works to bring about school improvement.

By investigating the DRF and the school improvement interventions that it has provided in the Rorke's Drift/ Isandlwana area, this research contributes towards the broader body of knowledge on school improvement. The potential benefits of such an investigation are extensive. Further insights can be gained into school improvement; in addition, the interventions that have been implemented by the DRF may prove beneficial to other South African schools seeking to bring about school improvement.

1.4 Key research questions

This study explores the following questions:

- What is the nature and function of the DRF?
- What interventions has the DRF implemented to bring about school improvement in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area?
- How were these interventions implemented and what were the processes of change that occurred?

1.5 The study sample

The sample for this study was drawn from the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area. A total of eight schools were sampled from the seventeen schools in which the DRF has implemented interventions. The principals from these eight schools were interviewed. Additionally, given that the main focus of this study was the DRF and its approach to bringing about school improvement in the Isandlwana/ Rorke's Drift area, the CEO of the DRF was interviewed. Lastly, a consultant who was involved in the running of the development programmes with teachers from these schools was also included in the sample to be interviewed.

1.6 The context in which this study took place

The larger context in which this research study took place was a relatively isolated rural area with a number of contextual issues. The community in this area is impoverished and employment opportunities within the area are scarce. Additionally, the area has a high incidence of HIV/AIDS amongst its residents. Aside from the issue of HIV/AIDS, the area also has many orphaned children, with a few child-headed households. The context of this area and the impact that this has on its schools will be elaborated on further in chapter four.

1.7 Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design was used so that the researcher would be able to gain a rich understanding and an in-depth description (Babbie & Mouton, 2005) of the school improvement interventions that were carried out in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area. A case study was the main methodological approach of this study. A case study was formulated to generate an understanding and provide insight into the school improvement interventions that the DRF has initiated, thus providing a thick and rich description of the interventions (Rule & John, 2011).

Once ethical clearance was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1), the researcher forwarded a letter seeking permission to conduct research in the targeted schools to the local Department of Education (see Appendix 2) in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area. The researcher also forwarded an application to conduct research in these schools to the Department of Education. Additionally, a letter seeking permission to conduct research was forwarded to each of the eight principals that were included in this study sample (see Appendix 3) and to the CEO of the DRF (Appendix 4).

Once permission was granted from the Department of Education (see Appendix 5), the CEO of the DRF (see Appendix 6) and the relevant school principals, the researcher went to the Isandlwana / Rorke's drift area for a period of three weeks to collect data. During these three weeks, the researcher conducted a document analysis to get a greater sense of the case and its history (Rule & John, 2011). The researcher then conducted a semi-structured interview with the CEO of the DRF with the aim of gaining an understanding (Starks & Trinidad, 2007) of how the DRF came about and the rationale for choosing the interventions that had been implemented in the partner schools.

The researcher then visited the eight schools and conducted semi-structured interviews with the principals of each school. The researcher engaged in non-participant observation whilst at these schools (Rule & John, 2011). Additionally, the researcher identified what interventions the DRF had implemented in each school by making use of a check list. To analyse this study, the researcher adopted a combination of both a deductive and an inductive approach. With the deductive approach, the researcher started the analysis of the data with a conceptual framework in mind and then moved towards the concrete empirical evidence to test this conceptual framework (Ali & Birley, 1999). An inductive approach, on the other hand, allowed research findings to emerge from the data with the identification of dominant themes (Thomas, 2003).

1.8 Organisation and structure of this dissertation

In this chapter the researcher has outlined the focus of this research study, together with the context of this research. The key research questions, together with the methodological approach that was adopted in this study was briefly outlined.

In chapter two, the researcher will outline what other scholars have said in relation to school improvement and school improvement initiatives. Additionally, the researcher will review what has been said about the state of school improvement within the South African context, together with an exploration of other school improvement projects that have taken place within South Africa. In chapter three, the researcher will outline the conceptual framework that was used for this study.

In chapter four, the methodological approach that this research study has made use of will be described in detail. This chapter will provide details in relation to the sample, the research instruments used and how data was both collected and analysed.

In chapter five, the main findings of this research study will be examined. This chapter begins with a descriptive introduction to the David Rattray Foundation (DRF). The chapter then goes on to discuss the three dominant themes that were identified by the researcher from the findings of this research study.

Chapter six will provide a discussion of the findings of this research study. The findings will be discussed in relation to the literature on school improvement, together with the conceptual framework outlined in chapter three. In this chapter the researcher will examine the DRF's approach to school improvement and how it relates to what the literature on school

improvement states whilst at the same time the researcher will determine whether there is anything that the DRF has done which was not predicted by the literature on school improvement.

Lastly, in chapter seven, the researcher will summarize the major findings of this research study, provide recommendations and conclude.

Chapter Two: A review of literature

2.1 Introduction

For years researchers and scholars around the world have been investigating the school improvement phenomenon with an aim to uplift schools so that they are able to provide an education that is of a good quality to learners. The issue of school improvement continues to be a problem that researchers grapple with (Hattie, 2009). What needs to be understood is that there is no universal recipe for success as each school is different and unique (Reid, Hopkins, & Holly, 1987).

Schools are complex systems in which learning takes place (Harris, 2010). Effective schools are those which have incorporated various key components into the structure of the school system. There are various aspects which have an effect on school improvement that need to be taken into consideration. Researchers are often focused on the technicalities of which interventions will bring about school improvement and, in doing so, they often forget that schools are systems and that these systems are contextually based (Nobles, Green, Brockmeier, & Tsemunhu, 2012). Many of the school improvement interventions that are implemented by the private sector are done so in isolation despite the fact that the school is a system and for change to occur within that system there needs to be a shared vision amongst the individuals involved within the system. As a result, such interventions are often less effective than they were expected to be (Khosa, n.d.).

In this review, the researcher will begin by exploring the differences between school effectiveness and school improvement, whilst at the same time highlighting their similarities and how they can complement each other. The researcher will then move on to examine the critiques of these two schools of thoughts, followed by a brief history of school improvement and school effectiveness and how they have come together.

The rest of this chapter will focus on how school improvement can be achieved and what has been regarded as effective school improvement strategies that could be implemented in schools. To do this, the researcher will explore models and frameworks that encompass a school improvement approach. Additionally, the researcher will determine whether these models and frameworks are suitable to both More Developed Countries (MDCs) and Less Developed Countries (LDCs).

Lastly, the researcher will focus on school improvement within the South African context and review what has been said and carried out in relation to bringing about improvement in South African schools. The researcher will then briefly introduce the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) and briefly examine the manner in which this foundation has initiated a project in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa with an aim to bring about school improvement.

2.2 Differentiating between school effectiveness and school improvement

While school improvement and school effectiveness might appear to be similar they have different goals (Reid et al., 1987). It is therefore important to distinguish between these two concepts and look at the ways in which they can complement each other when exploring ways in which school improvement can be brought about.

School improvement focuses on programmes which can be implemented as an innovation towards school improvement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). It focuses on change (Wikeley & Murillo, 2005) and problem-solving within a school and develops interventions that are intended to be of immediate benefit to the schools (Creemers, Stoll, Reezigt, & the ESI Team, 2007). School improvement acknowledges the contextual differences between schools (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010) and works with the different levels that affect the school (Fullan, 2001), such as parents, communities (Hattie, 2009) and the school district (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). School improvement ultimately looks at ways in which better student outcomes can be achieved and strategies that schools can use to manage change (Creemers et al., 2007; Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).

School effectiveness, on the other hand, focuses on researching school improvement and finding factors that contribute towards effective school improvement (Creemers et al., 2007). School effectiveness focuses on using theory to explain how school improvement can be brought about (Creemers, 2002). It also aims to determine what are the cause and effects that result in school improvement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). School effectiveness aims to identify the relationships between the educational processes that are involved in learning and the effect of these processes on learning (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). With this knowledge base, school effectiveness can establish what the reasons are for differences in student achievement between schools and classrooms (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).

School improvement focuses on bringing to the fore immediate interventions that schools can use to bring about improvement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997), whereas school effectiveness

looks at researching ways in which effective school improvement that is sustained over a long period can be achieved (Reid et al., 1987). It would appear that school improvement and school effectiveness have a lot that they could learn from each other (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). When research is conducted on school effectiveness, it could look at school improvement programmes to identify what factors are necessary to bring about improvement in schools (Creemers, 2002). And when school improvement programmes are designed, the research base for school effectiveness could be consulted to determine which factors require intervention (Creemers, 2002).

2.3 Critiques of school improvement and school effectiveness

Many school improvement interventions are implemented with little consideration given to the outcomes that should be achieved (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). Many schools initiate school improvement projects that have been successful in other schools (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997) without considering the appropriateness or applicability of the intervention to their own school and the context in which it is placed (Mourshed et al, 2010). Most school improvement interventions aim at bringing about immediate change (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). Bearing this in mind, many school improvement projects are not tested or piloted before they are implemented in schools and an evaluation of these interventions is seldom carried out (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).

This reality makes it difficult to decipher what has brought about change in schools. With little planning and thought as to what the interventions aim to achieve and the lack of an evaluation, it is difficult to determine whether the factors or variables that were engaged have had any impact on school improvement at all (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). It could be that the rationale behind these interventions is that the school is a system and a change in any part of the system will bring about a change in the whole system (Nobles et al., 2012). However, if this was the case, then what assurance is there that the change that has occurred will be sustained? (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).

Despite the lack of explicit theories on how to bring about school improvement there has been a vast amount of knowledge that has been created in the field with regards to the factors that contribute towards both classroom and school effectiveness (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). This knowledge can prove to be useful to school effectiveness and should be investigated further to determine whether these variables do in fact contribute towards school effectiveness (Creemers et al., 2007). Research on school effectiveness has placed less

emphasis on contextual factors (Fielding, 1997; Creemers & Reezigt, 1997), whereas school improvement has acknowledged that contextual factors do indeed play a vital role in school improvement (Creemers, 2002). Thus there is a need for school effectiveness to focus on these contextual factors (Fielding, 1997) and also on the various levels that have an influence on school improvement (Nobles et al., 2012). Research on school effectiveness also focuses on schools that are in the process of becoming effective and in the process of improving, rather than focusing on schools in a limited time frame; school effectiveness should carry out longitudinal studies which would provide a greater understanding of the various factors that are at play (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). Aside from research on school effectiveness focusing on the factors that contribute to school effectiveness, casual factors should be identified so that their influence on student outcomes can be better understood (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). Lastly, research on school effectiveness has given little attention to ineffective schools (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997); rectifying this could prove to be beneficial as the factors which render schools ineffective could be identified and then be given the necessary attention during interventions to effect school improvement and increase effectiveness.

2.4 The history of school improvement

Research into effective schools only came to the fore after the release of the Coleman report in the late 1960s in an attempt to counter the report and explore ways to improve learners' academic performance (Reid et al., 1987). The Coleman report stated that the poor performance of learners was largely a result of their social backgrounds and the homes from which they came (Nobles, Green, Brockmeier, & Tsemunhu, 2012). The report also noted that there were various inequalities evident in the education system which had an effect on the quality of education (Goldstein & Woodhouse, 2000). Christie (2008) notes that according to the Coleman report, education at that time was considered to be oppressive, with the school experience adding to inequalities experienced by learners rather than countering them. The education that was provided to learners was culture bound and linked to social and political power dimensions (Christie, 2008). The report also stated that in order to provide a quality education to learners the quality of teachers needed to be improved (Christie, 2008). It challenged the education system and implied that the quality of education in South Africa was poor and of no measurable benefit to learners (Nobles et al., 2012). The report claimed that the only way that the education system could improve the performance of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds was to ensure that teachers were of a high standard and were

equipped with the skills necessary to deliver a quality education to such learners (Christie, 2008).

In the 1980s the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) was launched in response to the Coleman report. The project was developed by experts from fourteen different countries around the world and essentially focused on school improvement (Reynolds, Bollen, Creemers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij, 1996). The ISIP laid a foundation for knowledge about school improvement and made this knowledge internationally available (Reynolds et al., 1996). Interest in the field of school improvement increased as a result of the project.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) note that the primary focus of school improvement initiatives during the 1980s was on bringing about organisational change within schools by encouraging schools to conduct self-evaluations whilst at the same time ensuring that both teachers and schools owned the process of change. However there was little association with the strategies for change and learner outcomes which was the ultimate objective (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001).

In the 1990s the two separate fields of school effectiveness and school improvement merged in order to establish a stronger base for work on effective school improvement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997). The field of school effectiveness contained knowledge about what worked and methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of schools (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001), while the field of school improvement focused on approaches to implementing interventions in order to effect school improvement (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001).

Over the years the understanding of how to achieve school improvement has shifted from a focus on individual school improvement initiatives to a perspective centred around systemic and whole school improvement. This perspective focuses on the different levels that are involved in the school system as a whole (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006).

2.5 The context and culture of schools

The context in which a school is placed is said to have a significant influence on the performance and learner outcomes that a school produces (Christie, 2008). Every school has different contextual factors which need to be taken into consideration (Mourshed et al, 2010). Given that every school exists in a unique context and that there are multiple factors that

contribute to the effectiveness of a school, schools can be expected to be at different stages and have different needs. As a result, they will have different requirements in order to improve student outcomes (Mourshed et al, 2010).

Reid, Hopkins and Holly (1987) note that as change is a process schools need to improve in order to become more effective. Fullan (2006) states that school improvement is contingent upon change within the system. The school is regarded as a system and change can only be achieved when there is a change to the system (Nobles et al., 2012).

Every school has a distinct culture or system with which it works (Fullan, 2006). Thus, in order for school improvement and change to be brought about, the culture and system of the school and the individuals that are involved in the school need to be changed (Nobles et al., 2012; Taylor, 2008). Fullan (2011) states that only once there is a change within the culture of a school, whereby individuals at the school are both determined and motivated to change, will interventions to bring about school improvement be able to achieve sustained change.

2.6 Differentiating between MDCs and LDCs

In this review the researcher will explore the differences in suitability of school improvement frameworks between More Developed Countries (MDCs) and Less Developed Countries (LDCs). It is important to elaborate what the researcher means by MDCs and LDCs. MDCs are those countries which are highly industrialised and are growing economically at a rapid rate (Puga, 1996). LDCs, on the other hand, are those countries that are less industrialised and are growing economically at a slower pace than MDCs (Puga, 1996). Additionally, MDCs are more technologically advanced than LDCs (Puga, 1996). This review will use these factors as a basis from which to distinguish between MDCs and LDCs.

2.7 McKinsey's model for school improvement

In an attempt to understand what works in school improvement, Mourshed et al (2010) set out to identify the commonalities between twenty school systems from across the globe that had initiated a school improvement intervention successfully. After extensive research conducted with these twenty school systems Mourshed et al (2010) point out in their report that every school is different and faces different challenges; as a result, every school is at different stage with regards to improvement. Consequently, the starting point for a school improvement initiative will be different for every school (Mourshed et al, 2010).

In order to initiate change within a school, Mourshed et al (2010) state that system leaders must be able to integrate three aspects in order to ensure that interventions will result in improvement. The system leader should (a) identify where the school is currently in relation to student outcomes, (b) determine the set of interventions that is needed to make improvements in student outcomes, and (c) the school must adapt the appropriate intervention to its context, culture and structure (Mourshed et al, 2010).

The report goes on to categorize what interventions should be adopted in relation to the current position of the school. Schools are required to determine their performance stage in terms of student outcomes achieved. The performance stages that Mourshed et al (2010) outline range from poor to fair, fair to good, good to great, great to excellent. Mourshed et al (2010) notes that each performance stage is associated with a set of interventions that would be useful for schools to ensure success at that given stage, so that they can move on to the next stage (Mourshed et al, 2010). With the development of stage appropriate interventions, Mourshed et al (2010) acknowledge that school improvement is a continuous journey (Reid et al., 1987) whereby the school moves from one stage to another with time.

In the “poor to fair” performance stage there is an emphasis on building a solid foundation for learners. To do this, schools are required to focus on literacy and numeracy skills (Mourshed et al, 2010). Teachers with minimal skills are provided with scripted material, allocated times within which to complete tasks and are coached where needed in terms of curricula. Within this stage there should also be school visits from district office personnel (Mourshed et al, 2010). Additionally, teachers should be rewarded for their success with incentives in order to motivate them to strive for excellence. There is also a need to ensure that the learners’ basic needs are met in order to increase school attendance and to optimise learner performance. The school at this stage will also develop in terms of infrastructure, availability of text books and increased student numbers (Mourshed et al, 2010).

With schools that are in the “fair to good” performance stage, there is a focus on improving the school system as a whole. In this stage, the focus is on ensuring that the teachers and the school are accountable, the structure of the school is improved to ensure efficiency, pedagogical models are to revised and the medium of instruction is reviewed (Mourshed et al, 2010). As indicated by Mourshed et al (2010), in this stage the school becomes decentralized and independent which allows it to handle finances on its own so that it can increase funds with aid from outside donors.

The “good to great” performance stage focuses on the teachers and the school leaders. This stage emphasizes the professional development of teachers by providing teacher training programmes and conducting internal evaluations of teachers (Mourshed et al, 2010). This stage allows the skills of teachers to improve and ensures that they are performing at their best.

Lastly, the “great to excellent” stage affords more freedom within the school, where the school and teachers can be creative and develop ways to improve by working within the school itself (Mourshed et al, 2010). Teachers are encouraged to learn from their peers and be creative with pedagogical styles (Mourshed et al, 2010). Additionally, teachers are encouraged to build support networks within their schools. The administration that is required to be carried out by the school is relieved from them at this stage; they are able to hire administrative assistants and thus they are able to focus their attention on teaching.

In addition to the stage dependent interventions, there are also an additional six interventions that Mourshed et al (2010) propose which contribute to school improvement that are to take place across the stages. These interventions include (a) revising the curriculum and the standards, (b) ensuring that an appropriate reward/ remuneration structure is developed for both teachers and principals, (c) assessing students, (d) establishing data systems, (e) facilitating improvement by the development of policy documents and implementation of education laws and (f) building the technical skills of both teachers and principals (Mourshed et al, 2010).

Mourshed et al (2010) note that how each school chooses to implement these interventions may vary. The manner in which each school chooses to implement the intervention will be largely influenced by its context (Mourshed et al, 2010). Therefore schools should adapt the intervention so that it suits their context. When schools are able to work around the challenges that they face due to their context and find a way to use their context to their advantage, they can achieve sustained school improvement (Mourshed et al, 2010).

A pattern can be identified in terms of the schools’ performance stage and the amount of control that is exercised over the schools. School systems that fall into the “poor to fair” stage experience tighter central control because the educators in these schools have limited skills (Mourshed., 2010). As schools move from a lower stage to a higher stage, the amount of control that is exercised over them decreases. In the “good to great” performance stage there

is less central control placed on schools and they are given more freedom to be creative and innovative in order to bring about further improvement (Mourshed et al, 2010).

Within LDCs, in areas such as Minas Gerais in Brazil, the Western Cape in South Africa and Madhya Pradesh in India, schools which are in the “poor to fair” performance stage are placed under strict control and guidance. In Minas Gerais, the lower performing schools are provided with strong guidance from the state and strict accountability is enforced in these schools (Mourshed et al, 2010), whereas the higher performing schools are afforded more freedom provided that they continue to meet their goals. In the Western Cape, there is strict central guidance that is placed on schools which requires the districts in this area to address eight areas in order to effect improvement (Mourshed et al, 2010). In Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, there is tighter control within schools themselves as there is scripting of curriculum and classroom teaching is standardized (Mourshed et al, 2010). Each of these three LDCs has exercised strict control over their low performing schools yet the manner in which such control has been exerted over the schools has been different, however each approach has enforced central control over these schools.

In MDCs such as South Korea and Singapore, on the other hand, which are in the “great to excellent” stage of school improvement, one notes that there is less control exercised over these schools (Mourshed et al, 2010). This is largely due to the fact that at this stage, the schools are encouraged to be creative and innovative in a manner whereby they can explore ways in which further school improvement can be brought about in their schools. In South Korea, teachers are funded so that they can engage in action research whereby they explore means to bring about school improvement within their schools (Mourshed et al, 2010). In Singapore, teachers have freedom in their classroom practices and schools principals have management rights to make decisions that will be beneficial to their individual school (Mourshed et al, 2010). Thus schools in this stage have become more decentralized and are afforded more freedom.

The strict control within LDCs is justified given that most teachers within these schools have limited content knowledge, as is the case within South African schools (Khosa, n.d.). MDCs, on the other hand, have teachers who are highly qualified and therefore have adequate content knowledge in order to teach effectively (Auguste, Kihn, & Miller, 2010). The decentralized approach used with these schools is also justified, therefore.

2.8 The productive pedagogy model

With regards to school effectiveness Lingard, Hayes & Mills (2003) note that much of the blame regarding a lack of school effectiveness is unfairly directed towards teachers. School effectiveness research considers teachers to be the most influential individuals in school improvement (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), and there is no doubt that they do have a profound role to play (Taylor, 2008). However, policy makers who produce educational policies fail to acknowledge the complexities of school systems, which have various components and factors that contribute to school effectiveness. Reynolds (2010) acknowledges that much of the school improvement movement focuses on providing ideas to schools on what they should do to bring about improvement in schools, and there is thus little ownership of the process of change (Fullan, 2011) and school improvement by the schools and teachers where it is implemented.

Lingard et al. (2003) state that the failure of schools to become efficient learning organisations is the result of their failure to acknowledge that schools are social environments which also have social conditions that influence learning. The idea that there are social conditions which influence learning stems from Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural learning. According to Vygotsky, social interaction is an important component in the process of learning, for it is through the interaction with others that we learn (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Children learn from their peers and from adults. Vygotsky proposed that we learn from others first before we take in knowledge and embed it within ourselves to form a deep understanding (Wertsch & Kanner, 1992). There is thus a need to build a strong school community which will foster an environment in which teaching and learning can take place (Lingard et al., 2003).

Lingard et al. (2003) propose a productive pedagogy model which builds upon authentic pedagogy research and takes into consideration both the social and intellectual aspects of learning. The productive pedagogies model was developed from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) which was conducted in Australia (Mills & Goos, 2007). The study identified 20 classroom practices which have been found to lead to improved student outcomes both socially and academically.

The study found that for schooling to be effective and to achieve improvement in student outcomes there is a need to value teachers and the knowledge that they bring to both the classroom and school (Lingard et al., 2003). The school as an organisation is dependent on

the knowledge that teachers produce within the organisation, without them no learning would take place (Taylor, 2008). Thus Lingard et al. (2003) acknowledge that teachers have a central role to play when it comes to producing student outcomes.

With the concept of productive pedagogies, an attempt is made to think of pedagogy as more than just aspects of teaching and learning. Rather, the productive pedagogies model is an indication of what teachers and schools can achieve by expanding the concept and acknowledging the social aspects involved in teaching and learning (Lingard et al., 2003). Once teaching and learning is regarded as a social practice then improved classroom practices can be achieved, whereby the classroom is made a conducive place for learning (Lingard et al., 2003).

The QSRLS research team set out to redevelop Newmann's authentic model of teaching and learning so that the social aspects of schooling could be incorporated and emphasized (Mills & Goos, 2007). The research team expanded the model so that it included all aspects that make a significant difference to student achievement as suggested by educational research. The factors that they developed include (a) explicit pedagogy, (b) the recognition of non-dominant cultural knowledge and the use of narrative, which is said to influence the outcomes of some groups of students, and (c) inclusive classroom environments which aim for social participation and active citizenship (Mills & Goos, 2007).

The productive pedagogies model aims to provide a lens through which the reconceptualization of the existing teaching practices can be viewed as a means by which an increase in both academic and social outcomes for all students can be achieved (Mills & Goos, 2007). Lingard et al. (2003) emphasise that there is a need to understand classroom practices as multidimensional, consisting of various influential aspects, rather than one-dimensional.

The productive pedagogies model works with four dimensions, namely (a) intellectual activity, (b) connectedness of social and academic, (c) supportive classroom environments, and (d) the engagement with and valuing of difference in classrooms and in society (Christie, 2008). The model holds that students should be exposed to work that is of a high intellectual quality and that is connected to the world in which they live (Lingard et al., 2003). Additionally, a classroom should be a place with high levels of support which recognizes difference, thus creating a safe social environment which is conducive to learning (Mills & Goos, 2007).

Lingard et al. (2003) note that current school effectiveness research places teachers and their knowledge at the centre of schooling practices and policy which can be dangerous. They argue that, rather, the social aspects involved in teaching and learning should be acknowledged (Mills & Goos, 2007), which would foster a social school community. Within this community effective learning can take place.

The model was developed so that an education that is of a high quality could be provided to all learners, with a focus on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Christie, 2008). By recognizing differences within the classroom and connecting learning to the social world, an attempt is made to bridge the gap between students in the classroom so that all learners can benefit from the lesson equally (Mills & Goos, 2007).

With regards to LDCs, this model could prove to be beneficial as it provides a means through which the learners can learn from their differences. Through the use of the model, indigenous knowledge is explored and welcomed in the classroom (Christie, 2008). However, the use of the productive pedagogies model would require teachers to have an advanced content knowledge of the subjects that they teach (Mills & Goos, 2007) and this could prove too problematic in LDCs such as South Africa where teachers lack adequate content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.).

2.9 Visible teaching and learning

According to Hattie (2009), teachers need to be aware that every cohort of students is different and should accommodate these differences in their approach to teaching. Hattie (2009) notes that it is often the case that students have to adjust to the competencies of their teachers each year as they progress. It is from this frame of thought that Hattie (2009) proposes visible teaching and learning.

Visible teaching and learning, as described by Hattie (2009), occurs when the goals of learning are made explicit, when there is a challenge faced, and when both the learners and teachers aim at overcoming the challenges of learning by finding ways through practice that will enable both the teachers and the learners to overcome these challenges together. Similarly, Taylor (2008) acknowledges that a visible pedagogical teaching style is one that is clear about what is required and the criterion for success and for assessing performance are clearly stated. Visible teaching and learning involves the active participation of teachers and students, where feedback with regards to what is being learnt is both sought and given

(Hattie, 2009). Hattie (2009) argues that teachers should approach teaching in a way that allows them to see how learning takes place from the perspective of the learners, while learners should acknowledge that their teachers are the key influences to their continued learning. He notes that one of the biggest effects that can be said to account for the learning of students occur when teachers learn from the way that they teach and when students are able to teach themselves.

