

**A study of school improvement:
An exploration of the David Rattray Foundation as a case
study for school improvement in the
Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area**

By

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education**

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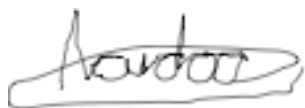
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Declaration

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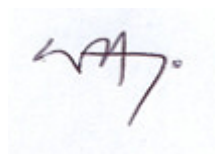
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Abstract

The poor performance of South African schools has become a pressing concern over the years and the need to improve learner outcomes has become tremendously important. It is for this reason funds are invested into the planning and implementing of school improvement projects so that learner outcomes can be enhanced. The purpose of the current study was to explore a set of projects carried out by the David Rattray Foundation (DRF), an organisation that attempts to bring about school improvement to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The study focused on trying to understand the nature and function of the DRF, what interventions they have implemented to bring about school improvement and what the processes of change were that occurred.

The study used Fullan's (2006) theory of change, the seven core premises he introduces on change and complexity theory to understand and interpret the data. The study also used Weber's (1947) two approaches, charisma and bureaucracy, to explain the findings that emerged from the data gathered. The study was qualitative. The study, in addition, was an exploratory and descriptive case study that used six types of data collection instruments, namely interviews, document analysis, a checklist, a preference analysis, observations and Participatory Action Research (PAR). The principals of 8 schools were interviewed as well as the CEO of the DRF. In addition, two of the eight schools were observed in great depth. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

This study presented three themes, which emerged from the data: school improvement, partnership and wider system issues. The findings indicated that the DRF is involved with trying to achieve school improvement. The study also indicated a business-like approach when trying to achieve school improvement. In addition, the study revealed a shift in the DRF's vision, from carrying out individual school improvement initiatives initially to wanting to adopt whole school reform. The study portrayed the difficulty in trying to bring about school improvement to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in view of the facts that the context is an unkind one, the DRF consists of one person solely carrying out interventions in 17 schools under the constraints of time and funding.

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Abbreviations

DoE Department of Education

DRF David Rattray Foundation

LCD Less Developed Country

MDC More Developed Country

MoU Memorandum of Understanding

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

SGB School Governing Body

SMT School Management Team

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1. Introduction

The David Rattray Foundation (DRF) is an organisation that attempts to bring about improvement to schools in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift region, a deeply rural area of KwaZulu-Natal. This study set out to investigate the nature and function of the DRF, the interventions they have implemented to bring about school improvement and the processes of change that have occurred. A checklist, semi-structured interviews, site visits, document analysis, observations, participatory action research (PAR) and preference analysis were used to gather data for the study.

This chapter provides a short background to school improvement and the David Rattray Foundation (DRF). This chapter also describes the focus and purpose of the study, the research problem, the rationale for the study and the significance of the study. The key research questions are highlighted in this chapter, as well as the research design and methodology. The ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are outlined in this chapter too. The chapter concludes with an outline of the remaining chapters in the dissertation. I affirm that permission has been granted for me to use the actual names of the DRF players in this thesis. School names, as well as the identities of principals, however, will be concealed for ethical purposes.

1.2. Background and context of the study

Currently, South Africa's education system is not performing as well as it is expected to. According to Khosa, (n.d.), nearly 80 per cent of public schools are not able to meet the minimum performance standards. It is for this reason that research on school improvement is being undertaken and vast amounts of money are being invested in the planning and implementing of school improvement projects. A number of projects have been implemented to bring about school improvement with each project aiming to address a whole school system or a particular area of the school system.

The David Rattray Foundation (DRF) is an example of an organisation that implements projects in an attempt to bring about school improvement in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in rural KwaZulu-Natal. In the 1980s, David and Nicky Rattray carried out community work

in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift Anglo Zulu War battlefields area. This community work involved the building of classrooms, kitchens and libraries and providing schools with computers. Their purpose was to assist children in the extremely rural areas of Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift to receive a good education in order to help them overcome their difficult life circumstances. In 2007, David Rattray was murdered in the area. Whether his murder was related to his role in the community or whether it was a random incident is not known. After David's death in 2007, the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) was established to honour his life and work. The foundation is sponsored by local as well as international donors who were inspired by the efforts of David and Nicky Rattray. The DRF's interventions aim to improve many aspects of a school, such as safety and security, infrastructure, water and sanitation facilities, the health and nutrition of learners, curriculum and resources, management and governance and the achievement of learners.