What teachers do in their classrooms matters. Teachers who embrace an approach to teaching that is both purposeful and visible are able to teach in a manner that allows them to ensure that teaching does take place in the classroom and that they meet their goals of learning (Hattie, 2009). Teachers who use such an approach are able to monitor the progress of learners and assist them by providing alternatives and probing them along the way, so that every learner is on track and they gain a clear understanding of the content of the lesson (Hattie, 2009).

The approach that is outlined by Hattie (2009) is similar to Vygotsky's theoretical concept called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept refers to the distance between what a child is able to do on their own and what they are able to do with the assistance of others (Chaiklin, 2003). It looks at the child's actual development -- that is, what the child is able to do independently without the help of others -- and at the child's potential development -- that is, what the child can accomplish with help from a more knowledgeable other (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The idea behind the ZPD is that when a child is assisted by a more knowledgeable other to facilitate the completion of a task that the child would not have been able to complete on his/her own, in the process he/she gains an understanding of the task and at a later stage will be able to complete the task without assistance (Chaiklin, 2003).

Every learner is different and has a different way of learning. It is therefore essential that teachers are able to acknowledge the differences in learning of their students and to assist them accordingly. Hattie (2009) notes that teachers must have the skills required to convey to their learners that they understand their perspective by communicating it back to them and providing them with feedback that will allow them to grasp the content.

According to Hattie (2009), feedback is an essential component in learning and can play a significant role in improving student outcomes. Teaching therefore requires a great deal of skill, as teachers are required to intervene in order for there to be a change in the learners' knowledge structure (Hattie, 2009). Teachers are thus required to determine what learners'

initial understanding is with regards to the content and should have adequate content knowledge themselves so that they are able to direct and challenge learners' understanding so that progressive development and learning can occur (Hattie, 2009). Similarly, Taylor (2008) states that when teachers use the learners' errors and try to provide clear feedback as to why their answers are wrong, rather than stating the correct answer or demonstrating the procedure to arrive the correct answer, it seems to result in greater achievement. For a teacher to be able to teach in such a manner, he/she would be required to have experience and knowledge of different learning strategies so that he/she is able to provide valuable feedback and direction to students when they do not understand the content (Hattie, 2009).

As most teachers in LDCs are not equipped with adequate content knowledge to allow them to provide feedback to learners, this would present a challenge. LDCs such as South Africa have teachers that do not have adequate content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.). In MDCs, on the other hand, teachers are more likely to have a great depth of content knowledge due to the extent of their qualifications (Auguste et al., 2010) and thus would be more equipped to provide learners with the feedback that they require.

Another aspect that is important to ensure that success can be achieved in the classroom involves the teacher explicitly stating the goals of the lesson and criteria that would lead to successful learning (Taylor, 2008). When this is done learners are able to monitor their progress and aim for the desired goal (Hattie, 2009).

Popper (cited in Hattie, 2009) articulates three worlds that schools should strive to bring together: the physical world, the subjective world and the conceptual world (Hattie, 2009). The physical world consists of the surface knowledge that individuals have of the physical world in which they live; the subjective world refers to the thinking strategies and the deep understanding of the subjective world that individuals possess and the conceptual world refers to the ways in which knowledge is constructed using knowledge from both the physical and subjective worlds. What Hattie (2009) notes is that when students enter the classroom they already have an existing knowledge base. Thus it is important for teachers to understand how learners construct knowledge by determining what their conceptual world consists of in order for there to be success in the classroom with regards to learning (Hattie, 2009). For teaching and learning to be successful, Hattie (2009) notes that teachers must pay attention to all three worlds and bring them together.

Lingard et al. (2003) also acknowledge that teaching and learning should be connected to the social and physical world in which the learners live. This is why Lingard et al (2003) emphasise that differences need to be acknowledged and that the curriculum should be made relevant to the learners in the classroom, so that they will be able to benefit from the lesson being taught. Learning should involve both the generation of surface knowledge together with a deep understanding, so that learners are able to elaborate and relate what they have learnt to greater contexts, thus increasing their contextual knowledge (Hattie, 2009). Hattie (2009) notes that most teachers in the classroom focus on bringing forward a deep understanding of the material.

Another factor that appears to be essential for effective learning to take place, as noted by Hattie (2009), is practice. Individuals get better at a task with practice; it is also true that when an individual focuses on building up his/her cognitive abilities by learning, he/she becomes more fluent on the topic. With a greater cognitive ability, further learning becomes easier. When individuals are fluent on a topic they increase their level of thinking in relation to the topic, making their understanding of the topic greater as they learn more (Hattie, 2009). Thus, the greater fluency one has the more learning takes place and the greater the chances that desired outcomes will be obtained (Hattie, 2009).

Hattie (2009) also takes note of the various factors that are involved in the generation of greater student outcomes. These factors include (a) the student, (b) the home, (c) the school, (d) the curricula, (e) the teachers, and (f) the approaches to teaching.

The learners enter the classroom with pre-existing knowledge (Hattie, 2009). They have their own expectations of what learning should be like, together with the expectations that their families have of them and what is expected of them from the school. The homes from which learners come can have a detrimental influence on learner performance (Hattie, 2009; Christie, 2008). If a learner comes from a home that is nurturing and has parents that are actively involved in their child's learning they are more likely to be successful as compared to those learners that do not have the support systems that they need in place (Hattie, 2009; Christie, 2008). Learners in LDCs are less likely to receive the needed support from their home environments in order to engage in homework tasks; additionally, they do not receive the intellectual stimulation that they require to increase their performance levels (Taylor, 2008). As an alternative, Harris (2010) notes that schools can provide learners who are placed

in such vulnerable positions with the emotional and social support that they require, whilst at the same time putting pressure on them to perform academically.

The school should provide a safe and welcoming environment in which learning can take place (Hattie, 2009). The schools that learners attend can make a difference with regards to the learners' experience of schooling and their overall achievement by ensuring that the different backgrounds from which learners come are taken into consideration and are attended to (Christie, 2008). Teachers are responsible for ensuring that they create an environment in the classroom that enables the generation of knowledge and the active engagement of the learners so that learning can take place (Hattie, 2009; Lingard et al., 2003). What teachers get their learners to do in a lesson seems to have a greater influence on learning than what the teachers teach. Teachers should foster and encourage engagement by students and seek to learn from the feedback that is obtained from the learners (Hattie, 2009).

In terms of the curriculum, Hattie (2009) states that there needs to be a balance between the physical and subjective objectives of learning, which ultimately aim at fostering the development of learning strategies through which meaning can be actively constructed. The teaching approach that a teacher should adopt is one that has a clear goal, has challenging tasks through which to practice learning and clearly indicates the criteria for success (Taylor, 2008). Additionally, teaching should welcome errors and learn from them through gaining and providing feedback, which should be considered a central component to the learning process. When teachers formulate lessons that are challenging and when the goals of learning are challenging it is more likely that learners will require feedback (Hattie, 2009). The more challenging tasks are the more likely that error will occur, creating opportunities for learners to learn from their errors (Hattie, 2009). Teachers and classrooms should welcome error; when there is an error a teacher can provide feedback that is valuable to the learners and probe learners so that they are able to grasp the concepts of the lessons (Hattie, 2009). At the same time, it is essential that teachers are able to "see learning through the eyes of the student" (Hattie, 2009, pp. 238) in order to gain a sense of where learners are and what their understanding of the topic is so that they can direct learners towards the right track. Harris (2010) affirms that within disadvantaged schools it is essential that teachers are able to address the individual needs of each child and provide an approach to teaching that ensures that learning takes place.

2.10 A focus on school improvement within the South African context

There are various components within the school system that contribute to success at schools. These components include (a) the school management and organisation, (b) the teachers, (c) the community and parents, (d) and the provincial and district education departments. All these components play a significant role in the running of a school to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. Within South Africa, there has been a focus on whole school and systemic school improvement (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). An attempt is being made to intervene at every level with an aim to bring about school improvement.

The school principal is said to be accountable for the successful management and organisation of a school. The principal is required to manage the school in such a way as to bring about change and transformation (Van Der Linde, 2006). The principal of a school should aim to work collaboratively with his or her staff members so that they can bring about improved learner performance. The principal sets the tone and determines the direction that the school takes; the principal also builds relationships and develops the school organisation as a whole (Schleicher, 2012).

Whether or not a school is effective is determined by the management of the school (Botha, 2010); the successful management of schools leads to school improvement and schools being effective. The evidence from the evaluation that was carried out with the Quality Learning Project indicates that increasing the school's capacity to manage their school results in an improvement in teaching and learning (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The school principal should ensure that the school is regulative; managers, teachers and learners should work together to ensure that the school as a whole functions well by managing their time well (Taylor, 2009). One of the main issues with South African schools is that they lack regulative order; this in turn leads to a learning environment that is poor and in which learners are less regulative in their approach to learning (Taylor, 2009).

The school principal is not the only individual that is responsible for the effective management of schools. There are also external players such as the education district office and the provincial education department that have a pivotal role to play. The provincial Department of Education in South Africa has formulated various policies regarding education together with the curricula that schools should follow. However, Chinsamy (2002) notes that the policies which are formulated by the provincial Department of Education are not being put into practice by schools and therefore transformation and school improvement in South

Africa has stagnated. He goes on to say that the reason for the lack of improvement and effectiveness within schools in South Africa lies with the district education offices, which are responsible for supporting and facilitating change within schools so that improvement within schools can be achieved (Chinsamy, 2002). Additionally, Taylor and Prinsloo (2005) note that under certain conditions enhancing the district offices leads to more effective school management, which ultimately leads to enhanced teaching and learning within schools.

Creemers et al. (2007) note that for school improvement to take place schools need an external form of pressure to initiate the process of improvement and change. The external goals that are set up by the provincial education departments and the local district office contribute to the pressure that is placed on schools to improve (Creemers et al., 2007). Taylor and Prinsloo (2005) indicate that the findings from Quality Learning Project showed no visible gains in mathematics in grades nine and eleven. The reason for this, as stated by Taylor and Prinsloo (2005), is that the spotlight was on matric results and thus schools were pressured to perform and achieve excellent matric results. There was, however, no pressure placed on schools to perform in lower grades, thus these grades were ignored and failed to perform.

Another factor which contributes to school improvement and which can be regarded as the most influential factor is teachers (Hattie, 2009) and their teaching styles (Lingard et al., 2003). Teachers are the group of individuals that are involved in the delivery of knowledge to learners, thus their work with learners in the classroom can therefore be regarded as a detrimental factor in school improvement (Creemers et al., 2007; Taylor, 2008). Teachers are said to perform their best when they are adequately qualified and when they receive the support that they require from their school management teams (Khosa, n.d.). Khosa (n.d.) notes that in South Africa teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of the content that they teach and they fail to complete the prescribed curriculum. In addition, they do not receive the support that they require from their district offices. This serves as evidence that when schools do not receive pressure from the external provincial and local governments to perform they ultimately fail to perform (Creemers et al., 2007).

As teachers have direct contact with learners in the classroom their approach to teaching and the teaching styles that they adopt can have an effect on school improvement (Botha, 2010). When teachers use a learner centred approach to teaching rather than a curriculum centred

approach, they are able to focus on the needs of learners so that their individual needs are met, leaving no learner behind (Hattie, 2009; Schleicher, 2012).

Contextual factors also contribute to school improvement (Botha, 2010). The backgrounds from which learners come have an influence on their academic performance (Christie, 2008). Whether learners come from impoverished homes or elite homes can have a significant impact on their performance at school (Christie, 2008). Additionally, one's economic status determines the type of school that a learner attends, with elite learners attending schools that are of a good quality with adequate resources and well trained teachers (Harris, 2010). The same cannot be said, however, for impoverished learners (Christie, 2008).

This brings us to another factor that has an influence on the performance of learners and ultimately determines improvement within schools. The resources that schools have or lack can have a significant effect on the outcomes that are obtained in terms of learner performance (Christie, 2008). The lack of resources in public schools in South Africa hinders the effectiveness of schools and reduces their potential to reach their goal of school improvement (Botha, 2010). Yet Taylor (2008) notes that there are schools within South Africa that perform well despite their restrictions on resources, with a total of seven per cent of schools being rated as top performing schools, and fourteen per cent of schools being rated as moderately performing schools. These schools do not let their history and their financial setbacks hold them back. This does not mean that additional resources would not assist them in bringing about enhanced performance in schools; rather the point is that other schools, too, could potentially perform better with the resources that they already have (Taylor, 2008).

While setbacks such as poverty and other psychosocial issues have an influence on the outcomes of students, some schools in South Africa have found a way to work around these issues so that school improvement and effective education can take place (Manyano Community Schools Conference, 2010). These schools have decided not to let these setbacks affect the outcomes that they obtain, but rather to work around them by using an integrated approach to school improvement to ensure that all factors that have an impact on school improvement have been addressed (Manyano Community Schools Conference, 2010). Such schools can prove to be of great benefit and require further investigation to determine how they attain effective school improvement. From such schools, we can determine what works and what doesn't to bring about school improvement.

Harris (2010) states that schools in the most disadvantaged contexts can improve. She goes on further to state that in order for such schools to improve they need to acknowledge their context: specifically, the needs of their school and the needs of the community (Harris, 2010). Harris (2010) notes that there needs to be an integrated approach to school improvement, one that (a) takes note of the uniqueness and the context in which the school is placed, (b) encourages networking between schools, whereby schools can learn from each other and support each other, and (c) follows a strategic school improvement approach to ensure that the resources that are required for a school are obtained.

2.11 School improvement projects that have been initiated within South Africa

There are various school improvement projects that have been implemented within South Africa in an attempt to uplift the quality of education in South African schools. Within South Africa there has been a focus to bring about a form of whole school / systemic improvement (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The researcher of this study has chosen to take a closer look at two school improvement projects which have been implemented within South Africa so as to gain an idea of contexts and situations that exist within the South African context while at the same time reviewing what these projects have found in relation to school improvement. The researcher has chosen to take a closer look at the Quality Learning Project and the Khanyisa Education Support Programme.

The Quality Learning Project was one of the first school development projects to be conducted in South Africa at a high school level. The project was carried out over a period of four years (2000 - 2004) in all nine provinces in South Africa. The project adopted a systemic school improvement framework which focussed on three levels of the school system (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The three levels included the district, the school and the classroom. The project aimed to build the capacity of these three levels so that they could perform at their best to consequently bring about school improvement (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005).

The Khanyisa Education Support Programme, on the other hand, was carried out in the Limpopo province in South Africa. The programme aimed to research a system that would provide a quality education to the schools of Limpopo (Bodenstein, 2008). To do this, the programme focused on a number of factors that were believed to have an impact on the quality of education (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). The programme focused on the complexity of the school (Harris, 2010) and the practices of teaching and learning that take place within the school.

The researcher will outline the main findings of each project below individually. The researcher will also provide an indication of what these projects focused on within these schools.

2.11.1 The Quality Learning Project

The underlying idea behind the Quality Learning Project was that schools perform their best when they receive pressure from the government and when they are given the required support (Creemers et al., 2007) and training that they need to enhance their performance (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). Thus, at the district level, there was a focus on building capacity so that the district could better monitor and support their schools; at the school level, there was a focus on leadership so that school leaders could be able to better monitor and support their teachers; and, lastly, at the classroom level there was a focus on teachers so that more effective teaching could take place (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The aim of the project was to improve student learning by focusing on these three levels in order to enhance teaching within the classroom (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005).

Training programmes were thus provided to teachers with a focus on mathematics and English as these two areas were regarded as the basis of all further learning (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The training programmes that were provided to mathematics and English teachers focused on improving the content knowledge of these teachers, as most teachers within the South African context lack adequate content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.). Additionally, teachers from other learning areas were encouraged to increase the amount of reading and writing that learners engaged in (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005).

With regards to school leadership, there was a focus on developing the school's planning for development in order to allow school leaders to manage both their resources and finances efficiently (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). Additionally, there was a focus on the school leaders' ability to provide support in terms of curriculum leadership. In terms of the district offices, there was a focus on getting these offices to better monitor and support schools (Creemers et al., 2007) by ensuring that they emphasized both financial and human resource management and by providing information on educational management, together with the provision of text books and stationary to schools (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005).

The results of the study indicate that the three areas that were targeted are key to bringing about school improvement within South African schools. This is demonstrated by the fact

that there was a dramatic increase in the overall matric pass rates within the Quality Learning Project (QLP) Schools, with an 8 per cent increase in the overall matric pass rates when compared to non-QLP schools. Additionally, there was a 61.79 per cent increase in the amount of exemptions, a total of 36.03 per cent increase in the amount of English Higher Grade (HG) passes that was achieved and a total of 924.19 per cent increase in the number of mathematics HG passes achieved within QLP schools (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005).

2.11.2 The Khanyisa Education Support Programme

The factors that were reviewed for the Khanyisa Education Support Programme include (a) the medium of instruction, (b) factors that contribute to the making of a good teacher, (c) the influence of the learners' homes and context on their learning and (d) the principles and orientation of the schools (Simkins & Pereira, 2005).

In terms of the medium of instruction, there was no one language that was used throughout the schools in the province; rather there were variations (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). In some schools, English was used as the medium of instruction and if the learners did not understand then teachers elaborated in their home language. In other schools the learners' home language was the medium of instruction and in some schools there was a combinations of English and the learners' home language used (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). Taylor and Prinsloo (2005) acknowledge that the medium of instruction is a fundamental aspect that has an influence on learner performance. Within South African schools, the majority of learners are exposed to a medium of instruction that is their second language (Christie, 2008). In most cases, the medium of instruction is English and it is therefore essential that learners become fluent in English as it is a tool that they can use in their continued learning, as all other subjects entail the use of English (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). Christie (2008), on the other hand, states that when learners are taught in their home language in their early years of schooling a greater amount of learning takes place.

In terms of the factors that contribute to the making of a good teacher, aspects that were identified included planning, assessment, the interaction between teachers and learners, the conceptual knowledge, the skills of the teacher and the complexity of tasks. The promotion of reading and writing tasks by teachers and whether or not they completed the prescribed curriculum were taken into consideration (Simkins & Pereira, 2005).

In terms of the influence of the learners' homes, the focus was on the conditions that the learners are exposed to and their practices in terms of educational as well as recreational activities (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). The learners were asked what language they spoke at home, if they read by themselves at home, how often they did homework and if they watched television and listened to the radio in English. The results indicate that learners who come from homes that have a higher socio-economic status are more likely to communicate in English at home as compared to those learners who come from a home with a lower socio-economic status (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). Harris (2010) acknowledges that there is a huge gap between learners who have a higher socio-economic status and learners with lower socio-economic statuses in terms of educational attainment. Learners with a high socio-economic status are more likely to perform better than those learners with a lower socio-economic status (Harris, 2010). Simkins and Pereira (2005) indicate that with regards to the Khanyisa Education Support Programme there was a strong correlation between the diligence of the learners -- that is, whether they did their homework and read on their own -- and the use of English in the home.

In terms of the orientation and the running of the school, factors such as the school's mission, their time on task, whether there was a register for teachers and learners, the planning in terms of curriculum, the monitoring of the school's progress by School Management Teams (SMT), the school's organisation (including class size) and its policy on assessment (Simkins & Pereira, 2005) were considered. With regards to South African schools, there are a lot of teaching hours that are lost due to the high rate of absenteeism on the part of teachers and their focus on other extra curricula activities. An increase in the amount of time that teachers spend teaching would bring about significant improvements in learner performance (Christie, 2008).

The overall results indicate that there is a correlation between the quality of teachers and the quality of the school (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). Additionally, diligence is a factor that seems to have a significant correlation with learners' performance while all the other factors do not have a significant correlation with learner performance in literacy (Simkins & Pereira, 2005).

However, it appears that the quality of the teacher and whether the learners perform better or not in literacy seems to have an impact on their performance in mathematics (Simkins & Pereira, 2005). This could be due to the fact that mathematics, in most cases, is taught in English and those learners who are exposed to teachers that are of a good quality are in better

schools due to their high socio-economic status (Christie, 2008) and thus they are more likely to speak English at home and are thus more diligent (Simkins & Pereira, 2005).

2.12 The David Rattray Foundation (DRF)

The David Rattray Foundation was established in the year 2007. The DRF was formed in order to commemorate and continue the work of the late David Rattray who was interested in the improvement of schools in the Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana area of KwaZulu-Natal. The foundation has formed a partnership with the local Department of Education and selected schools in which to intervene so that learners within these schools experience a good quality of education.

The foundation focuses on the development of infrastructure, the promotion of safety and security within schools, the development of good quality teachers and principals, health and nutrition, academic and curriculum related resources and the provision of an environment that is clean, well maintained and functional.

In terms of the areas of intervention that the foundation has chosen to focus on in order to bring about school improvement, the researcher notes that the foundation has chosen an all-inclusive approach to school improvement, ensuring that all the factors that relate to bringing about efficacy in learner performance are addressed. The foundation has implemented a unique intervention towards school improvement in South Africa which certainly warrants further investigation.

2.13 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has provided a review of literature with regards to school improvement. The researcher has focused on the history of school improvement and school effectiveness along with the various critiques that were brought about with these two schools of thought. The researcher then explains how these two schools of thought have merged over time. Additionally, the researcher makes mention of various models for school improvement, as well as school improvement projects that have been developed over time with a focus on what is needed to bring about school improvement. The researcher then places focus on the South African context and the school improvement projects that have been implemented. The researcher also makes mention of what scholars have indicated with regards to the South African school system, which includes its weaknesses and what needs to be done to ensure

that school improvement does indeed take place. Lastly the researcher makes mention of the David Rattray Foundation and the school improvement projects that it has implemented.

Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

In this section the researcher provides a conceptual framework (see figure 1) which outlines the manner in which the researcher understands how school improvement can best be accomplished as stated by the literature. The researcher advocates for a systemic approach to school improvement together with a focus on change theory.

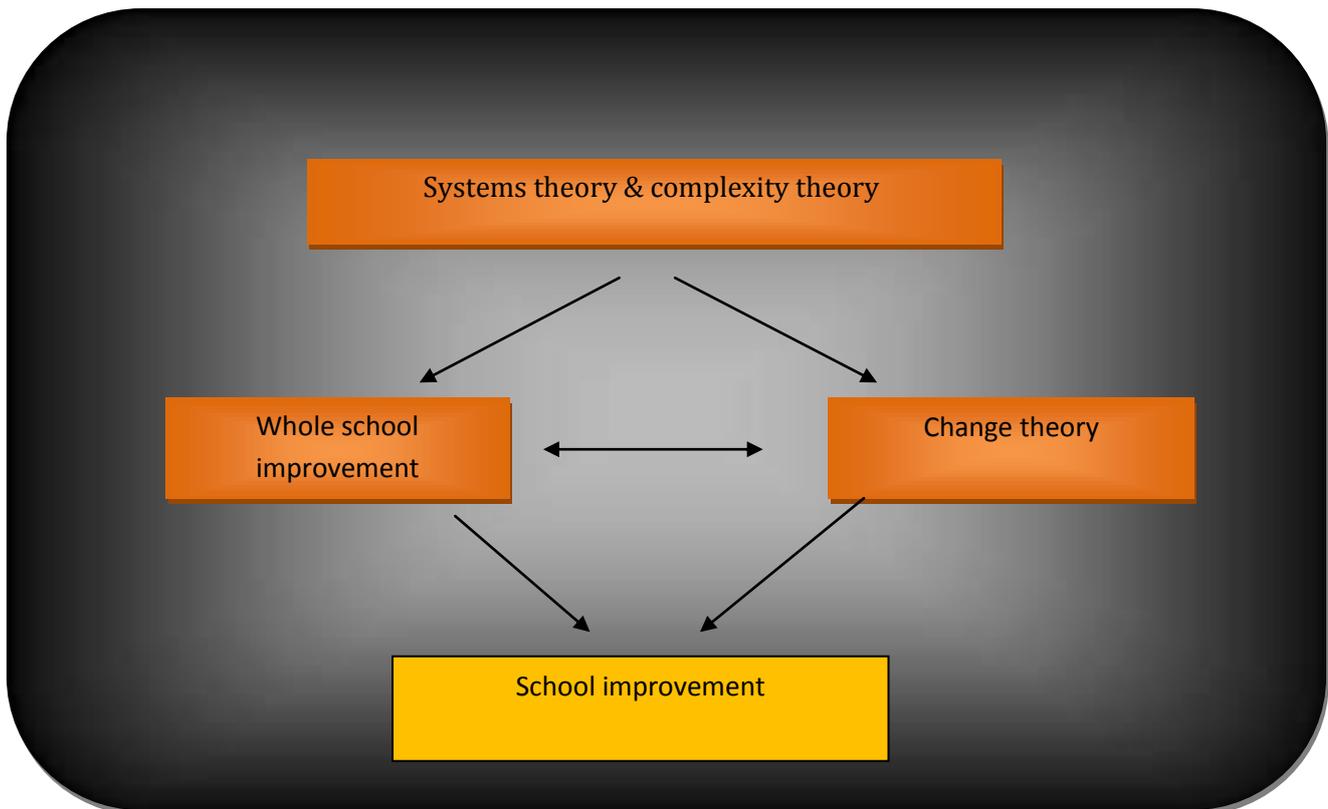


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for school improvement

3.2 Systems theory

A system is defined as a set of parts which interact with each other within a boundary (Germain, 1978). A system is made up of two or more parts in which each part has an effect on the other, thus each part has an effect on the functioning of the whole system (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). In order for one to understand the whole system one must understand both its individual parts and the relationship that exists between those parts (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). A system may be structurally dividable yet in terms of functionality it is undividable as each part within the system is dependent on the other and has an influence on the other (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998).

With systems theory in mind, the researcher of this study understands that a school is not a single entity; rather, it is a part of a larger system. Therefore when looking at how improvement can be brought about within schools it is essential to look at the school system from a systems theory point of view to determine how each aspect within the school system plays a role in the school system and what can be changed in order to bring about school improvement. Systems theory states that a change in one or more parts will result in an overall change in the whole system as each part within the system has an influence on the other (Nobles et al., 2012). A systemic approach to school improvement is one that ensures that the whole school system is improved.