1.3. Rationale for the study

The state of education in South Africa is a pressing concern and for this reason many are involved with trying to bring about school improvement. While the literature covers an extensive amount of research carried out on school improvement projects worldwide as well as in South Africa, the David Rattray Foundation has not been researched extensively. The rationale for this study is to explore the uniqueness of the DRF's school improvement projects.

The literature is informative regarding various school improvement projects. My motivation in carrying out this study, however, is to investigate the nature and function of the DRF specifically and explore the interventions they have implemented to bring about school improvement, how these interventions were implemented and what processes of change occurred.

My personal interest in pursuing this topic arose after visiting the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, studying the literature on school improvement and acquainting myself with various school improvement projects.

This study is significant as it provides me with the opportunity to develop insight into how an organisation like the DRF implements projects to try to bring about improvement to schools in an area steeped in history. Firstly, the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area is home to Blood River, the site of a significant battle between the Boers and the Zulus and between the British and the

Zulus, which makes the area a tourist attraction. Secondly, the CEO of the DRF is a wealthy white man carrying out a range of interventions in the schools of a black area that is extremely poor. Finally, the funders of the DRF, who are predominantly international, represent more power and wealth. This study therefore provides an opportunity to examine the processes and dynamics at play within the DRF as well as within the context in which the DRF operates. The findings of the study contribute to theory, practice and policy on school improvement. The study sheds light on the nature of school improvement and on future school improvement projects.

1.4. Key research questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

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

1.5. Research design and methodology

1.5.1. Research design

This study seeks to explore the DRF and its interventions as a case for school improvement. A qualitative style was therefore adopted as the intention was to gain rich, deep insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF. A qualitative style seeks to discover rather than test explanatory theories; it is also naturalistic and favours observation and interviews (Denscombe, 2007). A qualitative style seeks to express certain phenomena using thick descriptions rather than categories and variables (Rule & John, 2011). In a qualitative study, the researcher is expected to immerse herself as an instrument of data collection (Rule & John, 2011).

A case study was used as the main methodological approach as it allowed me, as the researcher, the opportunity to generate an understanding of and insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF in its work on school improvement. The DRF was therefore the unit of analysis. The advantage of using a case study is that it allows for a great deal of depth (Denscombe, 2007). It is also a flexible approach in that it can use an extensive range of methods for collecting and

analysing data, which was done in this study (Rule & John, 2011). A case study also seeks to understand a case in its natural context (Denscombe, 2007).

1.5.2. The research setting

The study was conducted with eight schools situated in the Umzinyathi District, in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The area suited the research objective as DRF interventions have only been implemented in schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The foundation as well as the CEO of the DRF, Ben are also located in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area at Fugitives Drift Lodge.

1.5.3. Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 8 schools from 2 circuits and 4 wards in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area for the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe purposive sampling as selecting participants according to the specific characteristics that are needed for the research problem. The 8 schools were selected on the criteria that they were involved with the DRF and the projects it carries out. The principals of all 8 schools were interviewed with the hope that they would provide valuable insight and extend the boundaries of my knowledge on the DRF. The CEO of the DRF was also interviewed as part of the study.

1.5.4. Data collection

Seven types of data collection instruments were employed in this study to strengthen the quality of its findings. Semi-structured interviews, site visits, a checklist, preference analysis, participatory action research (PAR), observation and document analysis were used. A semi-structured interview is valuable in that it allows the researcher to investigate a certain phenomenon in depth and clarify participant answers. Observations, as well as site visits, are essential for data gathering as they supply the researcher with an insider perspective of the dynamics and behaviours in different settings (Rule & John, 2011).

A document analysis of relevant reports on interventions that have been carried out in the DRF schools, newsletters, the memorandum of understanding, checklists of what has been implemented in the various schools and the schools data survey was conducted to get a sense of the case and its history. The document analysis allowed me to develop an understanding of the nature and function of the DRF as a case study for school improvement. A checklist was also

used while observing to get acquainted with the interventions that were carried out in the various schools. Preference analysis was used as a means to find out which DRF interventions were most favoured or least favoured by the school principals that were interviewed.

It was also important for me to understand the context in which the DRF schools were positioned. I therefore engaged in participatory action research (PAR) to develop a greater sense of the area in which the DRF is functioning. I embarked on a transect walk visiting the area and its surroundings.

1.5.5. Data analysis

Interviews conducted for this study were audio-taped, transcribed and analysed. The preference analysis and the checklist were also analysed. The documents gathered on the DRF were organised and, thereafter, read several times to gain a general understanding of the case. The documents also assisted in gaining a better understanding of the purpose of the DRF and the interventions that were carried out in each school. The observation data was also transcribed and read with careful attention to detail in order to gain a thick description of the nature and function of the DRF project. The transect walk allowed me to capture the context in which the DRF schools are positioned. The memos documenting my experiences from the transect walk was also transcribed and read carefully.

Data was analysed using two approaches, a deductive approach and an inductive approach. A deductive approach works from the more general to the more specific (Aqil Burney, 2008). This is most commonly known as a top down approach. An inductive approach, on the other hand, works from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories (Aqil Burney, 2008). This is most commonly known as a bottom up approach.

The deductive component of this study used Fullan's (2006) theory of change and the seven core premises he introduces on change to understand and interpret the data. I also made use of complexity theory, which in fact is combined with Fullan's theory of change. The deductive component therefore explored whether the theory of change by Fullan (2006) applies to the data collected on the DRF as an organisation implementing projects to bring about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The deductive component of this study also used Weber's (1947) two approaches, charisma and bureaucracy, to identify

whether the CEO of the DRF had adopted a charismatic or a bureaucratic approach when deciding on interventions to be carried out in the various schools.

The inductive component of this study used grounded theory to identify any concepts within the data collected. Thematic analysis was then used to discover, analyse and report any patterns within the data. The data revealed three themes which were of great interest to the researcher.

A variety of sources and methods were used to collect data for this study (triangulation) to address the issue of credibility.

1.6. Ethical considerations

It is important that participants in research have a clear understanding of the conditions and implications under which they will be volunteering. Confidentiality and anonymity were constantly emphasized during this study in order to protect the identities of the participants. The participants were provided with a consent form (see Appendix E) explaining to them the purpose of the study. The participants were informed that there would be no potential risks or harm and that there would be no incentive provided. The participants were also informed that participation was voluntary. The participants were provided with a written explanation of the conditions and implications before they could volunteer to participate in the study. The researcher also abided by the rules of research set out by the university. To pursue the study, ethical clearance was sought from the university (see Appendix A) and permission was obtained from the Department of Education (see Appendix B).

1.7. Limitations

The eight school principals included in this study were sent letters requesting permission to conduct interviews with them. These letters indicated that the study was being carried out on the DRF. The principals therefore may have concealed information during the interviews which could have been valuable to the study because of the fear of losing the DRF's support if they were to respond in a way that cast the DRF in a negative light.

1.8. Outline of the study

Chapter One presents a brief overview of what this study intends to do and serves as an introduction to the whole study. The background to the study is set out and an overview of the structure of the dissertation is provided.

Chapter Two provides a detailed account of the literature reviewed on school improvement. The purpose of the literature review was to outline the nature of school improvement as researched internationally and within South Africa. This chapter presents information on the history of school improvement as well the current position of school improvement. School improvement in a more developed country and a less developed country is also explored using the Productive Pedagogies Framework, Hattie's Visible Learning and a model proposed by McKinsey and Company.

The discussion on school improvement in South Africa focuses mainly on systemic school reform and a number of systemic school improvement programmes. The literature review concludes with a discussion of school improvement in KwaZulu-Natal specifically, as this is the location for the study. In this section I explain the areas which the DRF chooses to address.

In chapter Three, I discuss the charismatic and bureaucratic approaches identified by Weber (1947), which the thesis argues, characterise David Rattray and the DRF's current CEO, Ben Henderson. In addition, Fullan's (2006) theory of change is discussed in detail to demonstrate its relevance to this study. I also discuss complexity theory, a companion to Fullan's change theory.

In Chapter Four the design and methodology used for the study are discussed. This chapter explains the qualitative approach as well as the case study method of enquiry. It explains the sampling procedures used to select participants, the instruments used to gather data and the method of analysis. Ethical issues related to the collection and analysis of the findings are explored and the handling of the qualitative nature of the study is discussed.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the study. A number of different themes are explored in detail.