3.3 Complexity theory

Complexity theory states that in reality things do not always occur in a linear manner as is the case in mathematics or science (Byrne, 1998). In the real world, there are multiple variables at play which have an influence on the generated outcome. It is for this reason that it is almost impossible to determine the cause and effect of variables within a system which are believed to bring about a change (Byrne, 1998). Given that reality is non-linear, it does not necessarily mean that a change in one part of the system will lead to a change in the overall system (Opfer & Pedder, 2011): there could be other aspects at play within the system that either impede or promote further change (Byrne, 1998).

In the real world it becomes almost impossible to determine the cause of an outcome because an outcome can be the result of multiple factors which have an influence on the outcome (Byrne, 1998). Systems in reality are considered to be nested within other systems (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), thus there are always multiple influential variables which are at play which makes it difficult to distinguish between cause and effect (Byrne, 1998).

It is for this reason that although the researcher acknowledges the relevance of systems theory to the system of the school, it does not necessarily mean that a change in one part of the system will result in a visible change in the entire system. There may be a small change, and over time this change could disintegrate or alternatively expand and cause a greater change within the system (Byrne, 1998).

The same can be said with regards to whole school improvement and Fullan's change theory (2001; 2006): the adoption of these frameworks could possibly result in a small change within the system, but whether or not that change is sustained over time is difficult to

determine due to the complexity of the school system (Harris, 2010) and the real world (Byrne, 1998).

3.4 Whole school improvement

Fullan (2001) advocates for a systemic approach to whole school improvement. Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher (2005) assert that the school, community, district and the state need to be changed so as to bring about an enhanced improvement in schools. Fullan (2001) acknowledges that there are many whole school reform models which have been developed and which could prove to be beneficial to the school system in order to bring about enhanced learner performance.

With many of the whole school reform interventions that have been implemented there is evidence that schools which have had support from their districts have benefited much more from the implementation of reforms while those schools which have had a lack of support have not reaped the benefits of the implementation of reform strategies (Fullan, 2001). Whether a school improvement intervention is successful and sustained or not depends on the amount of support that a school receives from its district (Fullan, 2001). It is for this reason that Fullan (2001) advocates for the focus on capacity building within the whole school system so that the ability of the school system to engage in and maintain improvement can be strengthened.

Fullan (2001) outlines five key aspects that need to be addressed to enhance a schools capacity. They include: (a) teachers knowledge, skills, and dispositions, (b) the creation of a professional community, (c) programme coherence, (d) technical resources and (e) principal leadership.

The first aspect for enhancing a schools' capacity involves teacher development: equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge that they require to carry out their teaching within the classroom. Research indicates that for professional development to take place, teachers need time to absorb and become familiar with new knowledge that they are presented with, thus there needs to be a move away from the one day workshops that are common to a more sustained and intensive development programme to ensure that teacher change does indeed take place (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

The second aspect includes the development of all professionals within the school system so that they have a good working relationship with each other, which would optimally result in

the establishment of a professional community that can serve as a platform for all other work that is to take place within the workplace/school system. A professional learning community entails teachers coming together with an aim to focus on student learning and find ways to enhance both their learning and outcomes through working together (Talbert, 2010). With regard to the need to establish a professional community within schools, Opfer and Pedder (2011) note that professional development has proven to be more effective when teachers are from the same school and/or department. When this is the case it allows teachers to identify with each other and therefore participate collectively, which ultimately leads to a change in teachers (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

The third aspect indicates that there needs to be programme coherence to ensure that schools' goals for learning are made clear and are sustained over time. There needs to be coherence in the entire system so that every individual within the school system follows through with his/her role to ensure that learning and teaching within schools does indeed take place (Fullan, 2001).

The fourth aspect includes both the material and human resources that a school needs to assist and enhance its teaching practices. Lastly, the fifth aspect pertains to the principal of a school, who should be a good leader and ensure that the other four aspects of building a school's capacity are addressed (Fullan, 2001), thus the role of a principal is important (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005).

Fullan (2001) states that the adoption of whole school reform models may be beneficial in the short run yet focus needs to be placed upon on the culture of the school system in order for change to be sustained. Fullan (2006), together with Taylor (2008), asserts that the school system as a whole has a larger culture from which it works. Thus for any change to take place within the school system the culture in which individuals work needs to be changed (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005). The culture of the professional community in both schools and the district need to be changed in order to achieve maximum benefit from any reform strategy that is implemented within schools (Fullan, 2001).

3.5 Change theory

Fullan (2006) states that the along with the interventions that are implemented within the school system there also needs to be an adoption of change theory. With the implementation of any intervention the focus is primarily on the intervention itself and not on change (Fullan,

2006). In order for school improvement to occur there needs to be a change in the school system (Fullan, 2006; Taylor, 2008). The school is regarded as a system and change can only be achieved when there is a change within that system. Every school has a distinct culture or system (Fullan, 2006). Thus, in order for school improvement and change to be brought about, the culture and system of the school and the individuals that are involved in the school need to be changed (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) states that before any change can take place there needs to be a motivation and drive for change on the part of the individuals that are part of the system. Taylor (2008) argues that the key to bringing about school improvement involves a cultural change within the whole system which impacts all levels of the system.

Fullan (2006) proposes seven premises that need to be adhered to for change to occur within a system. They are (a) a focus on motivation, (b) capacity building, with a focus on results, (c) the context of learning, (d) the changing context, (e) a bias for reflective action, (f) tri-level engagement, and (g) persistence and flexibility (Fullan, 2006).

The system needs motivation in order to change and individuals in schools need to be collectively motivated in order to obtain results (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) notes that without motivation no change can take place. According to Fullan (2006), motivation is one of the key elements that is needed for change to occur; in terms of the other 6 principles of change theory, motivation also plays a role to ensure that they are met.

In line with the motivation to change, capacity building entails the need for school systems to be able to support each other and be motivated and pressured to both change and improve. Taylor (2008) acknowledges that the whole school system at all levels needs to take responsibility to bring about school improvement; this will involve staff improving themselves through professional development and an increase in accountability within the system.

Botha (2010) acknowledges that the management of a school can be regarded as an important factor which determines whether a school is effective or not. Van Der Linde (2006) states that principals need to manage their schools effectively so that they can bring about change and transformation. The principal of a school should aim to work collaboratively with his or her staff members so that they can bring about an improvement in learner performance. The principal sets the tone and determines the direction that the school takes; the principal also builds relationships and develops the school organisation as a whole (Schleicher, 2012). Additionally, Creemers et al. (2007) state that in order for school improvement to take place,

schools need some form of external pressure to initiate the process of change. This pressure on the system as a whole to perform can come from the local district office or the provincial Department of Education.

The schools, district, and state should therefore have the same vision for education and should be motivated to achieve such a change in order to enhance learner performance (Taylor, 2008). With an intervention at each of these levels, there needs to be a focus on change, more specifically a focus on a motivation to change (Fullan, 2006). Where there is a motivation to change, any other intervention to uplift the capability of these levels will be enhanced as the individuals within the system will strive for optimal performance.

The context of learning is a crucial aspect to change. When individuals learn from the context in which they work, they are able to be critical of the current system and change it accordingly; this is how the process of change comes about (Fullan, 2006). Mourshed et al. (2010) explain that how each school chooses to implement school improvement interventions may vary. However, the manner in which schools choose to implement interventions should be influenced by their contexts (Mourshed et al., 2010). Schools should adapt school improvement interventions to suit their contexts. When they do, they will be able to work around the challenges that they face due to their contexts and find ways to use their contexts to their advantage, it is in this way that they will be able to achieve sustained school improvement (Mourshed et al., 2010).

Additionally, the larger context, which includes other schools and the school district, needs to change and be motivated to change (Fullan, 2006). When this is accomplished then every school will be able to identify with the larger context and will therefore be motivated to obtain results and be successful (Fullan, 2006). At the same time, Fullan (2001) states that learning in context should entail schools sharing their “district-wide identity” which will ensure that all schools share the same goals and vision and that they are thus capacitated accordingly through learning from others.

Fullan (2006) states that reflection is a key aspect to change. Individuals should not only focus on change and on what they are doing, they should also reflect and think about what they are doing and how this is helping them to achieve their goal. Additionally, they should think about what else they can do to improve themselves and their schools. In terms of tri-level engagement, Fullan (2006) states that there needs to be a connection formed between the schools, the communities, the district and the state. When this connection is achieved the

whole system can be changed, as the whole system will be working together to accomplish the goal of change.

Lastly, in order for change to be brought about, systems and schools need to persist with change and not let any setbacks slow them down (Fullan, 2006). They need to be flexible in order to be able to change as needed so that the end result can ultimately be achieved. With many of the school improvement interventions that have been implemented in schools there has been a tendency to lose focus over time and drop the interventions (Fullan, 2001). Fullan (2001) states that this is primarily due to a lack of support from the district. With these seven principles in place change can occur, provided that individuals within the system persist and remain motivated to obtain a change in results.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has outlined a conceptual framework which can be used to ensure that optimal school improvement can take place. The researcher begins with systems theory and in doing so acknowledges that schools are embedded within a larger school system. Given that schools are systems and that there are various parts within the school system, the researcher acknowledges that every part within the school system has a role to play with regards to bringing about school improvement. At the same time, the researcher acknowledges complexity theory and that the school system is complex. Multiple aspects are at play within the school system therefore a change in one part of the school system cannot guarantee that a notable change will occur in the entire system to bring about school improvement. In reality problems are expected to occur due to the complexity of the real world. With both systems theory and complexity theory in mind the researcher brings in Fullan's model for whole school improvement which have various aspects that needs to be addressed to ensure that individuals within the school system are both capacitated and have the resources that they may require to perform their role within the school system. Lastly the researcher acknowledges Fullan's change theory which should be adhered to in order to bring about a change within the culture of schools and the school system at large. When all these aspects are addressed and taken into consideration, ultimately school improvement can be achieved.

Chapter Four: Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research paradigm from which the researcher has chosen to work, together with the research style and approach that this study has adopted. The chapter then goes on to explain the data collection methods that were used and a justification for those methods are provided. Following the data collection methods, the chapter explains how the data collected in this study was analysed. Lastly, the chapter outlines some of the limitations that this study has encountered and the ethical requirements that were taken into consideration.

4.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm can be thought of as a guideline which researchers may refer to in order to determine the direction to take for their research. A paradigm provides the researcher with a set of assumptions that he may utilize to guide his thinking and determine the approach that he adopts to conduct his research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). For this research study the researcher has chosen to work from an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive research paradigm aims to understand human experience, which is believed to be socially constructed (Mertens, 2010). The researcher chose this paradigm given that one of the main aims of the researcher was to understand the nature and the function of the DRF.

4.3 Research style

Given that the researcher chose to work from an interpretive research paradigm, a qualitative approach seemed to be the most fitting style. The primary goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand, rather than explain, human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2005), which is what the researcher of this study aimed to do. This research study adopted a qualitative research style so that the researcher could gain a rich understanding of the phenomena under study in an attempt to provide an in-depth description (Babbie & Mouton, 2005) of the school improvement interventions that were carried out in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area by the DRF.

Additionally, this research study aimed to gain an understanding of the experiences of the eight schools studied in this research and their journey towards school improvement in an

attempt to understand the key factors that have had an impact on school improvement in terms of the interventions that the DRF has initiated (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The researcher thus used a qualitative research style so that a rich account of the phenomena being studied could be gained.

4.4 Research approach

A case study was the main methodological approach used for this research study. A case study can be defined as a systemic and in-depth investigation of a particular phenomenon within its context with an aim of generating knowledge regarding the phenomenon under study (Rule & John, 2011). A case study was formulated to generate an understanding of, and provide insight into, the school improvement interventions that the DRF has initiated, thus allowing the researcher to provide a thick and rich description of the manner in which the DRF operates and the interventions that it has carried out. Additionally, a case study allowed the researcher to explore the schools which partner with the DRF, together with their complexity and the manner in which the interventions assisted them.

This research study uses a combination of both a descriptive and an explanatory case study. It attempts to provide a complete description of the schools which partner with the DRF and explain what interventions have been implemented in each school, including how and why they have contributed towards the improvement of these schools (Rule & John, 2011).

4.5 The context of this study

The area in which this research study took place is Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This deep rural area, which falls under the Umzinyathi District, has a high incidence of poverty, with a total of 83 per cent of the individuals who live in the area being unemployed (DRF, 2012). There is also a high incidence of HIV/AIDS among the residents of this area (DRF, 2012).

There are many orphaned children in the area which results in these children either being cared for by their grandmothers or living on their own. Additionally, since there are limited employment opportunities in the area, some parents of learners have gone to the cities in search of jobs, and in the process left their children to be cared for by their grandparents.

Principal: “...*the thing is, the parents are not with their children. Most of the parents are in Johannesburg, they are working there in the big firms. And the learners at home, they are all alone. At times they stay with their Gogos - uyabona? - the[ir] grandmothers and grandmothers who cannot come to school. And the bigger problem with that, the area does not have firms where the parents can go work.*”(Principal three)

The schools in the area face varying challenges. None of the schools in the area have access to running water and none have flushing toilets. Some schools have electricity whereas others do not. Many of the schools in the area have a shortage of teachers which does not make teaching and learning in these schools an easy task. Some schools have multi-grades due to a lack of teachers and a shortage of classrooms which results in a high number of learners in one classroom.

Aside from the issues mentioned above, the schools in the area have also indicated that they experience issues in terms of vandalism of their school premises. Within the community there are individuals who are destructive towards the schools property.

Principal: “...*the community we are working with, you can go during the weekend,[and when you come back] you find that the window pane is broken. Sometimes they open the windows, take the charts, throw [them],[I] found them outside the school.*” (Principal eight)

With any school improvement intervention, the context of the school and the context of the area will have an influence of the success of the intervention. There are thus various contextual aspects at play which need to be taken into consideration within this particular area.

4.6 The research sample

The researcher chose to use a purposive sampling method. A purposive method of sampling is one in which the researcher purposively chooses the participants that are to be included in the research study to ensure that all participants who are sampled have experienced the phenomenon under study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). A purposive method of sampling thus

allowed the researcher to ensure that the sample consisted of those schools that have partnerships with the DRF and at which the DRF has implemented interventions.

The sample was drawn from the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area, as this is the area in which the DRF operates and in which its partner schools are located. A total of eight schools were selected, on the basis of convenience, from the seventeen partner schools in the area. These schools included both primary and secondary schools. The principals of the eight schools were interviewed. Additionally, the CEO of the DRF, together with a facilitator that runs workshops for the partner schools, was included in the sample to be interviewed.

4.7 Data collection

Once ethical clearance was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1), the researcher forwarded a letter to the local Department of Education (see Appendix 2) seeking permission to conduct research at the schools in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area. The researcher also forwarded an application to conduct research in these schools to the Department of Education. Additionally, a letter seeking permission to conduct research in the partner schools was forwarded to the principals of the schools (see Appendix 3) and to the CEO of the DRF (see Appendix 4). Once permission was granted by the Department of Education (see Appendix 5), the CEO of the DRF (see Appendix 6) and the relevant school principals, the researcher went to the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area for a period of three weeks to collect data.

Data for this research study was collected using various methods which included a document analysis, non-participant observation, a checklist, semi-structured interviews, a preference analysis, and Participatory Action Research (PAR). There were three phases to the data collection stage of the research study that the researcher followed.

Phase one of the research study entailed the researcher carrying out a document analysis. A document analysis was conducted to gain a greater understanding of the DRF, its history and goals. According to Rule and John (2011) the documents of a case can be used to gain a sense of the case and can be useful in order to put the case into context. The researcher therefore examined the various reports, newsletters and other documents that were made available.

Phase two of the research study entailed the researcher going to the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area for a period of two weeks. Within this phase of the research study a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the interviewees' stories regarding the phenomena under study. The use of a semi-structured interview also allowed the interviewer to probe the participants to ensure that they conveyed a rich account of the phenomena under study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with the CEO of the DRF (see Appendix 7) in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the DRF as an organisation together with its goals, aims and reasons for choosing the interventions that have been implemented at its seventeen partner schools. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the principals (see Appendix 8) of the eight partner schools that were chosen to be included in the sample of this study. In the interview with the principals the researcher aimed to gain an understanding of each school's mission, its relationship with the DRF and the principal's understanding of school improvement as well as of the school improvement interventions that have been implemented in each school by the DRF and how these have assisted them.

During the interviews with the principals the researcher also conducted a preference analysis (see Appendix 9) with the principals of each of the eight selected schools. The preference analysis consisted of a list of all the interventions that the DRF had conducted with all the schools in the area. The principals were then asked to rank each intervention in terms of their preference and how they viewed each of the interventions in terms of importance to bringing about school improvement in their schools. However, most of the principals did not understand how to complete the preference analysis as they understood the preference analysis to be a checklist to determine what interventions they would like to have implemented within their schools. As a result, they rated all the items as important. The researcher, therefore, could not make use of the results from the preference analysis.

During the visits to the eight partner schools, the researcher also engaged in non-participatory observation, whereby the researcher made observations of the partner schools with the use of a checklist (see Appendix 10) and in the process gained an understanding of what interventions the DRF has implemented in each school (Rule & John, 2011). At the same

time, the researcher was able to gain a brief limited understanding of the functioning and the running of the selected schools.

Lastly, the researcher engaged in Participatory Action Research (PAR) in order to gain a greater understanding of the context in which the schools were based (Rule & John, 2011). This was done by going on a transect walk with members of the community. These walks allowed the researcher to gain a rich understanding of the living conditions and way of life of the individuals in these communities (Rule & John, 2011). This was beneficial to the researcher as it provided some insight into the contextual factors that influence school improvement.

In the third phase of this research study the researcher returned to the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area for a period of one week. In this phase of the research, the researcher chose two schools from the original sample of eight schools in order to focus on these schools in more depth. The researcher's aim was to gain an account of how the interventions were used and their benefits to the selected schools.

The researcher chose a school that was "good" and a school that was "bad" based on the findings and impressions that the researcher gained of the schools during the second phase of the study. A "good" school, in the eyes of the researcher, was a school that was running well based on the impression that the researcher got from the interview with the principal and from the non-participant observation conducted during phase two of the research. A "bad" school, in the eyes of the researcher, was a school that seemed to be running well yet the manner in which the principal answered the questions during the interview led the researcher to believe that there was some form of malingering that occurred, and it did not seem as though the principal was confident with running of the school as there were some aspects that the principal was not aware of.

Within this phase, whilst the researcher was at the chosen schools, observations were also carried out. The researcher examined the running of the schools, sat in on lessons with different teachers to observe classroom dynamics and spoke to teachers and learners (see Appendix 11), with an aim of gaining a greater understanding of the DRF and the interventions that it has implemented, as well as of the functioning of the schools.

4.8 Data analysis

The first step of the data analysis stage entailed the researcher transcribing the interviews and the interview notes. The transcribed data was then coded to identify key themes and determine “what the data is saying” (Rule & John, 2011, pp. 77). The researcher then explored how the partner schools understood school improvement and what their views were with regards to the DRF interventions as a means to bring about to school improvement. The researcher examined how the DRF interventions were initiated in each school and the reasons for the choice of school improvement interventions that the DRF implemented. In addition, the ethos of each school was explored.

During the document analysis the researcher attempted to understand the history of the DRF and the way in which its interventions were carried out. The researcher also attempted to use the documents to triangulate with what had been recorded in the interviews (Rule & John, 2011). With the non-participant observation, the researcher gained a sense of the running and management of the school. Thus when the researcher analysed the data he gained a deeper understanding of the ethos of the schools together with a descriptive understanding of how the interventions have contributed towards school improvement by scrutinizing and making sense of the field notes about what was observed (Rule & John, 2011). The checklist was used to record what interventions had been implemented at each school by the DRF.

Lastly, the transect walks that the researcher engaged in with members of the community afforded the researcher an opportunity to gain a sense of the contexts in which the partner schools are placed. The field notes were transcribed and analysed with an aim of gaining an understanding of the larger context of both the schools and community, as members of the community saw it.

To analyse this study the researcher chose to adopt a combination of both a deductive and an inductive approach. With the deductive approach, the researcher started with a conceptual framework and then moved towards the concrete empirical evidence to test the conceptual framework and determine whether it applied to the data (Ali & Birley, 1999). The inductive approach, on the other hand, allowed research findings to emerge from the data with the identification of dominant themes (Thomas, 2003).

For the deductive approach, the researcher intended to make use of a conceptual framework that was formulated at the beginning of study which consisted of the two approaches to change (bureaucratic and charismatic) discussed by Weber (Adair-Toteff, 2005), as well as Fullan's (2006) theory of change, in order to analyse the data. However, after entering the field and engaging with the data the researcher found that this original conceptual framework that had been outlined prior to the data collection did not match the case effectively. As a result, after the data had been collected the researcher reworked the conceptual framework. Weber's two approaches to change were removed from the framework while Fullan's change theory was retained. The researcher added systems theory, complexity theory and whole school improvement to the conceptual framework which was then used for analysis of the data.

Therefore, with the deductive approach the researcher worked through the data to determine if these theories applied to the case that was being investigated. However, along with the use of this conceptual framework, the researcher also chose to use an inductive approach in this research study to allow unforeseen findings to emerge from the data.

With the inductive approach, the researcher employed grounded theory to work through the data to find themes. Grounded theory was used to explore what was out there and to allow a theory to emerge from the findings of the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). When analysing the data, the researcher made use of thematic analysis to identify key themes in the data, which involved working through the data to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clark, 2006).

4.9 Validity and reliability

The validity of a research study can be defined as the extent to which an accurate account of the phenomenon under study is represented, whereas reliability, on the other hand, refers to the degree of consistency of the research findings wherein similar findings would be documented should the study be replicated at a later stage in time (Silverman, 2000). A qualitative study uses a different method to ensure validity and reliability than does a quantitative study.

In a qualitative study, the researcher aims to provide an understanding of how individuals within the context of the study both understand and make meaning of the phenomenon that is being studied. A qualitative study does not aim to generalise the findings of the research as is the case with a quantitative study (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Therefore, in a qualitative study to enhance the validity and reliability of the research the researcher focuses on the trustworthiness of the research study (Rule & John, 2011). To do this the researcher focused on the transferability, credibility and dependability of the research study.

Babbie & Mouton (2005) state that “a qualitative study cannot be called transferable unless it is credible, and it cannot be deemed credible unless it is dependable” (pp.277). To attain credibility within this study the researcher used triangulation by making use of different data collection methods and sources to ensure that the findings of the study were accurate (Rule & John, 2011). Additionally, the researcher engaged in peer debriefing whereby the researcher reviewed ideas regarding the research study with a colleague who is also familiar with the research study to ensure that the analysis and interpretation of the research findings had been critically thought through (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

Secondly, to ensure that the study was dependable the researcher had the findings of the study reviewed by his supervisor who determined the acceptability of the research findings by conducting an inquiry audit (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Thirdly, to ensure that the study was dependable, the researcher also engaged in email conversations with the CEO of the DRF after the data collection stage. In these conversations the CEO was asked further questions with regards to the running of the foundation to ensure that the researcher did not make incorrect inferences during the analysis stage of this study.

Lastly, to ensure the transferability of the research findings the researcher provided a thick description of the sample and the context of the study together with the methodology so that the transferability of the research study could be judged by the reader (Rule & John, 2011). With qualitative research the aim of the study is not to generalize the findings of the study to other contexts, thus the transferability of the research study rests on individuals who wish to do so (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

4.10 Limitations

There were two limitations that the researcher anticipated prior to the data collection stage of this research study. The first anticipated problem was the possibility that an instance of social desirability could arise during the interviews with principals (Tredoux, 1999). The rationale behind this was that the principals would like to be viewed in a positive manner and might therefore answer questions regarding their involvement with the DRF and their approach to school improvement in a manner that they believed would be socially desirable. To deal with this problem, the researcher asked the participants to be as honest as possible and assured them that the interview was completely confidential.

Another anticipated problem was that the observer effect could occur whilst conducting site visits. In this case the schools were aware that a researcher was coming in to conduct research and thus the researcher anticipated that the schools would be on their best behaviour. To deal with this problem, the researcher tried to blend in at the school and adopted a non-threatening approach in order to allow the principals and the personnel at these schools to feel as comfortable as possible around the researcher. The researcher further emphasized that the aim of the study was to gain an insight into the DRF and its activities.

In line with the observer effect, there was an additional limitation which arose which was not anticipated prior to the data collection process. During the researcher's time at the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, the researcher went to the schools using the foundation's vehicle. Thus when the vehicle arrived at a school staff were under the impression that the researcher was an employee of the foundation who was coming to the school for a visit. Despite the researcher assuring the principals from these schools that he was not employed by the foundation and was a student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the principals and the school as a whole continued to regard the researcher as an individual who had a great amount of authority. As the use of the DRF's vehicle may have compromised the interactions between staff and the researcher to some extent, the behaviour of staff at the schools whilst in the presence of the researcher should be regarded as unreliable.

4.11 Ethical considerations

To address the ethical issues of this research the seven universal ethical considerations for conducting research, as outlined by Emanuel, Wendler, & Grady (2000), were taken into

consideration. These seven principles include: social value, scientific validity, fair subject selection, favourable risk benefit ratio, independent review, informed consent and respect for enrolled subjects (Emanuel et al., 2000).

In terms of social value, the research contributes to the larger body of knowledge in the field of school improvement and credits the DRF for the school improvement interventions that the foundation has carried out. The results of this research study will therefore be used to increase knowledge in the field of school improvement and could provide a useful knowledge base for future school improvement intervention programmes.

With regards to scientific validity, the methods that were adopted for this study can be expected to have led to valid results as the researcher remained non-biased throughout the process of data collection and the semi structured interviews allowed the researcher to elaborate when participants felt that they did not understand the question at hand. Additionally, the researcher engaged in email conversations with the CEO of the DRF after data collection to ensure that the data was dependable (Rule & John, 2011).