Chapter Six provides a discussion of the findings. As the findings are disclosed, the chapter also reverts occasionally to the theoretical lenses in order to relate the literature and the theoretical framework back to the findings.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter Seven. This chapter includes a summary of the findings related to school improvement. The chapter concludes with recommendations that were identified during the course of the study with regard to school improvement interventions and makes suggestions for further research in this area.

1.9. Conclusion

I have introduced the dissertation in terms of the background and context of the study, the rationale and significance of the study, the research design adopted for the study and the structure of the dissertation. The subsequent chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

The quality of education is very important to the wellbeing of our world. It is for this reason many are extremely motivated and devoted to truly trying to improve student outcomes (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). An extensive amount of research has been undertaken on school improvement and vast amounts of money have been invested in the planning and implementation of school improvement projects around the world in order to improve education systems.

This chapter provides a detailed account of the literature reviewed on school improvement. The purpose of the literature review is to outline the nature of school improvement as researched internationally and within South Africa. The review begins with an explanation of the term *school improvement* as it is used throughout this thesis. The history of school improvement will be explored as well and a set of critiques of school improvement will follow.

The difference between school improvement in a more developed country (MDC) and a less developed country (LDC) are explored using the Productive Pedagogies Framework, Hattie's Visible Learning and the model introduced in the McKinsey report (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). An explanation of school improvement in South Africa follows, focusing mainly on systemic school reform and a number of systemic school improvement programmes. The literature review concludes with a discussion of school improvement in KwaZulu-Natal, the location of this study, specifically. In this section I describe the areas which the DRF chooses to address.

2.2. The concept of school improvement

Achieving excellence in education is not an easy task. An immense amount of commitment is required in order to attain sustained improvement and ensure quality (Atkinson, 1990). A school that performs exceptionally well is generally considered to have worked hard and utilized its resources well to improve learning (School improvement framework, 2009), which in turn enhances achievement and encourages each learner to realise their full potential (Christie, 2008; School improvement framework, 2009). School improvement, therefore, entails implementing a

number of processes that recognize and address the developmental needs of all schools (School improvement framework, 2009). School improvement is, as a result, concerned with change in order to increase the learning outcomes of all students (School improvement framework, 2009).

According to Harris (2001), research on school improvement concerns itself with the process that leads to student outcomes rather than the impact of an intervention on student outcomes. Researchers in school improvement have placed an emphasis on the process of change at a school level and paid attention to the improvement strategies that are necessary to achieve such change (Fullan, 1992). The position of researchers has been one of development with a unique emphasis upon process measures rather than achievement outcomes. School improvement researchers therefore have been primarily interested in how schools change and become more effective (Hopkins, West, Ainscow, Harris, & Beresford, 1997).

Hopkins (1996) adds that the school is considered to be the centre of change and teachers are seen to be an intrinsic component of the change process. Hopkins (1996) suggests that school improvement is seen in two different ways. The first relates to making schools better environments for learning. The second is a more technical view, in which school improvement is seen as an approach to educational change that improves student outcomes and enables schools to manage and cope with various improvement strategies. In order for schools to do this, however, they first have to become self-renewing. A self-renewing school is one in which change and development goals are identified by the school rather than imposed from the outside (Harris, 2001). In this view, schools have the capabilities to improve themselves by working on their internal conditions. School improvement as a result is mainly concerned with equipping schools with the correct strategies for change and growth.

2.3. History of school improvement

The field of school improvement dates back to the mid-1960s when the use of curriculum materials was emphasised (Harris, 2001). The effective use of curriculum materials was believed to have a significant impact on student achievement. This approach was later disproved, however by the field of school improvement (Harris, 2001). Curriculum materials, while of a high quality, were developed by academics and psychologists with no involvement on the part of teachers

(Harris, 2001). As a result, when they were used teachers merely extracted what they found useful and applied it to their existing teaching practice (Harris, 2001).

In the 1970s new curriculum materials were implemented with the expectation that they would change teaching practices (Harris, 2001). This too failed. Ultimately, it was acknowledged that a top down approach would not work (Muijs, 2010) and that in-service training would be necessary in order to impart to teachers new knowledge and the necessary skills to implement the curriculum successfully (Harris, 2001). The implementation of curriculum materials was an intricate process that required time, planning and commitment in order to succeed (Harris, 2001). Much was learnt in the 1970s which set the platform for future work.