In terms of fair subject selection, the use of purposive sampling ensured that the participants who were involved in the research study were individuals that had some experience of the phenomenon under study and to whom the research questions applied. In the case of this research study, subjects were staff of the DRF together with principals and teachers from its partner schools (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

With regards to favourable risk benefit ratio, there were no factors that would place participants at risk whilst participating in the study and the research study did not make use of vulnerable participants (Emanuel et al., 2000). There were no incentives offered to participants; however, the results of the research could be taken into consideration when generating further school improvement interventions and in this way the research could be of benefit to the participants.

With regards to consent and respect for participants, a letter was sent to the various school principals to seek their permission to conduct research in their schools prior to the commencement of the research study. Additionally, an informed consent form (see Appendix 12) was handed out to each of the eight principals to obtain their permission to be

interviewed. The consent form provided the participants with information regarding the study and informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they so desired. Additionally, the informed consent form informed participants that their participation in the study would remain completely anonymous and that confidentiality was and remains to be guaranteed (Emanuel et al., 2000).

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter provided a description of the research design and methodology that was used for this study. In this chapter the researcher has outlined the context in which this research study took place and explained how the sample for the study was chosen. The data collection methods were outlined with a description of the three stages that were involved in the data gathering process for this research study. Additionally, the researcher provided an account of how the data of this study was analysed. The researcher also justified how the reliability and validity of the study was ensured. Lastly, the limitations and ethical considerations of the study were outlined.

Chapter Five: Findings and analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the main findings of this research study will be presented. The researcher will begin by providing a descriptive introduction of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) and its development over the years. The researcher will then give an account of the three major themes that have emerged from the data.

The three major themes are:

- *School improvement*
- *Partnerships*
- *Wider system Issues*

5.2 Introducing the David Rattray Foundation (DRF)

In this section the researcher will describe how the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) came into existence. The researcher will provide a picture of what the DRF is all about and what its main aims as a foundation are. Additionally, the researcher will explain how the interventions that were chosen to be implemented were decided on together with how the dynamics of the foundation have changed over time.

5.2.1 Prior to the establishment of the foundation

As the name of the foundation indicates, the David Rattray Foundation is named after the late David Rattray. David Rattray once resided in Rorke's Drift, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. David and his wife, Nicky Rattray, relocated to Rorke's Drift in the late 1980s with the intention of developing a lodge in the area. As time passed their business flourished, and they found increasing opportunities to interact with the local community. Through their interaction with the community they discovered that being in a remote rural area it had many needs.

The Rattrays decided to intervene and attempt to provide some assistance to the community, primarily through the schools in the area. The basis of their decision to provide assistance to schools was that David believed that education was the key to improving the lives of the individuals within the community. With a better education, he believed that more doors would open up for them, enabling them to find ways to improve different aspects of their lives. As one principal put it,

“David Rattray wanted to bring light to the people of Isandlwana and to the learners, and to develop schools, the deep rural schools into making them better.... David is helping the schools because there are things that the department is not doing for the schools. So he had the passion, he had the love for all the schools around this area.”

(Principal three)

Prior to David’s death, he initiated a number of projects in the area. He provided milk to schools and established kitchens to provide food to the learners at school. He built classrooms, school halls, libraries and, in some cases, administrative blocks for the schools. In the year 2007, David was murdered in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area. After his death, his family and friends decided to continue the work that he had started in the area. They decided that the best way to do this was to set up a foundation to carry out the work.

5.2.2 The establishment of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF)

In 2007 the David Rattray Foundation was legally established as a non-profit organisation. The foundation was registered as a Not For Profit Section 21 Company which was intended to be for public benefit.

The main aim of the foundation is to provide support to the schools in the area in a manner that enables them to provide the best possible education to their learners. As the CEO of the foundation stated,

“The main aim of the foundation is to support the educational establishments in the area by filling in the gaps that exist in their system”. (CEO)

5.2.3 The early years of the foundation

In the early years of the foundation, the intention of the DRF was to continue with the school improvement projects that David had committed to prior to his death. As part of the process of learning about the work David had been involved in the foundation went around to the various schools within the area in an attempt to determine their needs.

Over time, through its interactions with the schools and school principals in the area, the DRF came to realise that the schools within the area had great needs. However, the requests that these schools made to the foundation did not always seem justifiable to the CEO of the DRF as interventions that would result in a greater improvement of the schools, which was the ultimate goal of the foundation.

5.2.4 A need for professional assistance

After some time the foundation realised that it required professional assistance in order to gain insight into the gaps that existed within the schools and the actual needs of the schools. The DRF contacted the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg for assistance.

The Delta Environmental Centre came to the Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana area in 2008 to conduct a whole school evaluation of six selected schools. The Delta Environmental Centre consulted the Department of Education with regards to their intentions of conducting a whole school evaluation with six schools in the area, of which the Department of Education selected the six schools that were to be included in the evaluation and worked together with the Delta Environmental Centre and the DRF to carry out the evaluation.

During their time at Rorke's Drift, the Delta Environmental Centre conducted two workshops with the six schools. The aim of the first workshop was to engage with the schools to determine the various needs that they had, whilst the second workshop was centred around developing an action plan for going forward with the journey towards improving the schools.

Shortly after the evaluation by the Delta Environmental Centre was completed, the foundation decided to form a partnership with the schools, the community and the Department of Education. The foundation believed that this was essential in order to enable all stakeholders to work together to ensure that the schools in the area were equipped to provide an education to learners that was of a high quality.

The findings of the evaluation by the Delta Environmental Centre revealed that four main areas needed to be addressed. The four areas that were identified included infrastructure, school management and community engagement, the development of teachers and internal school development (which included aspects such as health promotion and safety and security). The DRF decided to focus its attention on these areas for all future interventions.

5.2.5 The interventions implemented by the DRF

The interventions that have been carried out by the DRF over the years have been largely influenced by the findings of the Delta Environmental Centre report.

5.2.5.1 Infrastructure

With regards to the development of infrastructure within the schools, the foundation has built classroom blocks, school halls, computer centres and, in some cases, toilets at the schools. The foundation decided to hire local people for the construction work so that any money that was spent on the development of infrastructure would go back into the community. The foundation also formed a partnership with AVENG, which inspected the construction work and donated much of the materials required for the buildings that were built.

Aside from building infrastructure, the DRF also provided the schools with furniture such as classroom chairs and desks, library books, jungle gym play structures and educational toys. A summary of the interventions that were carried out by the DRF to develop the infrastructure of the schools can be found in the table 1 below.

Table 1: DRF interventions to develop infrastructure of partner schools

Construction	Maintenance work	Supply of facilities
Computer centre	Mains electricity	Classroom furniture (desks, chairs, boards, etc.)
Classroom blocks	Refurbishment of electrical system	Computers
Full service centre	Repainting of school buildings	Educational toys
New toilets	Repairs to school buildings	Library books
Shade/shelter	Roof repairs	Library equipment/furniture
Fencing of school grounds		Miscellaneous stationery
Improvement to ground water drainage		Refuse bins
Installation of water pump and water distribution piping		School text books
Jungle gym play structures		Scientific calculators
Science labs		Supply of electrical generators
Window replacement		Teaching aids
		Water storage tanks

5.2.5.2 School management and community engagement

The findings of the Delta Environmental Centre report revealed that one of the areas in which the schools needed assistance was management. To address this issue, the DRF employed a consultant to come in and run a series of workshops with the schools. The consultant focused on all the areas identified by the Department of Education in which school management teams and the principals needed to be equipped. The consultant used the departmental material and broke it down so that the principals and school management teams could understand what was expected of them and how to carry out their duties.

Additionally, the consultant encouraged the schools to develop school development plans. The consultant provided a detailed explanation and demonstration to the schools of how to develop school development plans for their schools. By the end of this process each school had developed a file in which its vision, mission and goals, together with the rest of its development plan, was outlined. The consultant also followed up with schools after every workshop to determine whether they were on track and doing what they were required to do.

With regards to community engagement, there was a need to get the community and parents within the area to be more involved with the schools. To do this, the DRF launched the Siyanakakela Project. As part of the project the NGO FUEL (Feed Uplift Educate Love) came in and conducted surveys with the schools in order to determine why some of the schools had failed to qualify for the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). By the end of the programme all of the schools had qualified for the NSNP. FUEL also trained community members on how best to manage the programme so that the children could gain maximum benefit from it.

Additionally, the workshops conducted by the consultant to address the curriculum needs of the teachers also touched on parental and community engagement. In this part of the workshops the schools were encouraged to get the parents and community involved in the schools so that education would receive a greater emphasis in the community.

5.2.5.3 Teacher Development

One of the first areas that the DRF felt it needed to address was teacher development. Almost all of the teachers had indicated that they were unfamiliar with the NCS curriculum, which was the curriculum that was in place at the time. To address this issue, the DRF decided to hire a consultant to come in and conduct workshops with these teachers. The DRF presented

its plan to the Department of Education which gave them the go ahead for the intervention. A series of workshops was conducted with the teachers over a period of fourteen months.

Additionally, the DRF formed a partnership with Kingsmead College in Johannesburg. A group of teachers from Kingsmead College came down to the Rorke's Drift/ Isandlwana area and conducted workshops with the teachers to share teaching styles and strategies used at Kingsmead College which could be beneficial to the teachers in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

5.2.5.4 Internal school development

With regards to internal school development, the schools in the area were encouraged by the DRF to ensure that their schools were kept well maintained and functional. The DRF encouraged schools to keep their premises clean, to ensure that teaching and learning took place, to ensure that they were disciplined and so forth. The schools were also encouraged to be active in both the development and improvement of their school; this was further enforced through the formalization of the partnership between the DRF and the schools whereby a set of criteria was outlined to which they agreed to adhere.

5.2.6 Formalizing the partnership between the schools and the DRF

Over the years, the DRF attempted to formalize the partnerships it had with the schools in the area. To do this, a document was drawn up which outlined what the DRF expected from each of the schools with which it worked. The foundation expected the schools to follow the criteria outlined in the memorandum of understanding as their part of the partnership. When a school adhered to the criteria of the partnership it indicated to the foundation that the school was playing its part and making an effort towards both the partnership and towards school improvement.

The motivation for these partnerships, as indicated by the CEO of the DRF, is to ensure that a school plays a part in the partnership and has some form of responsibility that is allocated to them. If a school adheres to the agreement of the partnership it conveys to the foundation that it is determined and motivated to bring about change within their school.

When a school makes no effort to adhere to the criteria outlined in the partnership, however, it sends a message to the foundation that it is not interested in moving forward to bring about change. When this happens and a pattern of a lack of interest is displayed on the part of the

school over time, the foundation slowly withdraws its involvement from the school in question. The result of the foundation gradually withdrawing from a school is that the school will not receive any major interventions in the future. However, such schools are still permitted to attend the workshops that the foundation carries out for its partner schools.

5.2.7 The implementation of interventions

There are three possible ways in which the decision to implement a particular intervention for a school is made.

The first entails the process of the DRF sending around a survey to all schools which they are required to complete and return to the foundation. The survey consists of various questions pertaining to what the schools feel they need. Once the completed survey is returned to the foundation, the foundation tabulates the findings from all the schools and keeps a record of this for future reference when deciding on what interventions to carry out.

The second way that can result in an intervention being carried out in a school is by a school making a request to the foundation. When doing this, the school principals are required to make a written or verbal request to the CEO of the foundation. The principals are required to justify their reasons for wanting the intervention that they have requested and they are also required to explain to the CEO how the requested intervention would bring about an improvement in their school. Additionally, the principals should also be able to provide evidence that they are already doing something to remedy the issue at hand.

The third way in which an intervention could be implemented in a school involves the CEO of the DRF asking the school if it would like to have a particular intervention. If a school affirms that it would like to have the intervention that is being offered, then the CEO of the DRF hands the intervention over to them at that point. This type of intervention is rare in that it only occurs if a donation is being made to the foundation in the form of purchased goods. An example would be a donation of socks. The CEO of the DRF would go around to all the schools and ask them if they would like to have socks for their learners. If they affirm that they would, then he would hand the donation over to them.

5.2.7.1 The process prior to the implementation of an intervention

Before any intervention is implemented within a school (excluding the third way of implementation), the school principal is required to justify why it is that he/she feels the

school needs the intervention. Additionally, the school has to show some form of initiative in terms of trying to do something to resolve the issue at hand. Over time, if the foundation feels that the school is justified in its request and has shown some initiative, then it will proceed to meet the request.

With regards to the first way of implementation, when the foundation has adequate funds to implement an intervention at one of the schools it reviews the records of all the schools to determine which schools are in greatest need of the intervention. When a school is identified that is dire need of the intervention to be implemented, the CEO looks at its record of attendance of workshops and determine whether the school has followed through with the requirements of the partnership. If a school has failed to meet the requirements of the partnership, as outlined in the memorandum of understanding between the school and the foundation, the CEO will move on to the next school on the list. If the next school on the list has followed through with the criteria outlined in the memorandum of understanding of the partnership, then it will receive the intervention that is to be implemented.

5.2.7.2 The process after the implementation of an intervention

After the implementation of an intervention in a given school, the DRF carries out a follow up of the intervention at hand. These follow ups allow the DRF to ensure that everything is going well and to determine whether the principals are happy with the intervention that they have received. At the same time, they also allow the foundation to determine if the intervention at hand is being used or not. If it is not being used, the foundation will ask the principal for the reasons. With the reasons that are given from the principals, the foundation will then try to intervene further if possible to remedy any issues that may be holding the school back from the full use of the interventions that they have been allocated.

5.2.8 The foundation as an 'NGO'

Three years after the establishment of the DRF, it became aware that people in the community regarded the foundation as an NGO. This came to its attention when it was invited to attend a meeting at one of the schools in the area at which various departments were represented. Sitting around the table at the meeting, the CEO of the DRF realised that every person had a name card at the table and so did he.

“So out of idle curiosity I picked up my name card and turned it over to see what it said. I suppose to see if my name had been spelt correctly or something, and it didn't

have my name, it had NGO on it. Up until then I'd never thought of the organisation as anything other than a continuation of Dave's desire. Suddenly when it said NGO I realised we're an organisation."(CEO)

Until that point the foundation had not considered itself to be an NGO. The foundation still doesn't consider itself to be an NGO, however the CEO of the DRF stated that whether others regard them as an NGO or not makes no difference. The purpose of the foundation, according to its CEO, is to intervene in a manner so that the schools in the area can provide learners with an education that is of a good quality in order to provide learners with the opportunity to pursue their dreams. When the foundation reaches the point that it feels it has achieved this goal it will close its doors.

Philanthropic foundations are set up with the intention to make a contribution towards the enhancement of the world at large (Whitman, 2008). The vision of every foundation is different and therefore the contribution that it makes to society will be governed by what it values most (Whitman, 2008). The DRF has chosen to focus on the improvement of education so that an education that is of a good quality can be provided to learners.

Steiner-Khamsi (2008) articulates the logic of donors and the idea behind foundations that are set up with a limited time frame. Such foundations set out to remedy a cause, and when they achieve success they cease to exist (Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). What Steiner-Khamsi (2008) states relates to the work that the DRF is carrying out together with the logic behind it. The DRF will cease to exist once it has reached a point where it has achieved an increase in learner performance within the schools with which it is involved. With the cessation of such organisations, it is hoped that government will pick up the work that has been done and possibly implement similar interventions in other areas of the country (Steiner-Khamsi, 2008).

5.2.9 The foundation going forward

Going forward, the DRF has decided to adopt a new strategy to try and bring about some change within the schools in the area. The foundation refers to this process as the development of "blue schools". To do this the foundation made a decision to work within the three phases that a learner should pass through during their schooling career. These three phases include the preschool phase, the primary school phase and the high school phase.

The foundation has decided to develop a chain of “blue schools”. To do this, the foundation will focus all its attention on one preschool within the area, one primary school within the area and one high school within the area. The foundation will develop each of the three schools so that a learner who attends one of these schools will be given the best possible education in each phase. A learner who attends a “blue preschool” will then move onto a “blue primary school” and then to a “blue high school”.

The idea behind this “blue” chain of schools is to ensure that all the needs of the learners are met at each phase and that they receive the best possible education throughout their years of schooling so that they will be adequately developed to be able to move on to the next phase. At the same, it will allow the foundation to determine whether the assistance it has provided has made a significant contribution, in terms of ensuring that learners have received a good quality education, as it will be possible to judge this by reviewing the results of the matriculants at the end of their thirteen years of schooling.

5.2.10 A difference in approach

Prior to the establishment of the foundation, David Rattray used a very different approach. David used a charitable approach, providing the schools with what they requested. He would ask no questions; he would simply provide interventions to the schools as they needed and requested them. Once he implemented an intervention at a school there was no follow up that was carried out.

It could be said that David took a charismatic approach to change. Charismatic change involves no regular or normative routines (Adair-Totef, 2005). Charismatic leaders of change require no expert training; they act primarily out of a drive for self-determination (Adair-Totef, 2005). A charismatic leader will take up a task that is of interest to him and will be obedient and persistent until he accomplishes his mission (Adair-Totef, 2005). David was not an expert on how to develop schools, yet he was determined to bring about change within these schools so as to enhance the quality of education that these schools were able to provide to learners.

A charismatic leader has no agency over others; he also receives no private gain from the tasks that he sets out to accomplish (Adair-Totef, 2005). Charismatic change moves away from the traditional way of doing things; it is change that occurs without any ties to an organisation. A charismatic leader is devoted to a cause and, more specifically, to the success

of that cause (Adair-Toteff, 2005). David was an individual that was devoted to the cause of improving the schools within the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area by assisting them however he could.

After the foundation was established the approach that was taken by the CEO of the DRF, Mr Ben Henderson, was completely different. Mr Henderson had been a business man prior to his involvement with the foundation. When we look closely at the approach that Mr Henderson has adopted to improve the schools, we find that he uses business principles to justify what he does.

Although Mr Henderson may have not been consciously aware of his use of business logic, it becomes evident when we take a look at what he has done over the years. Initially he went around asking the schools what they thought they needed, but the things they identified did not seem to him like things which would bring about significant change within these schools. He then asked the Delta Environmental Centre to do a needs-based analysis to determine what exactly the schools needed and what would bring about the most improvement to them. If we analyse these actions it is clear that he was trying to determine the 'opportunity cost'; in other words, he was trying to determine what would bring about the most change within these schools.

Additionally, the idea of forming a partnership with the schools stems from a business logic. Mr Henderson wanted the schools to be involved in the whole process. He did not want it to be a charity-like process, he wanted to work hand in hand with the schools so that greater improvement could take place.

5.3 Theme one: School improvement

A strong theme of school improvement has emerged from the data of this research study. There are instances of school improvement that arise through the work of the DRF and the support that it has provided to the schools. Additionally there are aspects which promote improvement within these schools and at the same time there are aspects which have been identified which hinder school improvement.

All the principals included in the sample for this research study indicated that the DRF assists them in bringing about an improvement within their school. They perceived the interventions implemented by the DRF as enhancing their ability to provide an education that is of a good

quality to their learners. As one principal indicated, the role of the DRF is to provide support to the schools so that effective teaching and learning can take place.

Principal: *“Their concern is to assist the school in terms of... improvement. Yah, they are trying to improve the teaching standard or level in all the school[s]. They are assisting the school so that the school will be independent....And they are providing assistance in our schools, like in our school they buil[t] a shelter, the jungle gym, the kitchen, as well as that block [on the] upper level. So that there will be effective teaching and learning.”* (Principal one)

5.3.1 The provision of resources

The DRF has provided the schools in the area with a variety of resources including infrastructure, library books, computers and teaching aids so that the effective teaching and learning can take place within these schools.

Principal: *“You know we are in black schools. Black schools are not like the, these white schools. But everything that they are doing, it’s taking us into being like those schools. You know when you are in a school, you feel like you are just like those people. Because what we did before, we usually visited th[ose] school[s] to see what it is that they are doing. You can’t see me going there anymore because I know that those things, the things that they are doing, we are doing it here, here in th[is] school. Because of the DRF, because of their intervention, the programmes that they are doing, making sure that we have the teaching aids, the necessary teaching aids. The library, the computers, the computer skills I gained from Ben, you know I’m using [it]. It was only two months but I’m sure of myself.”*(Principal two)

The extract above is an indication of the extent to which the DRF has assisted the schools in the area. The DRF has attempted to provide the schools in the area with all the resources that are necessary in order for optimal teaching and learning to take place. These schools are situated in a rural part of KwaZulu-Natal, and the majority of the schools in the area do not have sufficient resources for them to achieve optimal results. In the words of the CEO of the DRF,

CEO: *“...but if you’re lined up at the start of an Olympic race and there’s one guy with one leg and his name isn’t Oscar Pistorious, you know his chances of winning are much less and it seems very much the case that a lot of our schools in the area*

don't have the capability for a variety of reasons of turning out the kind of result that the education system is designed to produce. It's because the teachers are sometimes not the best trained, the principals [are] sometimes not the best trained, schools [are] inadequately equipped, distances from home to school [are] so great that children are, when they get to school they're already tired and all they want to do all day is sleep, and then go home as quickly as possible. So there's no extramural activity that supports what goes on in a school. So yeah, we're supporting a bunch of schools that are almost crippled and we want them to achieve Olympic standards and I don't know how realistic that is to achieve. But that's what we're trying to do (laughs).”(CEO)

The foundation is trying to provide support to the schools in the area by ensuring that they have everything that they need so that optimal teaching and learning can take place, so that they can ultimately reach high standards and be schools that excel. The CEO metaphorically describes the schools within the area as being disabled to emphasize the extent to which these schools are held back due to a lack of skills and resources. He believes that if the schools were equipped with the skills and resources that they need to function effectively, they might stand a greater chance of excelling and achieving high standards.

This is the motive behind what the DRF is doing: it is to enhance the schools within the area by providing them with the assistance that they need to progress. It is providing the schools in the area with the resources that they need to function and teach effectively and conducting workshops with teachers so that the teachers are capacitated with the skills that they require to perform to the best of their ability.

5.3.2 Developmental workshops

There are various workshops that the DRF has conducted with teachers from the schools to equip them with the relevant skills that they might require in order to be able to conduct lessons effectively.

A workshop was conducted with teachers to familiarise them with the NCS curriculum, which was the curriculum that was in place at the time, as not all teachers understood the curriculum fully. In these workshops the NCS curriculum was broken down and explained in detail to the teachers until the teachers felt that they were confident in their knowledge about the curriculum and how to deliver it.

Principal: *“The change of the teachers, some of the teachers, after the workshops, after the curriculum workshops that we had. So the teachers were very much confident in making that sure that they know how, they know what it is they are supposed to do in the class. Because [Consultant] gave us strategies of the new curriculum, NCS. So it was no longer like saying I don’t understand something when I get into the class. Because she gave us the way, even the ways of teaching the learners in the class. So the results improved. Because there was a way of shortening [our paperwork] because teachers we ha[ve] a lot of paperwork to do.*

Interviewer: Okay. She showed you how to cut down your paper work?

Principal: Yes. How to cut on the paper work....I can explain that.

Interviewer: Can you?

Principal: Yes. We had the policy document that we were using. With all the LOs and AS assessment standards but then she showed us a short cut that we can just group them together, have them in a file, instead of going there, you have everything there in your file. So immediately you see that okay, this is what I have to do, other than packing all these things, having a very big file. So it was easy for the teachers and we went through them. Through them. We went through them to say ‘Oh, this one says, is saying like this and like this’, because teachers did not understand some of things. So we unpacked, they were unpacked. The LOs and, and Assessment Standards they were very much unpacked by the lady and that made things much easier for the teachers. And also that, there’s that tendency of teachers that if I don’t understand something, then I jump it, I don’t teach it. But through her coming to the school, she showed us the way that we have, because the Assessment Standards...[if] there’s a teacher in the school who can understand this, then you can come and help [them with] this.”

(Principal two)

The extract above is an indication of the extent to which the consultant from the DRF went in explaining the NCS curriculum to the teachers. The consultant broke it down until every teacher understood what the NCS curriculum entailed; she showed them how to organise their teaching files; she equipped them with teaching strategies and she also indicated to them that if they do not understand anything they can ask another teacher in their school who does understand. Above all of this, the consultant carried out follow ups with the teachers at a later

stage to determine whether they were in fact practicing what had been taught to them at the workshops and if they needed any further assistance.

Another workshop that the DRF conducted entailed teachers from Kingsmead College going to Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana to share some of their teaching strategies with teachers from the DRF partner schools. These workshops were 'teacher to teacher' workshops about classroom practices and the teachers learnt how to be creative by using inexpensive materials to create teaching aids that they could use to enhance their teaching.

CEO: *"And they, we said something one day in a discussion about 'God, I wish our teachers could learn from your teacher[on] how to run the classrooms' or, you know, something like that. And the teachers of that, the deputy principal of that school said, 'Let me see if I can do something'. So she whipped up some of the teachers and they agreed to come down here and run workshops, teacher to teacher. Not, not theory, nothing else this is the real stuff this is what happens in a classroom on a daily basis and this is what happens in our classrooms and it's bound to happen in your classroom. This is how we handle it and it might be useful if you handle it that way to. These are the things we use as teaching aids and so forth. [We] suggest that you can do it too and they're made from nix to nothing, so can make them just as easily."*
(CEO)

The workshops that were facilitated by the teachers from Kingsmead College illustrated how to deal with classroom-based practices and the problems that teachers experience within their classrooms. The workshops were successful and the teachers from the area learnt how to be creative while teaching by using inexpensive materials to enhance their teaching practices.

After an evaluation of the programme was conducted by the CEO of the DRF, a decision was taken to restructure the programme so that it would be more fitting to the needs of the teachers. A continuation of the workshops will take place in the near future with a programme called ROPE. The ROPE programme will entail teachers from Johannesburg coming down to conduct workshops with the teachers but, this time around, the teachers from Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana have been asked what that they would like to be workshopped on to ensure that they are developed in a manner that will be beneficial to them.

The DRF also had a consultant come down to conduct a series of workshops with the principals and school management teams so that they could be equipped with the relevant

managerial skills that they require in order to effectively manage their schools so that ultimately effective teaching and learning can take place. In these workshops the schools developed school development plans which they can follow to ensure that their school develops effectively. After the workshops there was also follow up; the consultant visited the schools to determine whether the schools were practicing what they had learnt in the workshops.

Principal: *“Yah this is a project that is aim[ed] [to] assist the SMT, the school management team, in terms of managing [the school effectively]. So they [were] about how to manage the school. In other words they [were] assisting us how to manage the school. So all the SMT members [were] attending th[e] Phatakahle project workshop[s], in order to improve or to change [become]better. So it is conducted by [Consultant].”*(Principal one)

Another principal went on to state the benefit derived from the Phatakahle project.

Principal: *“So, mostly now the SMT workshops that are taking place. You know I was saying, we have a lot, we have books with all the information but you know, we don’t want to read. That’s our problem, we don’t want to read. So these workshops have made us realise that we need to take even, everything seriously. You just have [to take] your time to take things and read and see what, how, what is it that I can do about this and that. Not just to sit and relax, and say that things are going to come in their own way when, when they are going to come. Because you know what we’ve been doing, you know that’s why the ward mangers will come. I will tell them that [I] don’t understand this, I don’t know this. But then it’s not like that because they want [the] work done. So now I’m not afraid of anyone [who] would come because I will just tell them that, okay this is done like this, you have to do like this.”* (Principal two)

With the workshops that focused on strengthening the school management teams, the schools learnt a wide range of skills that equipped them to do their jobs. Now the schools don’t have to wait for someone from the district to come and show them how to do the things that they don’t understand because they have acquired the relevant knowledge that they require through the workshops that the DRF conducted with the school management teams so that they are able to do their work timeously by themselves with confidence.

In line with the development workshops that the DRF has hosted for teachers and school management teams, there has also been a programme that was initiated to try and get the parents and the community involved in the schools. This programme was called the Siyanakakela Community Engagement Programme. This particular programme focused on the need for parents and the community to come together so that they could promote education and ensure that the learners are encouraged and motivated to learn.

Principal: *“...And involvement of the community. We used to involve the community in some of the things but not in such a way, that, in a way that they could feel that they are part and parcel of the school. So with [the] Siyanakakela project, then they, some [of the] parents did some wonders, they had to go around looking for the learners who [were] not coming to school, going to families making sure that learners are coming to school and everything. Looking for the drop outs. The parents themselves, we had a committee here of the parents who would go outside. Right now, sometimes it’s very difficult because I don’t go to all the classes. But you find out that the parents are picking out some stuff in the classes. You, the parents came here and sa[id]; ‘M’aam, there’s a learner who’s not coming [to] class, that learner has a problem, his grandmother drinks a lot. The learner has got a problem, the learner fell from the tree and the learner was hurt [on his] arm and [his] leg.’ But the learner was, they thought the learner was very sick because they went to the home, [and when] they would touch the learner and the learner would cry terribly. And at the end they said; ‘Ma’am you know the situation in the family, so you have to try something.’ I had to try something, try, [I] sen[t] my admin clerk because I was busy on those days. [I] sen[t] my admin clerk, they [took] the boy to the hospital in Nqnutu. To the doctor first, then the doctor realised that his arm and leg was broken. And he was staying at home, nobody was taking care of that boy. So, those are such things that Siyanakakela, made [us aware of].*

Interviewer: That’s why you’ll brought about community involvement?

Principal: Yes community involvement, that they need to be involved. That that you cannot see all the things that are happening. But then they are always coming to say ‘Ma’am, this and that.’ And they are always, they always know that they have to come and say something if they feel like saying that. They come and help in the garden.”

(Principal two)

The extract above portrays how the Siyanakakela programme which the DRF has implemented to get the community involved with the schools has actually benefitted the schools. In an area that is impoverished, with the majority of the learners staying with their grandmothers and a few learners who live in child-headed households, it is essential for the community in the area to get on board and assist the school to ensure that the learners are both motivated and encouraged to learn and excel. In such a context, it is essential for there to be community involvement so that if there is a crisis that occurs, such as the one in the extract above, the community can step in and help wherever they can. One of the key determinants of learner performance is a supportive home environment (Hattie, 2009) and with this programme there is an attempt being made to ensure that the learners in the area are supported all round, even if they do not have that support from their homes and families.

5.3.3 The development of libraries

In line with the development of infrastructure within these schools, the DRF has also encouraged and assisted the schools to develop libraries. In some schools the foundation has built libraries and in other schools a classroom has been converted into a library. There have been Peace Corps volunteers who have assisted the schools to set up their libraries and to create systems for keeping track of the books. Additionally, the foundation has donated library books to the schools and the schools have also been encouraged to raise funds so that they can purchase their own books.

Consultant: "I'm not a teacher librarian, I've never been one, but through the intervention of the DRF we've been able to put up libraries and these libraries are functional. They are functional because learners in this area have never seen a library before in most of the schools. But I was fortunate to be assisted by one of the Peace Corps volunteers that [was] here, [from] the previous group, not the ones that are currently [here] now. To look into, as we were doing, resource management as part of the project and we thought 'Okay, let's look at the libraries for a start because books are the first and the foremost for the, for learners. We not going to go to the highly technological and sophisticated resources.' So we took them through a workshop: two ... three ... two workshops, if I remember well, on the library. And the DRF was ready to donate books, and they have donated lots of books, and the more I visited the schools based on what we have, we had trained [them] on, the more they began to show, you know, the skills of actually managing a library. Getting the

learners to use the library, teachers using the library in the sense of when giving the learners projects and work and et cetera, assessment, they had to refer the learners to the library. So I'm seen those libraries now beginning to work, and teachers are telling me that the learners well in those schools. Of course, it's not all of them doing the[ir] best. Because it can never be in the whole group. But in those schools that are very committed, if I may use that word, I'm seeing change. Learners are improving in their English as a language, spoken English, and in one of the schools one of the teachers who happens to be the principal, [and who is] also the librarian, showed me the written piece by a learner. Like when they do creative writing, and I could see that there is [a] huge improve[ment]..., she showed me where this learner had been up until, and I'm seeing teachers putting in place programmes to improve language in the[se] schools.” (Consultant)

At all the schools that were included in this research study sample a great sense of appreciation was expressed for the DRFs help with the establishment of libraries. The schools felt that the libraries made a great contribution towards the improvement of learner performance. The schools felt that the libraries assisted the learners to improve in their English skills. At the same time, due to the development of the libraries, the learners can now be given assignments where they have to conduct some sort of research at their libraries. In this way the learners can engage in an exploratory learning exercise rather than the teachers just “spoon feeding” them.

Principal: “... So we think by that we will be able to use the library as a[n] education[al] centre. Learners will be able to go there and get information rather than [us] teaching [them] only, [they will] also be able to get information for themselves, [rather] than [just] spoon-feed[ing] them.”(Principal eight)

5.3.4 Within school improvement

Aside from the assistance being provided by the foundation to aid school improvement, a great deal of within school improvement has been taking place in some of the schools. Some schools have taken the initiative to improve their school internally through the development of networks with other schools.

Principal: “And even networking, you know networking [with] highly performing schools that will, can also improve our performance. Reading, reading from

newspapers, books, all those things maybe can, can definitely improve our performance.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any networks with other schools?

Principal: Yes, we do, yah we are networking with one school from iPitizngome, [on] the other side for (inaudible) another ward, we [do] not belong to the same ward. We were also, even though we haven't started this year but last year we've also networked with Mgazi secondary school in Nquntu, Nquntu town.”(Principal four)

With the development of networks with other schools, the school in question can learn a great deal from the other school and they can find ways in which to assist each other, whilst at the same time identifying areas within their own school that could be developed through the generation of ideas from their involvement with the other school (Reynolds, 2010). In this way the schools can share ideas with each other about what works best for them and they can adopt strategies that they feel could benefit them as well.

Additionally, in some schools, the School Management Teams (SMTs) have engaged in a process of conducting an internal evaluation of their teachers whereby the SMTs sit in on classes and observe their teachers and how they teach. In this way the strengths and weakness of various teachers have been identified and the school principal has advised the teachers to take some time and observe the strong teachers and their teaching strategies so that they can get an idea of things that they could do to improve their teaching.

There has also been an instance of workshops being developed for teachers. These workshops were developed and run internally within a school so that the skills of their teachers could be developed. In one particular school, the school principal identified that the Peace Corps volunteer had a distinct style of teaching and had asked him to conduct a workshop with the other teachers so that they could learn the teaching strategies that he used.

Principal: “Yesterday we had a meeting because we want him to teach us some strategies for, especially for the slow learners because we have seen that he is able to deal with the slow learners. So next week we are having a workshop whereby every, all the staff members will be in the meeting, whereby he'll be telling us more about these strategies. Not just telling us, but he also said that we need to give four learners per class that are, that we see that they are very slow learners. Because last week we had our World Book Day, so on our World Book Day because there's a committee

which sat down and planned for the World Book Day. So on that day, there are learners which I know that are slow learners but I was surprised at their, the way they performed last week. So I saw something that I never seen.”(Principal two)

The same principal also identified that the teacher who conducts the arts programme in her school has a unique style of teaching that is very different from the mainstream teaching style because it allows the learners to feel comfortable in the classroom. She then decided to have all her staff members attend a workshop that was facilitated by the arts teacher so that the teachers could be exposed to the different style of teaching that is being used and so that they could use it in their own classes to assist them with their teaching. With this particular school it is becomes interesting to note how the principal of the school is able to identify the various strengths and weaknesses within her school and at the same time attempts to do something internally to try to rectify the issues so that a greater rate of improvement can take place.

5.3.5 Follow up

Aside from implementing interventions within schools, the DRF also conducts follow up with the schools. A follow up is carried out on every intervention to determine whether the intervention is being used and if there are any problems with the intervention that has been implemented.

The DRF also conducts random visits to the schools to determine if the schools are keeping to their side of the partnership and to check that teaching and learning is indeed taking place. The partnership is a key determinant as to whether change takes place within a school or not, according to the CEO of the DRF, (the partnership that the DRF has with these schools will be further elaborated later on in this chapter). On these visits, the CEO of the DRF walks around the school to check that everything is in order and then communicates with the principal of the school to determine if everything is going well and to determine if there are any issues or problems that the school has which need to be addressed.

5.3.6 Aspects that hinder school improvement

Whilst there are various aspects that contribute towards the improvement of a school, there are also those aspects which impede the development and improvement of a school. Within the DRF schools, there have been various aspects which can be said to be working against their favour in terms of bringing about school improvement.

Firstly there is the issue of the principals at these schools. Although not at all the schools, there are some schools who have principals who are not interested and who are not good leaders to their staff. A principal is the leader of the school and is supposed to direct the teachers of his/her school so that optimal teaching and learning can take place (Schleicher, 2012). At some of the schools in the area you find that the principal does not communicate effectively with his/her staff; in such a case the principal might attend workshops but will fail to convey to his/her staff what the workshop entailed; thus no development takes place. There are also those principals who are frequently absent from school, leaving the running of the school in the hands of the teachers. A school needs a good principal in order to progress and the job of a principal should not be taken lightly.

Secondly, the majority of the schools within the area are compliant with the ethos and vision that the government has for education in South Africa. Although this may not necessarily be a bad thing, it shows that the schools within the area are compliant and that they fail to own their school and set their own vision and mission which they would like to achieve for themselves. Therefore these schools fail to own the process of change and, until they do, very little change can take place (Reynolds, 2010).

In line with the compliance of the schools, you find that the teachers and principals of these schools fail to be critical. They will not question anything that they are told to do, they merely follow through with the instructions that they are given. Fullan (2001) states that with many of the school improvement reforms that are imposed on schools by the state there is little consideration of whether the reform will benefit them positively and will be fitting to their school and their culture. Mourshed et al. (2010) state that it is essential for schools to be able to adopt interventions that are to be implemented with their context in mind. When this is done then the school will be able to reap the most benefit from the intervention at hand and it is more likely that a sustained school improvement will take place.

Another aspect which hinders improvement within these schools is that of classrooms. There is a shortage of classrooms in some schools in which there are up to seventy learners squashed into one class with one teacher. There are also multi-grade classes at some of the schools which make it difficult for teachers to conduct a complete lesson for a grade.

Principal: "Yah there is a shortage of classroom[s] because we've got only nine classroom[s]. Out of all. And we do have this multi-grade classes. I've got two of

them. Yah there is a shortage, in such a way that grade 7 and 8 are squashed together.

Interviewer: Okay..and is there any other grades squashed together?

Principal: Yah, it's grades 7 and 8, as well as grade 4 and 5.

Interviewer: 4 and 5...then in this classroom how does it work, is there one teacher that teaches or?

Principal: Actually because these what you call the big grades, so what we used to do, we specialise. As I say, I am good at maths, so somebody else maybe takes English etc. So we specialise. But ay it's difficult really to teach because within 30 minutes, that is our period, we have to focus maybe on one grade and we have to divide that 30 minutes, 15 minutes the first grade and then the second grade. So it's difficult because we supposed to teach 30 minutes, but it's impossible because there's no other way, you have to split or you have to divide that 30 minutes period.” (Principal one)

From the extract above and from the observations that the researcher has made of these multi-grade classes, it becomes evident that it is challenging to conduct a qualitative lesson with these classes due to a constraint on time. There is also another observation which the researcher made in a school where there were two separate grades in one class with no partition in between. Thus when the grade four teacher was conducting a lesson in the front of the class, the grade five teacher was conducting a lesson at the back at the same time. This made it difficult for the learners to be able concentrate and benefit fully from the lesson due to a lack of privacy and an excess of noise from the opposite class.

Lastly, with regards to the teachers at these schools, there are a large number of teachers who are not adequately qualified which results in teachers not being able to explain content to the learners adequately or relate it to their life and surroundings (Lingard et al., 2003) due to their lack of content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.). Within the classroom setting itself, the teachers also fail to determine where the learners are with their learning and thus fail to provide and seek feedback from the learners to determine if they have in fact understood the content of the lesson (Hattie, 2009).

There is also an instance of a shortage of teachers within these schools. Without teachers, no teaching and learning can take place. The findings from the data of this study indicate that

when teachers resign from their posts, the district for the area takes a long time to get the school a replacement teacher and in the process a great deal of time is lost with regards to teaching and learning. There are a range of other wider system issues that come into play which can be said to hinder school improvement within these schools; these issues will be further discussed later on in this chapter.

5.3.7 Whole school improvement

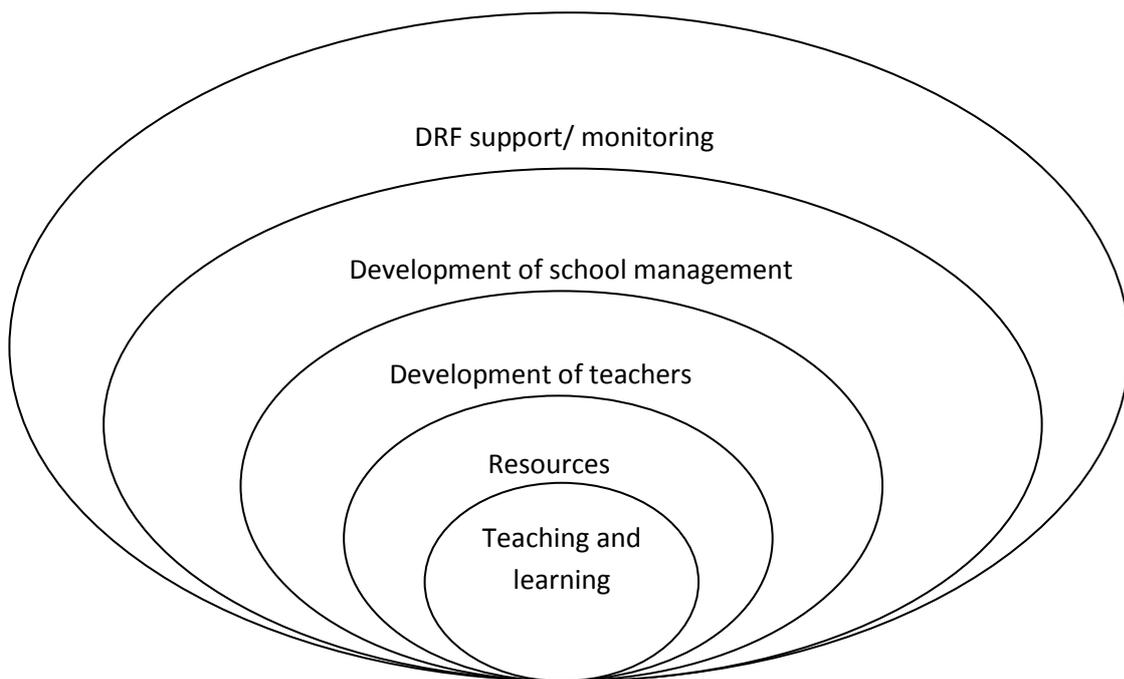


Figure 2: DRF approach to whole school improvement

The DRF has made an attempt to provide assistance to schools so that whole school improvement can take place. It has done this by trying to ensure that all the aspects that a school requires in order to perform effectively are available to these schools (see figure 2 above). To do this it has addressed the issue of infrastructure by providing classrooms, fencing schools, building libraries, building computer centres and science labs, providing schools with computers and so forth. They have also ensured that most schools within the area have access to basic necessities such as water with the provision of Jojo tanks and the development of a water pump on the school premises. They have also gone a step further to ensure that the schools' wiring and electrical systems are developed so that they have access to electricity.

Additionally, the DRF has focused on the development of teachers so that the teachers are better equipped to carry out their teaching in classrooms. With the workshops that the DRF has provided to the SMTs and principals they have taken a step towards ensuring that the schools function and run effectively so that optimal teaching and learning can take place.

The DRF has also formed partnerships with schools with which they are involved so that they can actively participate in the process of change. With the partnerships in place, it is a means to motivate the schools so that they perform to the best of their ability. Additionally, the partnerships allow the schools to gain a sense of ownership over their schools so that they own the process of change that it goes through.

Lastly, the DRF has also tried to get the community and parents involved with the schools so that the community at large understands the importance of education which will therefore allow them to promote education and motivate their learners to excel. Aside from the community engagement, the DRF has also played a role in ensuring that every school is equipped and has access to the NSNP programme that the Department of Education offers so that all the learners can benefit from the programme given that it is an impoverished community. In this way, all learners have access to food at school so that they are able to concentrate in class and participate effectively.

With the interventions that the DRF has implemented within these schools, a form of whole school improvement has been initiated. The issues of resources, teacher development, development of school management teams, and the involvement of the parents and the community has been addressed. Additionally, the DRF also monitors these schools by conducting frequent visits to ensure that the schools are functioning and that teaching and learning is indeed taking place.

5.3.8 A business model for school improvement

The findings from this study indicate that the CEO of the DRF uses business principles to inform his thinking when implementing school improvement interventions within these schools. In this section the researcher will explain the manner in which the foundation has progressed in terms of the use of a business model for school improvement.

Initially, the DRF provided equal support to all of the schools that they were involved with. Over time, the DRF noticed that some schools were more cooperative than others, and that not all schools were as motivated as they needed to be in order to bring about a change in

their schools. This led to the development of partnerships between the schools and the DRF. The partnerships were put in place to ensure that the schools played an active role in their development, while at the same time encouraging the schools to work together with the DRF to bring about school improvement.

With time the CEO of the DRF observed that the various schools that the DRF was involved with had participated differently and had shown commitment to varying degrees. After a while the DRF categorized the schools according to their commitment and their determination to change. The three categories are “red schools,” which are the schools that consistently fail to comply and show any sign of improvement, “yellow schools,” which are schools that are borderline as they show some commitment yet are falling behind over time, and “green schools,” which are schools which are fully committed and are determined to bring about improvement.

With the categorization of these schools, the DRF was able to distinguish which schools deserved to have further interventions implemented based on both their commitment and determination to change. The DRF then decided to implement all further major interventions in the “green schools” which would ensure that the money that it spent on these schools would not be put to waste as these schools were already performing well and cooperating in a manner that portrays that they want to bring about a change. Thus any further interventions that these schools benefit from will allow them to improve even further therefore ensuring that a greater rate of change occurs.

Despite the focus on the “green schools”, the DRF has decided that the “red schools” and “yellow schools” will still be allowed to participate in the developmental workshops that it provides as it will incur no additional costs if they participate in these workshops or not. Over time, should the CEO notice a change in the “yellow” and “red” schools in which they display a sense of cooperation and determination, he might then decide to re-categorize them accordingly until they reach the status of “green schools” which would allow them to benefit from further infrastructural interventions.

Aside from the categorization of “red schools”, “yellow schools”, and “green schools”, the DRF has decided to take another route going into the future. The DRF has made a decision to create a new category of schools which will be labelled “blue schools”. A “blue school” will be a school that is developed in every possible way to ensure that maximum improvement can take place within these schools. A single chain of “blue schools” will be developed. This

chain will consist of a pre-school, primary school and high school. For the development of these “blue schools”, one primary school and one high school will be chosen from the existing “green schools”.

With the development of “blue schools”, the DRF will ensure that these schools have all their needs met so that every aspect that is needed within a school which is considered to be beneficial towards increasing results will be available to them. In this way the DRF believes that with all the needs of the schools being met, there is bound to be a good quality of education that is provided to the learners who attend these schools, and thus these learners will perform well. With the DRF focusing on these “blue schools” and investing all its time and money into these schools, it believes that it will receive a higher rate of return and have a greater impact as compared to the impact that it has had thus far by providing only a few interventions to schools.

5.4 Theme two: Partnerships

In recent years the private sector has become more involved in the education sector with the development of partnerships between the public and private sector (Latham, 2009). In South Africa, the private sector has formed a partnership with the government to support the improvement of education (NBI, 2011). This partnership aims to serve as a basis from which the private sector can assist the government to develop the schools within South Africa through implementing whole school development programmes that complement the government’s efforts and therefore enhance the ability of such schools to provide an education that is of a good quality (NBI, 2011).

The concept of a partnership between the public and private sector is difficult to define as it can take on many forms (Kaur, 2013). Yet both proponents and critics agree on a general definition of partnerships which entails the public and private sector coming together to deliver a service (Kaur, 2013). A clearer definition of a partnership is provided by the World Economic Forum which stipulates a partnership as an alliance that is formed between individuals from different sectors with an aim to reach a common goal in which risks, responsibilities, means and competencies are shared in order to achieve the proposed goal (Latham, 2009).

Partnerships within the education sector entail the coming together of individuals from various divisions to aid the development of education. A partnership can be formed between

individuals from the private sector, between the government and individuals from the private sector, or alternatively a partnership can be formed directly with the schools themselves (NBI, 2011). With the ‘adopt a school’ approach, 59% of businesses from the private sector see themselves as partners with the schools that they interact with (NBI, 2011). However there are challenges that are faced with the development of partnerships in the education sector such as the differences in power between the respective partners (Latham, 2009). Yet such partnerships seem promising since most individuals from the private sector view their role in the education sector as one which entails various individuals coming together to reach a common aim through aligning themselves with the priorities that are set by government (NBI, 2011).

Similarly, after the findings of the Delta Environmental Centre were made available to the DRF, it decided that a partnership needed to be formulated in order to go forward. The DRF felt that it was essential to work together with the chosen schools so that they could all be a part of the process of change. The DRF did not want to be a charity organisation that would merely hand out interventions and resources to the schools; rather it wanted the schools to be involved in the whole process. As the CEO of the DRF stated:

CEO: “And we felt that it was important that they be so encouraged so that they would become partners in this process, we didn’t want this to be a handout type operation we wanted it to be a partnership. Dave had considered himself to be a partner of this little community and the foundation also considered itself to be a part of th[is] little community and played that kind of a role.”(CEO)

Going forward, the DRF intended to develop partnerships with the schools so that they would be involved in the process of change. The DRF always encouraged the schools to take initiative and be a part of the process so that their school and learners could benefit. However, not all the principals of these schools actively participated with the DRF as partners. This led the DRF to formalise the partnerships between itself and the schools with the development of a document that outlined the roles of both the DRF and the schools in the partnership. The document includes various requirements that the schools have to follow and adhere to as their part of the partnership (see table 2).

Table 2: Requirements of DRF schools as outlined in the memorandum of understanding

The school's responsibilities as outlined in the memorandum of understanding between the schools and the DRF:

- The school is expected to proactively take care of all materials, equipment, buildings, etc. that are supplied to it from whatever source.
- Grounds should be litter-free at all times.
- Broken windows should be repaired within a reasonable time, and all general work carried out as, when and how needed.
- The school should secure its property at all times and display responsible asset management.
- All scheduled meetings between institution-based organisations (SMT, SGB, ILST, etc. should take place at the recommended (by DoE) and agreed frequency, with minutes kept of all discussions and decisions.
- The school will keep the DRF informed of any relationship with other NGOs, or any other development work that is scheduled to take place for the school.
- The school will make every effort to have the appropriate person, or a substitute, attend all relevant DRF meetings or courses.
- Once a project has been approved and authorised, the school is expected to exercise every effort to assist with the completion of the work that is required to be done.
- The school will at all times exert every effort to deliver the best all-round education (including extra-mural activities such as sports) possible to the children attending the school, keeping proper records of their achievements and progress (preferably on SA-SAMS.)
- The school will make available to the DRF their examination results (as a primary measure of progress) and be prepared to discuss these with the DRF.

Despite the attempt made by the DRF to formalise the partnerships that they had with the schools to make clear what was expected of the school as their part of the partnership, there were still some schools that failed to adhere to what was required of them.

CEO: *"...and that was our first initial attempt to formalising the relationship. Since then because time passes on many things and our, over the five or six years that we've been working now you begin to notice patterns exist, [and] start to develop. Certain schools always fail to do certain things. They fail to turn up for meetings, they fail to submit information that you'd requested, they fail to reply to whatever it is. Or they fail to show up for occasions".* (CEO)

When a school repeatedly violates the agreement of the partnership as outlined in the memorandum of understanding over time, the DRF then makes a decision to step back due to the unwillingness of the school to actively participate as a partner.