In the late 1970s to mid-1980s, the first studies on school effectiveness were published and the characteristics of an effective school were established. School effectiveness explores the impact that school projects and programmes have on learners' educational outcomes (Creemers & Reezigt, 2005). During this period, studies on school improvement were conducted and the dynamics of the process of change began to be understood (Harris, 2001). Fullan and Joyce became prominent figures due to their contributions in the field of school improvement during this time (Harris, 2001).

During this period, an initiative called the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) was also underway to develop strategies for school improvement (Harris, 2001). The ISIP took a very different line to the top down approaches of the 1970s. The aim of the ISIP was to situate schools at the centre of change. Its objective was to shift schools towards self-renewal and growth (Harris, 2001). This project laid the basis for later school improvement initiatives. After the ISIP, another set of school improvement projects were introduced which took a different approach to that of the ISIP. These included The Halton Project and the IMTEC, an approach to institutional development initiated in Norway (Harris, 2001). These projects situated the school at the centre of change and involved them in the process of planning. These projects also emphasized the importance of involving schools in decision making (Harris, 2001). The Quality of Education for All (IQEA) was a successful project implemented in the UK which provided a model for school change that focused largely on facilitating cultural change within a school (Hopkins & Harris, 1997).

The late 1970s and early 1980s was also a period during which vast amounts of knowledge were produced on the process of change and the factors which influence effective schooling. However, according to Harris (2001) it was not adequate to improve the quality of education. It was in the late 1980s that practitioners and researchers began to develop strategies for specific schools with which they were working (Harris, 2001). Today there is a shift away from only studying change as an event to a view of schools actively taking part in school development and the change process (Harris, 2001). Fullan (1982) emphasizes that teachers, learners and principals need to be involved in the change process.

It is significant to remember that the field of school improvement is very much linked to the field of school effectiveness. School effectiveness as explained earlier investigates the impact that school initiatives have on their learners' educational achievements (Creemers & Reezigt, 2005). Both fields have had a strong influence on education over the past two decades. In the 1990s researchers attempted to make a connection between the two fields, which resulted in effective school improvement (Reynolds, Hopkins & Stoll, 1993). The aim of connecting these two fields was so that the idea of schools being more effective and the idea of improving the performance of learners would be integrated when planning and implementing school improvement programmes (Creemers & Reezigt, 2005). We see this integration today in the various initiatives that are planned and executed.

This overview of the history of school improvement is aimed at noting highlights rather than providing detail. While many school improvement projects have been initiated, few have resulted in school improvement and data on the effectiveness of the projects has not always been available. This will be discussed further in the section which follows, which focuses on critiques of school improvement.

2.4. The current status of school improvement

The nature of school improvement and its history have been briefly reviewed. It is clear that the field of school improvement has yielded a number of important insights and made a significant contribution to how society understands the process of change within schools. Research on school improvement has demonstrated that teacher development is imperative (Opfer & Pedder, 2011) at a school level (Harris, 2001). It has also shown that the development of teachers is

closely linked to the development of schools and both are a crucial part of school improvement (Harris, 2001).

Work on school improvement has shown that there is no “one size fits all” approach that works for every type of school (Fullan, as cited in Griffiths & O’Neill, n.d.). It is important that improvement strategies correspond to the type of school that is targeted (Hopkins et al., 1997). The field of school improvement has highlighted the importance of improving the teaching and learning conditions within a classroom and revealed how important it is that one understands and works with school culture (Fullan, 2006). A school culture that encourages trust and shared working relationships and focuses on teaching and learning is much more likely to be responsive to improvement than a school where this is not the case (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Fullan, 2006).

2.5. Whole school reform

Over the years, schools have been weighed down by innovations that come and go. The solution to this problem, according to Berends, Bodilly and Kirby (as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 2) “has been the development and implementation of Whole School Reform models which involve school-wide reform”. This entails working with whole systems rather than pieces of a system. If a whole system - that is, the school, the district and the state - are being worked on, school improvement is likely to take place. The focus of whole school reform “is reculturing the professional community at the school level, and transforming the infrastructure supporting and directing schools” (Fullan, 2001, p. 3).

There are a number of problems, however, with whole school reform models, according to Fullan (2001). A flaw that seems to exist is the implementation of school reform models as they vary across schools (Fullan, 2001). There