CEO: *"... and it's nearly always the same schools. So as I say after a while you begin to notice that and you think to yourself 'Hmm, are we wasting our time with these schools?' Because they don't respond in a way that we expect. And so there are some schools, now, from whom we have withdrawn much of our support."*(CEO)

Within a business framework, a partnership serves as an agreement between both parties to ensure that they both abide to their side of the deal (Latham, 2009) so that the most can be achieved. With the infringement of the partnership by some schools, the rate of return is much lower as compared to a school that abides to the partnership and follows through with it. Here again we find that the decision of the CEO to withdraw support from the uncooperative schools is based on opportunity cost. The CEO wants to ensure that the schools who are involved with the foundation benefit the most from it so that the ultimate goal of improving these schools and improving results can be achieved.

Therefore, when one questions whether it is ethical or not for the foundation to withdraw their support from the schools that fail to actively participate and make the best out of the foundation and their support, it becomes evident that there is a move away from a humanitarian principle to that of a business principle that is aligned to business ethics.

With business ethics in mind, the idea is to provide support to schools that will reap the most from the interventions and use it to the fullest, thus gaining a visible improvement or change and at the same time ensuring that the foundation's money is put to good use. In this way, the foundation's money is not being wasted at a school that does not want to participate and change to bring about improvement.

CEO: *“And if they don’t have the drive to take it by themselves then you want to replace them with somebody who will, but it’s not our role to do that and it’s not our, not even our intention. Our intention is to provide support but when you spending a lot of money you want to try and get the best bang for your buck. And you can’t get that if the person that you’re spending it with is not sufficiently motivated to make the changes as well. Your partner doesn’t have the same passion for the things that you’re doing as you do, which is understandable because it’s not their thing it’s your thing. But you’re supposed to be sharing the common objective of educating the children, so you tend to think that they have the same objectives that you do.”* (CEO)

By the foundation withdrawing its attention from those schools that are uncooperative and don’t show any initiative, it is able to focus its attention on those schools which are interested and which want to bring about a change. In this way the foundation ensures that the money that it spends is not being wasted and that the schools that it spends the money on actually bring about a noticeable amount of change and improvement that will eventually be of greater benefit to their learners.

5.4.1 A sense of control

With the formalisation of the partnerships between the DRF and the schools, the DRF was able to gain some control over the situation. The development and distribution of the memorandum of understanding was a means to ensure that the schools do play a part in the process of change with the implementation of interventions, and it also ensures that the schools are committed to change and work towards that change.

The memorandum of understanding outlining the responsibility of the schools makes the school’s role in the partnership clear. At the same time it also gives the DRF the ability to judge which schools are compliant and cooperative and which schools are not. If a school fails to be cooperative with the DRF and fails to adhere to its side of the partnership, the DRF gradually withdraws its support until eventually the school receives no assistance from the foundation due to its lack of cooperation.

CEO: *“And we began to define for them what we expect them as partners to do. And if they don’t want to do these things then they don’t want to be a partner and they don’t want to be a partner with us and then we would withdraw..... If they don’t do those things I can go back to them and say, part of your partnership is that remember,*

if you don't do it we withdraw. And he will do it because they don't want to be ever dropped. And that was one way of exerting a little bit of control that I don't really have over the schools because if they want us to be a partner with them then they must do their part.” (CEO)

From the extract above it is evident that the CEO of the DRF wanted some form of control over the situation. The CEO needed to gain some form of authority over the schools so that he could get them to cooperate with the foundation and work together with the foundation. With the formalisation of the partnership, the CEO of the DRF has attempted to gain some form of control over the schools and the situation.

5.4.2 Accountability

With the formalisation of the partnerships each school was required to be accountable for itself. The memorandum of understanding outlines what the school is responsible for as its part of the partnership. Although that the schools are accountable for their part of the partnership and for their continued development, not all schools are as cooperative as the DRF would like and not all schools follow the requirements that are outlined in the memorandum of understanding. These include schools which have principals that are not cooperative, fail to attend meetings and workshops, fail to keep their school grounds clean and fail to abide by the other aspects of the agreement as laid out in the memorandum of understanding. On the other hand, those schools which have principals who are cooperative and determined to make a change adhere to all aspects that are outlined in the memorandum of understanding. Therefore, in the eyes of the CEO the DRF, the principal is accountable for his/her school and thus is responsible to ensure that the school adheres to the requirements of the partnership.

CEO: “Every school I had anything to with is a reflection of the principal. A good principal, good school. Bad principal, bad school.” (CEO)

The CEO believes that schools which have a good principal will have a good school due to the fact that the principal is committed and able to manage the school effectively and efficiently. A school with a good principal shows commitment and therefore is motivated to change. If the principal is motivated, it is more likely that he/she is going to make the best use of the interventions that are provided by the DRF and is more likely to reap the best benefit from the interventions so that a noticeable improvement can take place. On the other hand, a

school that has a bad principal is perceived by the CEO as having a principal that is uncooperative and lacks interest in improving his/her school. When the principal of a school has no interest to change then he/she will not make the best use of the resources in order to gain the best possible benefit from the interventions.

When the principal of the school is not cooperative over time and a pattern begins to develop, the DRF will slowly withdraw its support from that school.

CEO: *“So even though a school can have great needs, if the principal is what we would consider a non-cooperative principal I don’t care how great their needs are I’m not going to do it. Just because it feels to me a waste of money. We know where there are other schools that are more responsive and that still have the same needs we’ll go there.”*(CEO).

From the extract above, we begin to understand that the CEO wants to provide assistance to those schools that are cooperative and that show some form of initiative so that the school will ultimately make the best out of the interventions that it is provided with. When doing this, the CEO has in mind the opportunity cost so that the money that the foundation spends will reap the best profit. Thus the CEO wants to ensure that those schools which he is spending the money on make the best out of the interventions and therefore have a greater rate of change. The CEO thus wants to ensure that the marginal benefit will be greater than the marginal cost; he wants to ensure that the rate at which the school benefits and improves is higher than the cost incurred to implement those interventions within those schools.

Therefore it becomes essential for the principal to be accountable for his/her school and to take charge so that the school adheres to the requirements of the partnership. If he/she fails to adhere to the criteria, the school will not benefit.

We note that the CEO has indicated that a school which has a good principal will be a good, well run school and that a school with a bad principal will be a school that is badly run and such a school cannot benefit fully from the interventions that the DRF implements in terms of increasing learner performance. However, there are two other alternatives that the CEO has failed to acknowledge. The first is a school with a good principal yet aspects beyond the principal’s control are bad (such as teachers who are not motivated and fail to do their jobs, the results of learners being poor, and so forth), therefore making the school a bad school. The second alternative is a school which has a bad principal yet the school still functions and

performs effectively due to the commitment of the teachers and the learners thus perform relatively well, therefore the school is a good school.

5.4.3 A misunderstanding

Although that the DRF believes that it is in partnership with the schools, not all schools perceive their relationship with the DRF as a partnership. Despite the efforts of the DRF to formalise the partnerships that it has with the schools, there are still some schools which do not perceive themselves to be partners with the DRF. As one of the principals had indicated,

Principal: *“I think honestly speaking, I mean, I think we, we need to sit down and then he must explain to us the plan or they must explain their plans that they [are] going to do 1, 2, 3. How do you feel, how can we do it? So that we can come up with our own inputs.”*(Principal one)

The extract above serves as an indication that the principal of that school feels that the DRF should include him in the decision making process, thus he does not perceive himself to be a partner with the DRF.

There are also some schools which regard the DRF as more of a charity organisation than a joint effort.

Principal: *“.....I think there are a lot of things to be done but we don't have money to do them within this (inaudible). It will take time if we do them our self. But if he can give us something, I'll be happy. To improve the, the school.”*(Principal eight)

With regards to the schools that are included in this research study, Figure 3 below provides an indication of the number of schools that consider themselves to be partners with the DRF, those that don't see it as a partnership and those that are unclear. With those schools that are unclear of their relationship with the DRF, they understand that they have to be compliant but at the same time they consider the DRF to be an NGO that provides them with resources.

Figure 3 was drawn up based on the researcher's analysis of the interviews and how the schools felt their relationship was with the DRF as indicated through the principals' statements about their relationship with the DRF. Out of all eight schools included in the sample of this research study, only one principal explicitly indicated that the school was a partner with the DRF.

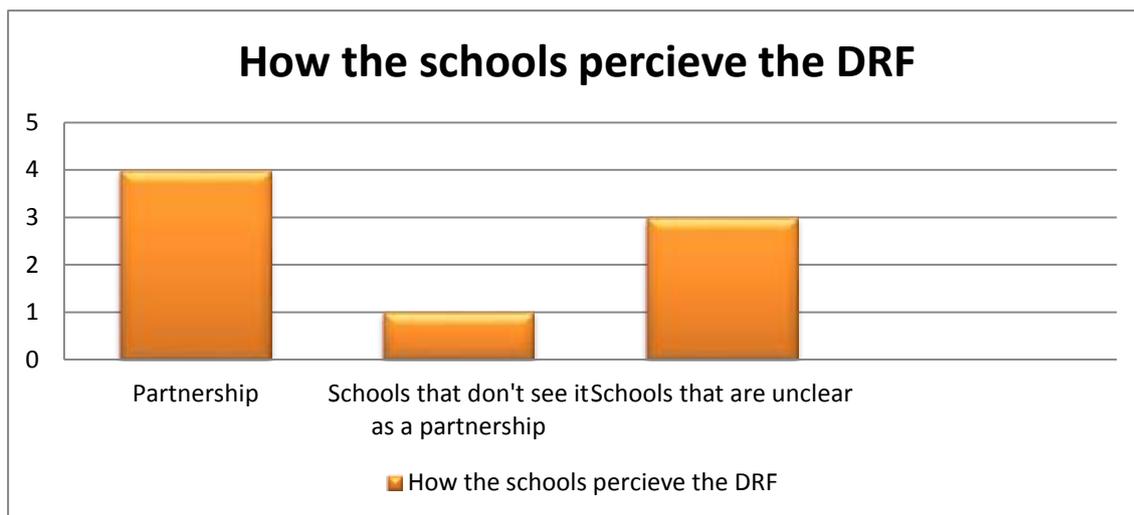


Figure 3: How the schools perceive the DRF

This misconception could be due to the fact that when David used to provide assistance to the schools whilst he was still alive it was done as charity. David did not expect anything in return from the schools; he simply asked them what they needed and provided it to them. In the extract below a principal articulates quite well how the foundation’s approach is different to that of David.

Principal: *“I would say perhaps it was just spontaneous in a sense. Unlike, unlike now we’ll see, now everything seems to be structured in a way, there seems to be a certain protocol that is followed. But with David you would just simply approach him and say ‘Hey, I have this problem and that,’ and he’ll say ‘Ay, I’ll see what I can do’. And (inaudible) just like that.”*(Principal seven)

With the development of the foundation, a new system of operation has been adopted by the CEO of the DRF. The CEO does not see the foundation as a charity organisation, rather he wants it to be a joint effort. One of the principals outlined the manner in which the CEO of the DRF operates in an interesting yet very precise manner.

Principal: *“...Ben, Ben is systematic (laughs). Ya, Ben is Ben, Ben is unique, Ben has got his own [way]. I would say Ben operates on the basis of, I should say a 50-50. He would like to see a commitment from the school. And then he can then play a part in ensuring therefore that the school gets what it does. So with Ben I think he’s, he’s business-like.”*(Principal seven)

From the extract above it is evident that the CEO of the DRF is business-like in his approach and that he expects a commitment from the school first before the foundation can intervene.

Therefore the manner in which the foundation operates now is completely different from the way in which David used to operate. The foundation regards its involvement with the schools as a joint effort in which both parties should play a role to ensure that a change is brought about. Whereas David operated in a charismatic and spontaneous manner to aid the development of education; in a manner in which he had no ties to the schools but would merely assist them where he could so that they were better equipped to provide a good quality education to their learners.

Another possible reason for the misunderstanding about the partnership could be due to the fact that when the CEO of the DRF communicates with the school principals he does so in a gentle manner which could have resulted in a misinterpretation on their side.

CEO: *“Ya. I don’t know if the principals see it the same way but they should. They may not under[stand] because sometimes when you’re discussing these things with them you’re asking them in ways that are much more gentle than we [are] talking about it now. Now we’re saying it clear, cold, as it is. With them you, very often you’re more gentle in your approach because you’re trying to get him to do something and you don’t want to be, you don’t [want] to say [to] him straight in his face, ‘What are you going to do?’ You know.”* (CEO)

5.4.4 Preferential treatment

Over the years the foundation has taken a liking to some of the schools with which it is involved. Although it may seem as though there is some form of favouritism involved, this is not entirely the case. The distinguishing factor that determines whether the DRF likes a school or not can be narrowed down to the principal of the school. This is because the CEO of the DRF interacts solely with the principals of these schools when discussing future plans and when visiting the schools. Therefore if the principal of the school is cooperative and has a good attitude with a determination to change, the CEO of the DRF is more likely to get on with the school and form a liking towards that school.

When the CEO has formed a liking towards a school, he will engage with the school more frequently and the school will benefit more in terms of interventions from the DRF. The DRF is more likely to implement an intervention in a school that adheres to the criteria as outlined in the memorandum of understanding as compared to a school which is defiant in one or more aspects that are outlined in the memorandum of understanding.

CEO: *“So even though a school can have great needs if the principal is a ... is what we would consider a non-cooperative principal, I don’t care how great their needs are I’m not going to do it. Just because it feels to me a waste of money. We know where there are other schools that are more responsive and that still have the same needs we’ll go there. Maybe their needs aren’t quite as great as this but we have a table of all schools’ basic statistics; how many children in the school, how many teachers in the school, whether the schools have common rooms, whether there’s ... how many classrooms do they have, how many children per classroom, how many teachers per (inaudible). You know, all these kind of things that serves me as a ... as an information base when we deciding things. As an example, about four months ago Avenge, who used to provide funding for our community building project, said to us, “Okay, we’re going to fund another project this year.’ So to decide which school was going to get that project we went to that list and said, ‘Who has the highest number of children per classroom?’ And the highest number of children per classroom is a school called [school M]. [school M] has a school principal who doesn’t participate effectively, so sorry, next school.” (CEO).*

The onus is completely on the school in question, more specifically on the principal of that school, to determine whether it will benefit from the interventions that the foundation provides or not. When the principal shares the same vision as the DRF and is committed in his/her duty as a principal and towards bringing about an improvement in the school, then it is more likely that the CEO will develop a liking towards that school.

However, in a school with a bad principal or an uncooperative principal, is the CEO justified in judging the school on the basis of the principal? There are some schools which have bad principals and because of the “bad principal” the DRF gradually withdraws its support from that school. A school can definitely benefit from having a good principal who would be a good leader to that school, but if the principal is defiant there is still a possibility that the school will overcome this situation and function to the best of its ability. Within some of the schools which have defiant principals, the teachers have indicated that they are doing their best to overcome the issue of their principal yet, despite all their efforts, the DRF does not acknowledge the efforts that the teachers are putting in because the DRF will not go past the principal. Hence their school and learners suffer.

“Educator 1: When [our] principal was absent, he g[ot] annoyed with this principal. But he forget[s] about the other colleagues at school: there are some colleagues who are doing their best, at their best level. But he [is] only focused [on] the principal.

Educator 2: He’s not focusing on the learners.” (Principal six).

5.5 Theme Three: Wider system issues

The theme of wider system issues includes all aspects within the whole school system which can be said to hinder school improvement within these schools. This includes aspects from the district all the way down to the teachers within these schools.

5.5.1 Negligence on the part of the district

The local Department of Education within the Rorke’s Drift/Isandlwana area has been open to the DRF intervening within the schools in the district and has given the DRF its blessing to do so. Given that the department has been open and willing to allow a private organisation to intervene within their schools is a sign that it understands that there are great needs within these schools. Thus they are in agreement that something needs to be done in these schools to enhance the quality of teaching and learning that takes place within them.

“As Minister of Education, Dr. Naledi Pandor, said at the UNESCO conference held in Dakar November 2008, “While the notion of partnerships holds much promise, we should not run the risk of being diverted from the real task at hand, which is the renewal of education in Africa. This not an undertaking for the faint-hearted. It requires from all of us a sustained commitment to developing and nurturing educations systems as the building blocks of sub-regional and regional systems, without which we cannot hope to participate meaningfully in partnerships.” (Beeton, 2008, pp. 3)

As indicated by Dr Naledi Pandor, the district should be welcoming to private organisations who want to intervene within its schools so that improvement can take place at a faster rate. However, at the same time the district should make an attempt to get more involved in the process and work alongside the DRF so that it can be a part of the process of change. The findings from this research study indicate that there has been a lack of concern on the part of the district toward some of the schools in the area. The district has failed to assist some schools with the requests that they have had from these schools. In response to this issue, the

DRF feels that if the district fails to show any interest, then there is no point in the DRF showing any interest.

CEO: "Absolutely and I've said to them I'm not coming back here until this is fenced and I've said to the Department of Education who promised to fence it in 2009.

Interviewer 2: They said they've been chasing the department.

CEO: Ya.

Interviewer 2: and they have no...(cut off)

CEO: And the department's not interested so if the department's not interested why should I be?" (CEO)

The extract above serves as evidence of the department's lack of interest in some of the schools within the area. In the year 2009 the department made a commitment to have a particular school fenced and four years later it has still failed to fulfil its commitments. Such a response on the part of the Department of Education portrays that it has an apathetic attitude towards its work. Therefore the DRF feels that if the Department of Education fails to show any interest, why should the foundation show any interest? If the department is not motivated enough and does not share the same vision as the DRF, together with the vision of the provincial Department of Education, which has since seen an endorsement for partnerships between the private and public sector (NBI, 2011), how can the state of education within these schools change for the better?

Secondly, there has been an indication that district officials fail to do their jobs adequately in some cases. The findings of this research study reveal that there has been a tendency on the part of the district personnel to treat their jobs as a 'tick-box' exercise. The officials merely go to schools to complete their paperwork as proof that they have been there, yet they fail to truly monitor the running and functioning of these schools through observations and frequent visits.

As an example, the researcher of this study was fortunate enough to observe officials from the monitoring and planning department of the local district who arrived at a school during the researcher's observation period at a particular school. The officials from the district came in and sat in the office of the school, looked through the schools files and asked a few questions, filled out their paperwork and then left. The officials did not walk around to

observe if teaching and learning was indeed taking place, they merely asked the secretary if this was the case. With district officials conducting their work in such a manner, without actually going in and being critical, how can the schools progress? If this is the manner in which the district personnel conduct their visits to schools it would become easy for schools to mangle and create an impression that portrays that they are running well.

A second example is of a circuit manager who failed to address an issue at one of the schools in the area. At this particular school, the principal of the school has been on paid sick leave for a year. In her absence one of the teachers has had to stand in as the acting principal. This teacher has not even been sure of what her role as a principal is.

Principal: "We told this thing, we discuss this issue about [our principal] with our SAMS Mr [Circuit manager]. He promised to give us [a] substitute since our principal was away [on] such a long leave.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes did you speak to the district about your principal being absent for so long?

Principal: Yes they know.

Interviewer: And what do they say about it?

Principal: Ah, they say nothing.

Interviewer: Okay, but do you feel that they provide enough support for you? Is the support okay, not so okay, would you feel you need more support?

Principal: Maybe the support that we get from the subject advisor from the different, not the....(silent)

Interviewer: Okay. So you feel that the subject advisors are providing enough support for you.

Principal: Yes.

Interviewer: And not enough support from?

Principal: Lack of support, we need support from the ward official, our (inaudible), manje would give clarity when since our principal is such in a long, is in a long leave, what can we do now? They even fail[ed] to give us a substitute as we, as Mrs

(inaudible) was known that our principal having a, a class that's multi-grade, grade two and three. Now." (Principal six)

The extract above is an indication of the lack of support that the school in question receives from its ward official. The school has been without a principal for a year and the ward official has failed to address the issue at hand. This serves as an example of the inability of district officials to adequately carry out their job which is to monitor and support the schools so that optimal functioning can take place. The principal of the school has been away for a year with no qualified substitute being put in place; the district needs to address the issue at hand yet has failed to do so.

The CEO of the DRF went to the extent of arranging a meeting with the district director to address the issue with regards to the principal of the above-mentioned school, yet despite these efforts the district has still failed to address the issue.

CEO: *"The Department of Education has sole responsibility for that mess. They are the ones under [Circuit manager] who had not helped that school. We've put it in writing to them, I've delivered verbal messages to the director personally about that school, that was the only purpose of our meeting. That school is failing because the department is not performing properly. The department should put a substitute principal. The principal has been missing from that school for 6 months. It's now 12 months. Ya. You know what's the department thinking? There're only three teachers there, one of them is missing (laughs). You know.*

Interviewer 2: *I think that this [Circuit manager] person is not getting...*

CEO: *[Circuit manager]*

Interviewer 2: *Is not getting to the district or...*

CEO: *He, he...*

Interviewer: *Or he's hiding.*

CEO: *He seems to be for whatever reason unable to get around the schools that he does. When he does come it's a kind of 'tick box': 'Okay, everything alright here?' and off he's gone. You know. So he's useless. [Director] doesn't seem to be able to do anything about him, [Director] doesn't seem to be able to do anything about the*

principal of the school who should be replaced immediately. I mean she's been paid a salary for the last year and hasn't been at work.” (CEO)

Even after the CEO of the DRF went directly to the district to address the issue of the principal being absent from the school the district still did not make an attempt to address the issue. If such an attitude is depicted by the district towards its schools, how can the schools in the area progress if they do not receive the required support and management from their district office? This is one of the problems with the education system in South Africa. Chinsamy (2002) notes that the district in South Africa fails to provide much needed support to schools. And without support and pressure being exerted by the district, schools fail to perform effectively (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al., 2007).

5.5.2 The recruitment of teachers

In line with the inability of district officials to carry out their jobs effectively, there has been an indication of the delay that is associated with the recruitment of teachers to the schools within the area. The waiting process involved has been an issue which was identified by the schools. The schools have to wait for long periods of time before teachers are appointed. During the time that a school has to wait for teachers to be recruited a lot of teaching and learning time is wasted and thus the learners of these schools are affected negatively.

Principal: “Why extra classes? Did not perform well last year, so we want to help learners because there were subjects that did not have teachers last year, almost the whole year. The teachers came late, as late as September. So there's a gap, you know. So we want learners to fill, we want that gap to be filled so that everything goes well. If the Department of Education could provide teachers always at time, early in the year. You know sometimes, like this year, I have one teacher who has left this school in April, the second week of April. And we have requested another teacher from the Department of Education and I [am] still waiting. If the Department of Education could know that when we need teachers it should be prompt, you know that could make the school to be better.” (Principal three).

At this particular school the principal indicated that in the year 2012 they waited for almost the whole year for teachers to be appointed to her school for certain subjects. The result of there being no teachers at her school to teach that subject was that the learners did not have sufficient teaching and learning time thus the learners did not perform well. The principal

indicated the need for the district to be efficient in the recruitment of teachers to schools, for without teachers no teaching and learning can take place. The school can only progress and perform when its need for teachers is met promptly.

Another issue that arose from the data with regards to teachers at the schools is that most of the schools in the area have indicated that they have a shortage of teachers. The shortage of educators results in the school's performance being lower than it could have been if it had sufficient educators to allow teaching and learning to take place.

Principal: "Ya. For, for instance we are under staffed: we don't have HODs at the present moment. So the people who are supposed to lead the curriculum are not available currently. So those are the things maybe that can decrease maybe our performance. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: And has it always been like this or does it vary?

Principal: Yes, especially this year but last year we were also short by one HOD but we were sufficient. Only the beginning of this year whereby the other educators have to leave. One was retiring, the other one has been promoted, and the other got transferred. So, well, these educators are not [yet] substituted. But as from the beginning of this year, last year we were short of one HOD, but this year we are also short of two people, two educators." (Principal four)

The principal of the above mentioned school indicated that the school does not have an HOD to lead and manage the curriculum. Without HODs at the schools and without adequate teachers, how is teaching and learning supposed to take place effectively? Additionally, a combination of a shortage of teachers and a shortage of classrooms within these schools results in many learners being crammed into one classroom and in some cases multi-grade classes being present. As the researcher of this study has identified with classroom observations, an over-crowded classroom and multi-grade classes are by no means conducive to learning.

Aside from the shortage of teachers there are also instances of there being no suitably qualified teachers to teach particular classes. As an example, some of the schools within the area have computer centres yet they are unable to make use of those computer centres due to the absence of a computer teacher.

Principal: *“Ya. Computer centre, we do have a computer lab but we do not have somebody to teach computer[s]. Like the foundation, the David Rattray, they donated computers, we have the computer lab but the biggest problem [is that] there’s no computer teacher. So now if it says computer centre, I, we do have [it] but now it’s only that part that is needed, the teacher.”* (Principal three).

The school is not making use of its computer centre due to the absence of a computer teacher. Thus the learners are being deprived of the opportunity to be exposed to computers which would play a vital part in their further development.

5.5.3 An issue with teachers

Another issue within the system is that of the teachers and their inability to do their jobs adequately. The researcher’s observation at the schools revealed that some teachers are less motivated and enthusiastic about teaching than others. A lack of drive and motivation on the part of a teacher results in the lessons that they conduct with learners being uninteresting and unproductive. When learners find lessons uninteresting they are less likely to grasp the content of the lesson adequately which ultimately results in the desired teaching and learning not occurring.

Additionally, as confirmed in the literature, the researcher found that there are some teachers at the schools who do not have enough content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.). Observation of some lessons revealed that when teachers do not have adequate content knowledge they are not completely comfortable with the content of the lesson thus they are not confident enough to teach the lesson effectively. Additionally, teachers who lack content knowledge stay close to the textbook and fail to relate the content of the lesson to the learners’ lives (Lingard et al., 2003) to the point that the learners actually grasp the message behind the lesson.

Despite the low content knowledge of some teachers, there are some teachers who are reluctant to attend workshops that could help them to develop.

Principal: *“Ay, I don’t like to attend, especially during the weekends. I don’t know what am I going to write here (laughs). Because there were forms which Ben gave us for the workshop. Some say they don’t want to attend the workshop, so I will say one?”*

Interviewer: Why don’t they want to attend the workshop?

Principal: They say on weekends it's their time, after school it's their time. But if the workshop[s] are far, like Kingsmead, they can't afford to go there because they have their homes,[their] children are at home, so they don't.

Interviewer: I don't think it's held at Kingsmead, it's held at one of the schools, like they all in the area. So all the schools meet at one school.” (Principal eight).

In the extract above the principal provides an account of the attitude of teachers towards attending workshops. Teachers are reluctant to attend workshops after school and during the weekends. This again depicts the lack of motivation on the part of teachers to improve themselves and the school system so that a good quality education can be provided to the learners.

Another issue with the teachers at the schools is that they fail to work together as a team. Although there are some schools which do work together as a team, this is not the case with every school. The influential factor which determines whether or not a school works as a team is the principal of that school (Talbert, 2010).

CEO: “...part of our training we trying to encourage the schools to function as teams. The school management groups -- the people in the school -- to operate as team so that if anybody wasn't there for any particular purpose, everybody else knew what was going on and what needed to be done and you know, as you would expect even in a business, for everybody to know what was going on. The principal of that school kept saying ‘Yes, we do these things’ et cetera, and then if we ever had the opportunity to go past the principal and ask the teachers themselves they said ‘No absolutely not, we haven't got a clue what's going on. He doesn't come to school, he doesn't tell us where he is, we don't know,’ and you begin to think there's a disconnect between what this principal is telling us and what the staff are telling us so then you ask the principal: ‘No, they [are] talking rubbish.’” (CEO).

The extract above is an indication of the need for a principal to be a good leader to the school and team of teachers. The principal should manage the school in such a manner that the teachers know what is going on and so that they are able to deal with the issues at hand together as a team. When a school works together as a team they ideally share a greater vision for their school, which is to provide an education to their learners that is of a good quality, and thus do everything that they can do to enhance learner performance. When this is not the

case, a divide begins to form between teachers and the principal or in some cases between the teachers themselves.

Principal: “... or conflict, you can feel that today or in one way or the other, but it happens when you work that maybe you don't see eye to eye. You see but (inaudible)

Interviewer: This is with your staff members?

Principal: Ya, because of the what you call, if there are many people in one place, you will expect, ya the dispute, th[is] kind of dispute. But I will try by all means to level that and not to encourage that.” (Principal one).

The extract above serves as evidence that teachers within a school do in fact find themselves in conflicting situations with each other. It is the job of the principal to ensure that these issues are rectified and at the same time to encourage the teachers to work together. When the teachers of a school work together they can assist each other in the areas that they have difficulty with. Additionally, with the principal encouraging the school to work together as a team, the principal can also encourage the teachers to share the vision of their school for education. In this way the teachers will be motivated by their principal to do their best to ensure that the environment of the school is conducive to learning in every possible way. Fullan (2006) indicates that a key to bringing about change within schools is motivation on the part of individuals involved within the system. With the principal motivating the teachers, the teachers will also be motivated in their teaching practices.

With all this said it serves as an indication that the teachers at these schools are not doing their jobs to the best of their ability. Again, it is not all the teachers' as there are some teachers who are extremely passionate about teaching and therefore do their best to provide the best possible education to learners. The extract below provides an indication of how many teachers feel that they are doing their jobs to the best of their ability.

CEO: “I don't know if I ever told you, we were talking about this at school at a teachers meeting one day -- or it was teachers or principals? I think it was principals - and during the coffee break we were all sort of just chatting and I said to them, to the principals, ‘What would you say if education is privatised? Would it be a good thing or a bad thing?’ ‘Aah, it would be a very good thing.’ ‘Why do you think so?’ ‘Because it would get done better’. You know, all that kind of usual things that we expect them to say. I said, ‘If education was privatised and put into the hands of

businessmen let me ask you a question to which you could give me an honest answer: how many of you would have jobs? Put your hands up.' Not one put their hand up, not one of them. So not one of those people thought that they were doing enough to justify their salaries." (CEO).

Not a single teacher at that meeting put their hand up as an indication that they were doing their job to the best of their ability. What does this reveal about the state of these schools and the amount of effort that teachers put into ensuring that a quality education is provided to learners? This serves as evidence that these schools could perform better if these teachers put in more effort to ensure that they did their job to the best of their ability and thus provide the best possible education to their learners.

5.5.4 A culture of silence

Aside from the inability of some district personnel and some teachers to do their work efficiently, there has also been a culture of silence which was revealed in the findings of this research study. When the schools and teachers were asked about the role of the district within their school, almost all the teachers stated that the district is supportive. Yet during the interviews the researcher was able to pick up that this was not entirely the case.

"Interviewer: Thank you. And would say that the district is involved in your school and provides the relevant support that you need?"

Principal:... even though I can say not as DRF does, but they do give us support, they do give us. But not to the extent that DRF is giving us support." (Principal four)

The extract above is an indication of the extent to which the district in the area provides support to the schools. The district does provide support but it is not as much as it should be for the development of the school. This is in line with what is indicated in the literature by key scholars that the district departments in South Africa fail to provide adequate support to schools in South Africa (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al., 2007).

Principal: "...Ya the part that is not, ya they do visit but not re, every time." (Principal three).

In a second school, when asked whether the district in the area was supportive or not, the principal indicated that it was and that it did visit though not as often as expected. When one looks at the extract above, there is an indication that there is some hesitation in the principal's

answer. The hesitation on the part of the principal could be seen as an indication that the principal feels that the district does not provide enough support as she would like it to provide. During this interview with this principal, she went on further to state that there were some departments within the district that provided more support than others. She indicated that the TLS department provided much more support than the governance department.

In an interview with a principal from another school within the area, the principal stated that the foundation phase district personnel visited the school more frequently than the GET district personnel.

Principal: "Yes I'm in frequent [contact], actually, with the foundation phase, they are always here, I'm always asking things from them. The only problem is the GET ones, maybe they are they are also lazy. They don't, they are not in so like, those people that will come and help all the time but the foundation phase ones, they are very good."(Principal two).

At this particular school, the principal indicated that the foundation phase was performing better than the rest of the grades. Once the learners go to grade four their results begin to deteriorate. After reviewing the Annual National Assessment (ANA) results for all grades, the researcher came to the conclusion that the foundation phase was indeed performing better than the other grades. Could the deterioration in results be associated in any way with the level of support that the district is providing to this school? Indeed there are various factors which have an influence on the performance of the learners. However, when examining school improvement from a systems theory point of view, one begins to realise that every aspect within the system has an influence on the system. Thus a change in one aspect of the system could have an influence on the overall system (Nobles et al., 2012). With this in mind, the lack of support from the GET district personnel can be regarded as a contributing factor which results in the performance of learners within this phase being low.

With the schools remaining silent about the lack of support from the district, learners and the school are impacted negatively. Until the teachers and schools demand that their district offices assist them as they require there will be no visible improvement within the schools in terms of results.

5.5.5 A need for assistance

Another issue that arose from this research study is that at times when a teacher does not understand something or does not know how to do it he/she leaves it aside and pays no attention to it.

Principal: *"...And also that, there's that tendency of teachers that if I don't understand something, then I jump it, I don't teach it."* (Principal two).

With such an attitude being adopted by teachers, the quality of education within a school becomes questionable. The area that the teacher decided to "jump" could have been important to the development of the learners. Such an attitude therefore negatively impacts the ability of a school to increase the performance of learners and bring about school improvement. This issue also goes back to the previous issue of a culture of silence amongst the teachers. If a teacher does not understand something he/she needs to ask for assistance, if not from the district office then from the other teachers at the school. This is the idea behind the creation of a professional learning community (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

A similar instance was documented with the SMT teachers who had issues around the managerial tasks that they had to carry out. If the SMTs do not understand how to carry out a task, they sometimes leave it aside until a district personnel comes to show them how to do it. In an interview with a principal, she indicated how the workshops that the DRF has conducted with them have changed the manner in which they handle such tasks.

Principal: *"So mostly now the SMT, the SMT workshops that are taking place. You know I was saying, we have a lot, we have books with all the information but you know, we don't want to read. That's our problem, we don't want to read. So these workshops have made us realise that we need to take everything seriously. You just have [to take] your time to take things and read and see what, how, what is it that I can do about this and that. Not just to sit and relax. And say that things are going to come in their own way when they are going to come. Because you know what we've been doing, you know that's why the ward managers will come. I will tell them that I don't understand this, I don't know this. But then it's not like that because they want [th]e work done. So now I'm not afraid of anyone [who] would come because I will just tell them that, okay this is done like this, you have to do[it] like this."* (Principal two).

The extract above is an indication of the extent to which the DRF has assisted the schools in terms of capacitating them so that they are able to carry out their jobs efficiently and timeously. This is the reason that Fullan (2001) indicates that individuals need to be capacitated for their role so that school improvement can ultimately take place. The extract is also an indication of what is likely to happen at a school where the SMT members do not know how to carry out a task; they will wait for the district. In a case of this nature one begins to question whether it is the district which is responsible to teach the SMTs how to carry out tasks or whether it is the teachers who should “read” and teach themselves.

Another issue of a similar nature that was brought to the researcher’s attention was the inability of the schools within the area to draw up a strategic plan due to the lack of guidance and training from the district.

Consultant: *“Ya, because you know with the departmental officials, there’s always a complaint that they have a lot of a load to carry. One circuit manager would say ‘I am, I’m managing 48 schools’ for an example, and the demands of the system are overwhelming, as schools would be expected to submit this and submit that. Draw up your school development plans, somebody would use a different language, draw up a strategic plan and submit to the department, to the district, and schools don’t know what a strategic plan is, it’s too high flown for ordinary school managers.”*
(Consultant).

From the extract above one gets the impression that most of the time the schools are required to process and submit documents to the district without actually knowing how to do it. The district merely makes demands without providing the required support and guidance as to how to go about completing the task at hand.

Aside from the district’s inability to support and provide guidance on how to carry out tasks, they also fail to follow up with the schools at a later stage. One striking example which is deemed as important to teacher development is the IQMS.

Consultant: *“... that’s not the only one, right now, today, I’m coming from a staff development workshop. You know that in the system we have what they call the IQMS Integrated Quality Management System for schools and that is meant to be [for] performance management and staff development. So in the previous workshop, in April, we introduced the performance management systems and we looked at the*

systems in general from a private sector industrial point of view and the schools' point of view and then today, as a follow up, we doing staff development, we've been doing staff development. Now I was trying to help them to link these what they call self assessment, their stages. You know it's quite a complex process: the educator has to do a self assessment and thereafter they draw what they call a PGP Professional Personal Professional Growth Plan et cetera. And these things are just shelved for the sake of submitting to the district and nobody follows up. And therefore the IQMS loses its focus which is mainly teacher development.” (Consultant).

When the district fails to follow up with schools on critical aspects such as the IQMS and the PGP, how can any teacher development take place? Teacher development is an aspect which could contribute largely towards school improvement and it is being neglected. How then can the state of South African schools improve to provide a quality education to its learners if crucial aspects such as these are being neglected?

A principal explicitly stated to the researcher that the district personnel failed to conduct a follow up with the schools to determine if they were on track or not.

Principal: “...as I said, they are not working those department one. The trainees they don't do the follow up and don't see whether we are doing it correctly or what. But the DRF, there's a follow up.” (Principal eight).

When the district officials fail to conduct follow up's with the schools, how then can they determine whether a school is progressing as planned or not? How then does one determine if the schools need any further support? The role of the district is to manage the schools through providing them with direction, placing pressure on them and giving them the required support that they need so that they can progress (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al, 2007). However within the schools in this particular area this is not the case.

5.5.7 A need for a change within the South African school system

The education system in South Africa has been historically problematic. Over the years there has been a focus on developing the education system so that it provides a good quality education to all learners. There are issues with the districts (Chinsamy, 2002) and with teachers at the schools (Khosa, n.d.). There needs to be change within the system as a whole (Fullan, 2006). It is clear that the schools are not doing their best to ensure that an education of a good quality is provided to their learners, and they know that they can do better.

CEO: *“It means they know they could do better. Why don’t they do better? Because they [are] not encouraged, they[are] not incentivised, they[are] not supervised, they [are] not ... nobody nurtures the system. You know the objective of the system is to provide children with an education that will make them right in the world. Do you think that’s what everybody in that whole chain of -- from the prime minister or the president all the way down to the local [Circuit manager] on the ground -- do you think [that] everybody on that organisation has the same vision? 99.9 per cent of them are only concerned about their own monthly salary, and their own job, and their car allowance, and their housing allowance, and their food allowance, and the next meeting they going to; that’s what they’re concerned about.”*(CEO).

The extract above sums up the reason why teachers within these schools fail to perform at their best. The schools and teachers need support from their district (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al., 2007); they need to be encouraged and motivated (Fullan, 2006). Another point that the CEO of the DRF makes is that everyone who is involved with the Department of Education needs to share the same vision so that they have the same drive to change the system of education within the country. What the CEO of the DRF says is in line with what Fullan (2006) says about the need to change the culture of the school system. This should be done at a whole school level, targeting the whole school system so that every individual within the system is both capacitated and shares the same vision for education (Fullan, 2001).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has introduced the David Rattray Foundation and how it was established. The researcher has also outlined the various projects that the DRF has implemented over the year and how it’s functioning has progressed over the years. Within this chapter the researcher also introduces and explains three major themes which have emerged from the data. These themes include (a) school improvement, (b) partnerships, and (c) wider system issues.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will discuss both the review of literature and the conceptual framework of this research study in relation to the findings of the study. The researcher will determine whether or not the literature and conceptual framework apply to the findings and identify what has not been done with regard to the literature and what has been found that was not predicted by literature.

6.2 The complexity of schools

Schools can be understood as complex systems in which learning takes place (Harris, 2010). There are various requirements that need to be met in order for schools to perform at their best. Thus there are various factors which need to be taken into consideration when implementing projects at schools with an aim to bring about school improvement. As discussed in chapter two, these factors include (a) district support and pressure (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al., 2007), (b) good principal leadership skills (Van Der Linde, 2006; Schleicher, 2012), (c) good skills and knowledge on the part of teachers (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), (d) adequate resources (Christie, 2008) and (e) parental and community involvement (Hattie, 2009).

The literature on school improvement acknowledges that it is essential to address the above mentioned issues within the school system so that school improvement can take place. However, the literature also indicates that within South African schools these aspects are often inadequate which results in poor performance within schools (Khosa, n.d).

The factors mentioned above all contribute towards whole school improvement (Fullan, 2001). When implementing school improvement interventions at a school, one can choose to focus on the whole school in order to bring about whole school improvement or alternatively one can choose different aspects or parts within the school and focus on that part in order to initiate school improvement. The DRF has made an attempt to implement a form of whole school improvement within the schools with which they have initiated school improvement projects. They have provided resources (including infrastructure development) to the schools, built the capacity of principals to perform to the best of their ability, focused on the

development of teachers and tried to get the community and parents involved within the schools.

However, when one looks closely at what the DRF has done with regards to the implementation of these interventions at schools, one begins to realise that not all of the DRF's partner schools have received the same resources in terms of infrastructure development. Each school has received different interventions in terms of infrastructure and although the DRF has had the whole school in mind, it has not equipped the schools with every possible resource that they would need for optimal performance. Rather, it has chosen to invest in selected areas that contribute towards school improvement. Bearing this in mind, one can say that the DRF did not provide a comprehensive form of whole school reform to these schools although it did have the whole school in mind. Yet at the same time, one can note that the DRF has provided a range of individual school improvement interventions to the schools, which is the approach that was followed in the early years in the field of school improvement (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006).

Aside from the fact that the DRF has provided varied resources to schools, the DRF has also not focused its attention on the district in terms of capacitation. The DRF did, however try to get the district involved in the early years, with little success. Fullan (2011) acknowledges that for whole school improvement to take place, all levels involved within the school system need to be capacitated so that they are able to carry out their roles in the system effectively. With regards to the DRF, one notes that despite its efforts to get the district involved it has not intervened at district level. The school improvement model that it has used cannot be termed whole school reform, therefore, as a whole school reform would look at all aspects involved within the school system (Fullan, 2011).

Despite the DRF providing varied resources to schools and not including the district in its plans, it is clear that the DRF does indeed have the school system in mind. Systems theory claims that a change in one part of the system has an influence on the whole system as every part within the system has an influence on the other parts (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). At the same time, complexity theory argues that the school system is complex (Harris, 2010) and that there are various aspects at play at the same time. Every aspect within the system is nested within others and there are thus multiple dynamics at work within the system that could either impede or promote an overall change in the system (Byrne, 1998). It is for this reason that one can never know what exactly will bring about a change within the school

system, yet one can try to intervene at all levels so that ultimately school improvement can be achieved.

This is essentially what the DRF has done: it has attempted to provide a form of whole school improvement by addressing the areas that are believed to have the greatest influence on the school system. The CEO of the DRF acknowledges that a school is a system and that a change in one part of the system is bound to influence the whole system. Through the implementation of interventions within schools, the DRF has encountered problems over the years, which Fullan (1993) and Byrne (1998) indicate is to be expected as in the real world there are numerous influential aspects at play. To address the issues that the DRF has faced, the CEO of the DRF has adopted a unique business approach to ensure that teachers and schools are both committed and motivated to initiate change. As outlined in chapter five, the business model for school improvement explains the thought processes and rationale behind the CEO's decisions.

However, going into the future, the DRF does intend to provide a form of whole school reform to two chosen "green schools" which will form part of a chain of "blue schools". As discussed in chapter five, the DRF intends to provide every possible aspect that is required to bring about school improvement within these "blue schools". Thus a form of whole school reform will be attempted. The shift from individual school improvement initiatives to a whole school improvement by the DRF is in line with trends the field of school improvement, as today there is a focus on bringing about systemic and whole school improvement (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). However, in order for the DRF to make this a comprehensive whole school reform, it needs to include the district in its plans for school improvement to ensure that there is development at the district level as well.

Fullan (2001) states that the capacity of the school system needs to be developed first before any school improvement interventions are implemented within schools. When the capabilities of school systems are developed then they are able to make the best use of the interventions that they receive or choose to implement. Fullan (2006) also states that the culture of schools needs to change so that optimal school improvement can take place.

6.3 Change within schools

Fullan (2006) acknowledges that before any change can take place within a school, the culture and individuals within the system need to change first. He emphasises the need for

individuals within the system to be motivated to change (Fullan, 2006). Within the DRF we find that the CEO of the DRF has a similar approach towards school improvement. The CEO of the DRF uses the partnership, as outlined in chapter five, which were formed with the schools as a basis for initiating this change within the schools.

The partnerships have been put in place to ensure that the schools are committed and show some initiative towards bringing about a change. When the CEO of the DRF identifies that a school is both determined and motivated to change, which is determined by its commitment to the partnership, he will then assist it further with the aspects that it may require in order to progress.

Fullan (2006), together with Taylor (2008), indicates that the whole school system needs to change its culture and needs to be motivated to bring about change. However, we find that the CEO of the DRF initially tried to get the district involved but experienced little success. Despite this setback he has focused on initiating change within the schools themselves. In schools that adhere to the partnership the principal and teachers are found to be motivated and committed to bringing about change.

Fullan (2001) goes on to say that aside from the motivation to change and changing their culture, schools also need to be capacitated to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they may require for their role in the school so that a notable change can take place. Through the DRF's interventions school principals have been capacitated with leadership and management skills and teachers have been equipped with curriculum and pedagogical strategies so that they can fulfil their roles to the best of their ability.

From the point of view of complexity theory and the idea that every aspect that contributes towards the development of a school is complex in itself, one needs to ask what aspects of teacher development and the development of managerial skills were taken into consideration when planning the capacity building workshops. As an example, it is essential to take into consideration every possible aspect that plays a role in the development of teachers that would allow the performance of teachers to increase (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). When this is done it is more likely that teachers will in fact benefit from such workshops, and their ability to contribute to school improvement will increase when all the contributing factors are taken into consideration.

6.4 The context of schools

The context in which a school is based is regarded as having a significant influence on the performance of the school in question. There has thus been a great deal of emphasis placed on the need for schools to take into consideration their context when implementing school improvement projects (Mourshed et al, 2010; Christie, 2008).

The DRF's partner schools are located in a deep rural area and the context in which these schools are placed has a profound effect on their performance. The schools are situated in an area which is isolated and poverty stricken with many of the children that attend these schools staying with their grandmothers and some children living in child headed households, as discussed in chapter four. There is only a small number of children who attend these schools that actually live with their parents.

With this in mind, the schools in the area all have access to kitchens in which they provide meals to learners at lunch time. Additionally there are 'drop in centres' that provide breakfast to orphans in the morning before they go to school. Aside from the provision of food to learners, there has also been a need to get parents and the community more involved within the schools. To do this the DRF implemented a community engagement project to encourage parents and the community members to get more involved. Most of the individuals who live within this area are illiterate, thus it is challenging to ensure that learners receive additional support for their schoolwork from their home environment, a factor which has an influential impact on the performance of learners (Hattie, 2009).

Despite this challenge, principals reported that following the DRF's community engagement programme parents have been more involved in their children's learning and have assisted where they can. The community has been encouraged to motivate and encourage learners to perform whilst at the same time emphasising the importance of learning. As a result learners are now encouraged by the community to read at home and community members are bringing learners who play truant back to school.

Additionally, Christie (2008) speaks about the difference in the quality of education between rich schools and poor schools. A rich school which has more resources is more likely to perform better and offer an education that is of a greater quality to learners than a poor school which lacks the essential resources it requires in order to perform effectively. To counter this issue, the DRF has attempted to provide the schools within the area with the resources that

they require so that they are able to provide their learners with an education that is of a good quality.

Despite the fact that both context and socio-economic status are strongly associated with a school's performance (Christie, 2008), Taylor (2008) acknowledges that there are schools that achieve a higher quality of education and thus perform better with fewer resources than South African schools. As Taylor (2008) has indicated, South African schools have a notion that due to a lack of resources they will not perform well and are then held back by their lack of drive and motivation. This attitude of apathy was evident in the findings of the data from this study as noted in chapter five.

6.5 Models of school improvement

There are various models of school improvement which the researcher has discussed in chapter two. The researcher has found that not all of these models are being used by the schools in the area.

With regards to the model of school improvement that is proposed by McKinsey and Company (Mourshed et al., 2010), the researcher found that the schools in the area do not adhere strictly to the hierarchy of the model in terms of what is required of schools within the various stages. The schools have elements of different aspects of the model.

With regards to the "poor to fair" stage of school development (Mourshed et al., 2010), the researcher notes that within the DRF's partner schools there has been a focus on literacy and numeracy as is the case with all South African schools. There has also been infrastructure development within these schools with assistance from the DRF and the schools have tried to ensure that the basic needs of their learners are met through the provision of meals during lunch and food hampers which are made available to learners from child headed households. However the schools do not use scripted teaching material; while they follow the CAPS curriculum, the planning and preparation of lessons is left up to teachers who also choose which text books they use. In terms of district visits, the researcher has found through this research study, as discussed in chapter five, that they are inadequate as schools do not receive as much support as they would like from the district. Lastly, with regards to teachers who perform well, there are no incentives in place for such teachers which could be seen as a reason for the general lack of drive and motivation.

With regards to the “fair to good” stage of school development discussed in chapter two (Mourshed et al., 2010), the researcher found that within the DRF’s partner schools the teachers and the school are required to be accountable, as indicated in chapter five; they are responsible for ensuring that teaching and learning does take place and that they adhere to the requirements of the partnership that they have with the DRF. DRF workshops have also improved the structures of the schools; the SMTs have been equipped with managerial skills and a consultant has visited the schools to ensure that what they learn at workshops is implemented. Lastly, the schools are permitted to handle their finances on their own.

In the “good to great” stage of school development there is a focus on teacher development (Mourshed et al., 2010). At the DRF’s partners schools the DRF has provided workshops to equip both teachers and principals with the skills that they may require to increase their ability to perform their functions within their schools effectively. There are also some schools that perform internal evaluations of their teachers, as outlined in chapter five, in order to ensure that their teachers are performing to the best of their ability.

Lastly, in the “great to excellent” stage schools are afforded more freedom, with schools focusing on within school improvement (Mourshed et al., 2010). Among the DRF’s partner schools one notes that there are schools that have developed ways to improve from within and there are also schools which have formed networks with other schools. Additionally, every partner school has administrative assistants who handles the administration of the school.

Therefore, when reviewing the model proposed by Mourshed et al. (2010), one finds that in relation to the DRF’s partner schools, these schools have factors that they practice across all stages and they do not adhere to the stage specific factors as outlined by the model. This highlights the complexity of the school system, as the schools have engaged in a range of strategies to ensure that they improve. It is almost impossible to determine cause and effect in school improvement due to the fact that there are so many parts within the system which are nested in each other (Byrne, 1998; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In terms of determining what will result in school improvement, the schools and the DRF have chosen to focus on those factors which they believe to have the greatest influence on the development of the school.

With regards to the productive pedagogies model that is outlined by Lingard et al. (2003), the need for learning to be made relevant to the lives of learners is emphasised, as outlined in chapter two. The model accounts for the complexity of classroom practices which have

various influential factors at play. Within the DRF's partner schools, the researcher found that very few teachers made an attempt to make their lesson relevant to the lives of the learners by using the model. There could be two possible reasons for this: it could be that the teachers were unaware of the model or it could also be that the teachers at most of these schools do not have adequate content knowledge (Khosa, n.d.), as discussed in chapter five. According to NEEDU (2012), teachers fail to implement pedagogical strategies due to their lack of content knowledge or alternatively due to their lack of complex problem solving abilities. Yet the productive pedagogies strategy could be useful within South African schools as it is a teaching strategy that acknowledges differences and take these into consideration so that learning can be made relevant to learners within the classroom.

In Hattie's (2009) model of visible teaching and learning he emphasises the need for teachers to determine where the learners are with regards to their learning by seeking feedback from the learners and providing learners with feedback so that they do indeed learn what is being taught in the lesson. Within the DRF's partner schools the researcher found that no teacher sought feedback from the learners, nor did they provide feedback. The only form of feedback that was initiated was the marking of learners' books, and even then the teachers did not provide valuable feedback in the form of corrections. There was only one grade one teacher that went around the class during her lesson to determine whether the learners were doing what was required of them correctly. A possible reason for this failure to provide and seek feedback on the part of teachers could be their lack of content knowledge (Khosa, n.d), as discussed in chapter five.

6.6 School improvement within a South African context

In the South African context there has been a focus on bringing to the fore a system of education that would provide an education of an equal quality to all learners. In doing so South Africa has chosen to implement a form of whole school and systemic school improvement strategies (Simkins & Pereira, n.d.; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). In line with South African school improvement projects such as the Quality Learning Project and the Khanyisa Education Support Programme, the DRF has also made an attempt to focus on a form of whole school improvement in order to ensure that every aspect that has an influence on increasing learner performance is addressed.

Unlike the Quality Learning Project, the DRF has not focused on the district but has focused on the school as a whole. This includes classroom practices to an extent. It has also chosen to

focus on community and parental involvement as is the case with the Khanyisa education support programme. Yet much like the Quality Learning Project, the DRF has focused on capacitating the teachers and principals within its partner schools so that they are better equipped to perform their functions within their schools.

In line with the vast amount of literature on the importance of the role of a principal within a school (Botha, 2010; Schleicher, 2012; Taylor, 2008; Van Der Linde, 2006), the CEO of the DRF also believes that the principal of a school determines whether or not the school functions and performs effectively or not, as discussed in chapter five. It is for this reason that the DRF has chosen to capacitate the principals and management teams of the schools to be able to manage and run their schools effectively so as to allow effective teaching and learning to take place.

One of the issues with regards to bringing to the fore school improvement within a South African context is the lack of support and pressure from the district offices (Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers et al., 2007; Khosa, n.d.; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005). The district departments are considered to be influential in determining the outcomes that a school produces yet it is often the case that the district fails to carry out its role effectively within the school system. It is for this reason that Fullan (2001) advocates that every individual that has a role within the school system, at all levels, be capacitated so as to ensure optimal performance. In line with the capacitation of personnel within the system, Fullan (2006) also advocates for a change in the culture of these individuals so that every individual within the school system shares the same drive and motivation for achieving school improvement.

Within the DRF's partner schools, the researcher found that the schools in the area felt that they did not receive adequate support from their district department, as outlined in chapter five. The lack of support and pressure from the district department can be regarded as a contributing factor within the school system that hinders improvement.

6.7 What was not predicted

There is a vast amount of literature on school improvement which includes many possible interventions that could be implemented within schools. Bearing this in mind, the DRF has certainly conformed to the literature in terms of what interventions should be carried out to bring about school improvement yet the approach that the DRF has taken towards school improvement is unique.

As outlined in chapter five, the researcher of this study found that the CEO of the DRF uses a business approach when implementing the various school improvement interventions. This is largely due to the fact that the CEO of the DRF comes from a business background. While the CEO of the DRF may have been unaware of his use of business principles in the implementation of school improvement interventions, it provides an insight into a different approach to initiating school improvement within schools.

With this approach, the CEO of the DRF formulated partnerships with the schools, as outlined in chapter five. The partnerships serve as a means to ensure that the schools within the area have a role in bringing to the fore school improvement even if it may be implicit. The partnerships provide a means to ensure that all schools are determined and driven to bring about change; at the same time it provides a form of external pressure to the schools.

This business model, which is outlined in chapter five, represents a unique approach to implementing school improvement initiatives. With business logic in mind, determining the opportunity cost and the rate of return drives the rationale behind how the CEO implements projects. He will only implement a project if the expected rate of return is high.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has discussed the findings of this study, as outlined in chapter five, in relation to the literature that has been reviewed in chapter two and the conceptual framework in chapter three. The chapter outlines how the DRF has progressed over the years which goes in line with the literature on school improvement. The researcher also takes note of how the DRF has taken similar approaches as recommended by Fullan. Lastly the researcher has outlined how the DRF's approach to school improvement is unique as compared to that of other school improvement projects.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In this section the researcher will provide a summary of the main findings of this research study. In doing so, the researcher will indicate how the questions of this research study have been answered. Lastly, the researcher will provide recommendations for school improvement.

7.2 Summary of the main findings

This research study investigated school improvement which was initiated in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa by the David Rattray Foundation. The focus of this research study was the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) together with the school improvement interventions that it has carried out. This research study aimed to formulate a case study of the DRF as an organisation in an attempt to identify the nature and the function of the DRF.

The researcher chose to work from an interpretivist paradigm as the researcher wanted to gain a deep, descriptive understanding of the work that the DRF has conducted as a means towards achieving school improvement within its partner schools.

There were three main questions that the researcher set out to answer:

- What is the nature and function of the DRF?
- What interventions has the DRF implemented to bring about school improvement in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area?
- How were these interventions implemented and what were the processes of change that occurred?

To determine the nature and function of the DRF, the researcher conducted interviews with the school principals, the CEO of the DRF and a consultant who works with the foundation. Additionally, the researcher engaged in a document analysis to gain a greater understanding of the DRF and its functioning.

The findings from this study indicate that the DRF is an organisation which aims to provide assistance to the schools in the area so that the selected schools are better equipped to provide an education that is of a good quality to its learners. The DRF is by no means a charity

organisation; rather it is an organisation that requires its partner schools to get involved in the process of change.

The findings of this research study also indicate that the manner in which the DRF operates is unique as compared to the approaches of other school improvement projects. The DRF uses a business approach to bring about school improvement with business principles in mind. The use of a business approach is a means to ensure that the schools cooperate and play a role in the process of change.

With regards to the second question of this research study, the researcher engaged in a form of non-participant observation with use of a checklist to determine which interventions were implemented in each school. Additionally, the school principals and the CEO gave the researcher an indication of which interventions were implemented in the schools during their interviews.

The findings of this study indicate that the DRF has provided various interventions to its partner schools to bring about school improvement. These include resources and infrastructure development, development of teachers, development of school management teams and principals and community engagement programmes. The DRF has provided a range of interventions to these schools so that they are equipped with the skills and resources that they require in order to progress.

With regards to the interventions that were provided to these schools, the researcher notes that the DRF has attempted to provide a form of whole school improvement to these schools as areas such as resources, development of teachers and principals and community involvement was addressed. However, with regards to the resources that were implemented in these schools, the findings of this research study indicate that each school received varied interventions; no two schools received the same resources. Thus every school had a different need that was addressed.

Additionally, for a whole school improvement to be achieved, all the levels that are involved in the school system have to be included in the plan for development and capacitation (Fullan, 2001); this includes the district, school and teachers. Although the DRF made an attempt to try to get the district involved with the school development plans and projects, it had little success. The DRF did not intervene with developmental workshops at the district level; as a result, whole school improvement was not entirely achieved.

However, going into the future the DRF intends to bring about a form of whole school improvement, as discussed in chapter five, with the development of “blue schools”. In these schools every aspect that is believed to have an influence on the improvement and effectiveness of a school will be addressed. Thus these schools will be equipped with every possible resource that they may require so as to ensure that an increase in learner performance is ultimately achieved. However, again, for this to constitute whole school reform the district would need to be included in the school improvement plans with capacitation at this level of the school system.

With regards to the last question that this research study set out to answer, the researcher made use of both the interviews and the participant observation that occurred in stage three of the research study to answer this question. The researcher has identified that the manner in which interventions have been implemented within these schools has changed over the years.

During this research study the researcher identified a shift from the charismatic approach towards school improvement that was initially taken by David prior to the development of the foundation, to the current approach, which is more systematic and business-like, with the establishment of the foundation.

Initially, the DRF intended to carry on the work that David had initiated prior to his death. However, with time, the DRF realised that a better understanding was needed of what exactly the schools required in order for school improvement to take place. The findings of the evaluation that was conducted by the Delta Environmental Centre have since influenced the interventions implemented by the DRF.

Additionally, over time, with the development of the partnerships, as discussed in chapter five, the manner in which the DRF operates has changed. After the inception of the partnerships, the DRF began to categorise the schools according to their commitment and willingness to participate. The reason for the categorization of schools was to monitor the schools’ commitment, whilst at the same to ensure that the schools were both motivated (Fullan, 2006) and determined to change.

Going forward into the future, the DRF has decided to focus its attention on two of its partner schools which will be designated as “blue schools.” These schools will be equipped with every possible resource that they may require to ensure that optimal learner performance is achieved. With this in mind, the researcher notes the manner in which the DRF has changed

over time. The DRF initially provided individual school improvement interventions to the schools and going into the future it will provide a form of whole school reform with the creation of “blue schools”. Over the years, the DRF has tried different approaches to ensure that ultimately school improvement will be achieved within these schools. As Fullan (1993) notes change is a process; things do not always go according to plan and not everything that is attempted will work due to the complexity of school systems. He goes on to state that one is bound to encounter difficulties whilst implementing school improvement plans as this is part of the change process; change is a journey and what is required to bring about improvement within schools will constantly change due to the complexity of the school system.

With regards to the DRF we note that the manner in which the foundation has progressed portrays the use of a business logic and business model of school improvement. As the CEO of the DRF went along with the implementation of the school improvement projects over the years, one notes that the CEO experienced problems along the way which could be expected due to the complexity of the school system. To address these issues, the CEO uses a business logic to ensure that an optimal rate of return is achieved. Additionally, over the years the CEO has become aware of the school as a system and has begun to understand that every aspect within the system has an influence on achieving school improvement. The CEO has also realised that in order to achieve a greater rate of change the whole school system needs to be improved. This has led to the CEO's decision to move away from providing individual school improvement projects to focusing on the whole school with the development of “blue schools” in the near future so that whole school improvement can take place.

Aside from the themes of school improvement and partnerships which emerged from the findings of this research study, a third theme of wider system issues also arose from the data, which indicates the complexity of bringing to the fore school improvement. This theme is in line with much of the literature on South African schools and the issue of school improvement. Firstly, the district department is not providing sufficient support to schools (Creemers et al., 2007) and without the needed support and pressure from the district schools fail to perform. Secondly, with regards to teachers, the researcher found that there is a large number of teachers that are not motivated to teach and there is also a great amount of teachers that lack adequate content knowledge to teach effectively (Khosa, n.d.). There are other issues within the school system that have emerged from this research study that are discussed in chapter five.

Aside from the issues within the system, there are also contextual issues which have an impact on the performance of learners (Hattie, 2009), as discussed in chapter four. These include the existence of child headed households, children living with their grandmothers, poverty, and so on. These contextual issues further add to the complexity involved in ensuring that increases in learner performances are achieved.

7.3 Recommendations

There are two recommendations that the researcher would like to make when considering further school improvement interventions. The first stems from Fullan (2001, 2006, 2011) who advocates for a need to change the culture from which individuals within the school system work. Individuals within the school system need to be motivated and determined to change (Fullan, 2006), which results in a shared vision of school improvement. When this happens, even if problems arise along the way as can be expected due to the complexity of school systems (Fullan, 1993), individuals will have the capacity to be flexible and persist (Fullan, 2006) with their school development plans.

Secondly, with regards to the various school improvement interventions, as indicated by Fullan (2011), there needs to be a focus on the capacitation of the school system which includes the development of professionals so that they are better equipped to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Once this is achieved then any school improvement intervention that is implemented within a school is bound to be successful due to the competence within the system and the motivation and determination that exists among the individuals who work together to tackle the issue of school improvement.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has summarized the major findings of this research study and in doing so, the researcher has explained how the key research questions of this research study have been answered. Lastly the researcher has provided recommendations to take into consideration for further school improvement projects.

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Appendices

Appendix one

Ethical clearance from the UKZN Ethics Committee



19 July 2013

Mr M Govender 209504783
School of Education and Development
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: H55/0462/013D
Project title: An investigation of school improvement: a case study on DRF schools in rural KwaZulu Natal.

Dear Mr Govender

Expedited approval

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Professor U Bob (Chair) and Dr S Singh (Deputy Chair)

/pk

cc Supervisor: Professor Wayne Hugo
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr MN Davids
cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Professor Urmilla Bob (Chair) and Dr Shenuka Singh (Deputy Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: simbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



Appendix two

Letter seeking permission from the district

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01
Scottsville, 3209



25 February 2013

The District Director
District Office
Department of Education

RE: permission to conduct research in schools in the Isandlwana area

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Mogandren Govender, and I am an Education and Development student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's Dissertation involves exploring the DRF interventions on school improvement. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Prof. W. Hugo (UKZN, South Africa) and Mr. E. Khambule.

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach eight schools in the Isandlwana District.

I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes copies of the measure and consent forms to be used in the research process, as well as the copy of the approval letter which I received from the UKZN research ethics committee.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 073 688 9707, mogandrengovender@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mogandren Govender

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

Appendix three

Letter seeking permission from principals of the DRF's partner schools

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville, 3209



The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently studying towards a Master's in Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am presently engaged in a research study which explores the DRF interventions on school improvement.

In this regard I have chosen your school because you are involved with the DRF. I believe that you have the potential and can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this concept. We would also like to request permission to converse with teachers and learners informally about the DRF and its work in your school.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance and competence of your teachers or of the school. It is specifically directed at the impact of the DRF intervention. The identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all principals of DRF schools. They will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. However, principals will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of the participants, feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the study.

My supervisor is Prof. W. Hugo who can be contacted on 033 260 5535 at the Faculty of Education, Room 51, Pietermaritzburg Campus (School of Education and Development). My contact number is 073 688 9707.

You may contact my supervisor or myself should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully

Mogandren Govender

Appendix four

Letter seeking permission from the CEO of the DRF

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville, 3209



Dear Sir

I am currently studying towards a Master's in Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am presently engaged in a research study which explores school improvement.

In this regard I have come across the DRF and the school improvement projects that it undertakes. I believe that the investigation of the DRF and the school improvement interventions that it has implemented can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on the concept of school improvement within the South African context.

Please note that this is not an evaluation of the DRF. It is specifically directed at the impact of the DRF interventions towards school improvement. I request your permission to carry out research of the DRF and the interventions that it has carried out, together with an investigation of the DRF schools and how these interventions have worked for them.

I assure you that the identities of all who participate in this study will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I undertake to uphold the autonomy of all principals of DRF schools. They will be free to withdraw from the research at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to themselves. However, principals will be asked to complete a consent form. In the interest of the participants, feedback will be given to them during and at the end of the study.

My supervisor is Prof. W. Hugo who can be contacted on 033 260 5535 at the Faculty of Education, Room 51, Pietermaritzburg Campus (School of Education and Development). My contact number is 073 688 9707.

You may contact my supervisor or myself should you have any queries or questions you would like answered.

Yours faithfully

Mogandren Govender

Appendix five

Letter granting permission to conduct research from the Department of Education



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref: 2/4/8/432

Mr Mogandren Govender
28 Lucknow Road
LADYSMITH
3370

Dear Mr Govender

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct a pilot and research entitled: **An Investigation of School Improvement: A case Study on DRF Schools in Rural KwaZulu Natal**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 June 2013 to 30 June 2015.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the schools and institutions in the following District/s of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education:
Umzinyathi District Amajuba District Vryheid District


Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
24 June 2013

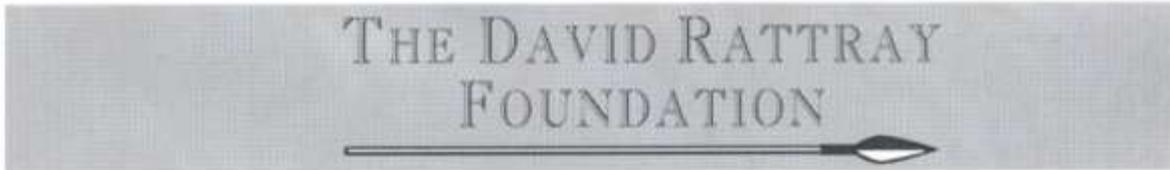
KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa
PHYSICAL: Office G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 3418610 Fax : 033.341 8612
EMAIL ADDRESS: sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;
WEBSITE: www.kzndoe.gov.za

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty

Appendix six

Letter granting permission to conduct research from the CEO of the DRF



In association with The David Rattray Memorial Trust (UK)

2 July 2013.

RE: Permission to conduct research.

To whom it may concern,

This is to serve as a notice that Mr M Govender has been granted permission to conduct research on behalf of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) during the year 2013.

Yours faithfully,

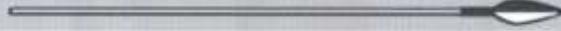
J B Henderson

P O Rorke's Drift 3016 KwaZulu Natal South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 34 271 8768/271 8051/6421843 Fax: +27 (0)34 271 8053/271 8768
Email: foundation@fugitivesdrift.com Website: www.davidrattrayfoundation.com
www.facebook.com/davidrattrayfoundation

Patrons: His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales – Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Directors: Tom Boardman (Chairman) – Christopher Harvie – Ben Henderson – Malcolm McCulloch – Mondli Makhanya – Andrew Rattray – Nicky Rattray – Cyril Ramaphosa – Princess Tyler – Brian Xaba

THE DAVID RATTRAY FOUNDATION



In association with The David Rattray Memorial Trust (UK)

CEO & Trustee
David Rattray Foundation

P O Rorke's Drift 3016 KwaZulu Natal South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 34 271 8768/271 8051/6421843 Fax: +27 (0)34 271 8053/271 8768
Email: foundation@fugitivesdrift.com Website: www.davidrattrayfoundation.com,
www.facebook.com/davidrattrayfoundation

Patrons: His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales – Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi

Directors: Tom Boardman (Chairman) – Christopher Harvie – Ben Henderson – Malcolm McCulloch – Mondli Makhanya –
Andrew Rattray – Nicky Rattray – Cyril Ramaphosa – Princess Tyler – Brian Xaba

Appendix seven

Interview Schedule for CEO of the DRF

1. Could you please explain what the DRF is all about?
2. How did the DRF come about?
3. What are the aims of the DRF?
4. Why did you choose to focus on schools rather than any other organization?
5. Why did you choose to work with the schools in this area in particular bearing in mind that this area is so full of power and history?
6. Did you select the schools in which to intervene or did the schools approach you?
7. (Depending on the answer) - How did you go about selecting those specific schools?
 - On what criteria did you select those schools?
8. How did your list of interventions come about?
9. What is the logic that underpins the list of interventions?
10. How did you decide what interventions were needed in the various schools?
11. Did you follow up on the interventions?
12. In your opinion, would you say that your interventions have been useful?
13. If yes, what makes you say that they have been useful? If no, why do you say that they have not been useful?
14. Please comment on the following: How do the DRF schools perform? (How do you distinguish between schools that perform well and schools that perform poorly?)
15. Why do you think school performances vary?
16. Would you say that the DRF has contributed to school improvement and how?

Appendix eight

Interview Schedule for Principals

Part one:

1. How many years of experience do you have as a principal?
2. How many years have you been a principal for in your current school?
3. What is your role as a principal?
4. Could you please elaborate on the ethos (culture) of your school?
5. Does your school have goals, a vision and a mission statement?
6. How would you rate the performance of your school?
7. What is your understanding of school improvement?
8. What do you feel needs to be done in your school in order to bring about school improvement?

Preference analysis

Part two:

9. What is your understanding of the DRF?
10. Explain to me how you were introduced to the DRF?
11. How is the DRF involved in your school?
12. What has the DRF done in your school?
13. How do you feel about what the DRF has done in your school?
14. How were the interventions decided on?
15. Why did you decide on these interventions knowing all the other interventions exist?
16. Are there any interventions not on this list which you think could improve your school?
17. Why do you think they could be important to your school?
18. Why do you feel these interventions were not important?
19. Why do you feel these interventions were important?
20. Has the DRF been useful to your school?
21. Has the performance of your learners worsened or gotten better after the involvement of the DRF?

Appendix nine

Preference Analysis

(Example)

Please rank the interventions below based on what you feel your school needs, using the scale below.

(1) being the *most important* intervention, (2) being the intervention of *medium importance* and (3) being the *least important* intervention.

Interventions	Rating
Bridging nutrition – Nhlayisa	
Classroom furniture (desks, chairs, boards, etc)	
Clinic	
Computer centre	
Computer lessons for principals	
Computers	
Construction of 3 classroom block	
Construction of 4 classroom block	
Construction of full service centre	
Construction of new toilets	
Construction of shade/shelter (400m ²)	
Delta Environmental Centre course	
Educational toys	
Fencing and extension of school garden	
Fencing of school grounds	

Funding for self help construction	
iHubo summer camp	
Improvement to ground water drainage	
Inkanyeziyokusa I (NCS, Admin, Community engagement.)	
Installation of water pump and water distribution piping	
Jungle gym play structures	
Kingsmead computer visit	
Kingsmead Teachers Workshop I	
Kingsmead Teachers Workshop II	
Kitchen (for food prep)	
Leadership Academy	
Leadership Academy (Principals only)	
Library books	
Library equipment/furniture	
Mains electricity	
Major maintenance work	
Milk supply for children	
Miscellaneous stationery	
NSNP development workshops	
Peace Corps volunteers	
Phathakahle	

Refurbish electrical system	
Refuse bins	
Repainting of school buildings	
Repairs to school buildings	
Roof repairs	
School library, new/refurbish	
School text books	
Science lab	
Scientific calculators	
Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)	
Sports kits	
Supply of electrical generator	
Supply of knitted hats	
Supply of shoes	
Supply of socks	
Teachers' training (Embury)	
Teaching aids	
Tree planting	
Water storage tanks	
Window replacement	
Year end educational trip	

Total (1) =

Total (2) =

Total (3) =

Below are the list of interventions that were implemented at your school, please rank them in accordance to how you feel these interventions were important to you and your school, using the scale below.

(1) being the *most important* intervention, (2) being the intervention of *medium importance* and (3) being the *least important* intervention.

School Name: School one

Intervention	Rating
1. Computer lessons for principals	
2. Computers	
3. Construction of shade/shelter (400m2)	
4. Delta Environmental Course	
5. Funding for self-help construction	
6. Inkanyeziyokusa I (NCS, Admin, Community engagement.)	
7. Installation of water pump and water distribution piping	
8. Jungle gym play structures	
9. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop I	
10. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop II	
11. Kitchen (for food prep)	
12. Leadership Academy (Principals only)	
13. Library books	
14. Mains electricity	

15. Milk supply for children	
16. NSNP development workshops	
17. Phathakahle	
18. School library, new/refurbish	
19. Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)	
20. Teachers' training (Embury)	

Total (1) =

Total (2) =

Total (3) =

Appendix ten

Checklist

Interventions	Check (Yes/No)
a) Safety & Security	
.Fencing and extension of school garden	
. Fencing of school grounds	
b) Infrastructure/Environment	
. Classroom furniture (desks, chairs, boards, etc)	
. Construction of 3 classroom block	
. Construction of 4 classroom block	
. Construction of full service centre	
. Construction of new toilets	
. Construction of shade/shelter	
. Fencing and extension of school garden	
. Fencing of school grounds	
. Improvement to ground water drainage	
. Jungle gym play structures	
. Library equipment/furniture	
. Mains electricity	
. Major maintenance work	
. Refurbish electrical system	
. Repainting of school buildings	

. Repairs to school buildings	
. Roof repairs	
. School library, new/refurbish	
. Supply of electrical generator	
. Window replacement	
c) Water & Sanitation	
. Installation of water pump and water distribution piping	
d) Health& Nutrition	
. Bridging nutrition	
. Clinic	
. Kitchen (for food prep)	
. Milk supply for children	
e) Academic, Curriculum & Resources	
. Computer centre	
. Computer lessons for principals	
. Computers	
. Delta Environmental Centre course	
. Educational toys	
. Funding for self help construction	
. iHubo summer camp	

. Kingsmead Computer Visit	
. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop I	
. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop II	
. Library books	
. Miscellaneous stationery	
. School text books	
. Science lab	
. Scientific calculators	
. Supply of knitted hats	
. Supply of shoes	
. Supply of socks	
. Teaching aids	
. Year end educational trip	
f) Sports, Culture & Community Interaction	
. Peace Corps Volunteers	
. Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)	
. Sports kits	
g) Leadership/Management/Governance	
. Inkanyeziyokusa I (NCS, Admin, Community engagement.)	
. Leadership Academy	
. Leadership Academy (Principals only)	
. NSNP development workshops	

. Teachers' Training (Embury)	
h) Achievement	
i) Eco-friendly	
. Refuse bins	
. Tree planting	
. Water storage tanks	

Appendix eleven

Observation schedule: Phase three (two schools)

Part one: Learners

1. Have you heard about the DRF?
2. Are you aware of the interventions carried out in your school by the DRF?
3. Do you make use of these interventions?
4. Have these interventions assisted you in any way? How?

Part two: Teachers

1. What has the DRF done in your school?
2. How do you feel about these interventions that were carried out in your school?
3. Are these interventions being made use of?
4. Are these interventions beneficial to you?
5. Do you feel that these interventions are beneficial to the learners?
6. How do the interventions contribute to the learning process?

Appendix twelve

Informed consent form

**University of KwaZulu Natal Pietermaritzburg
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**



An investigation of school improvement:

a case study on DRF schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mogandren Govender, from the Department of Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The results from this questionnaire will be contributed to a Master's Dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a principal. In this regard I have chosen your school because you are involved with the DRF. I believe that you have the potential and can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this concept.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of the DRF as an intervention towards school improvement. I hope that this information will contribute toward future school improvement projects.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

- 2.1 Participate in an interview.
- 2.2 It will take about +/- 45 minutes of your time.
- 2.3 I would also require your consent to partake in observation of your school environment and to sit in on a few classes.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that some of the questions that I ask may make you feel uncomfortable. At no time are the questions meant to make you feel threatened, or that you are being judged; they are only asked in such a way to get the relevant information.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

I hope that your participation in the study will help in the planning and implementing of future school improvement projects. No remuneration (payment) will be made to participants.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study and you receive no payment to take part in the study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping the information in a safe place, i.e. the interview scripts will be locked in a cabinet with the supervisor of this research.

The only persons that will have access to this information are the researcher, my supervisor and the examiners at the institution through which this research is conducted.

The data will be destroyed after five years in the case of further research on this topic.

No names of participants or institutions will be disclosed in the publication of results.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mogandren Govender (researcher) at 073 688 9707 or Prof. Wayne Hugo (supervisor) at 082 906 1491.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

I hereby give my consent to participate in this study on the _____ / _____ / 2013 _____

Signature

Declaration by participant:

I _____ (full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research
project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE
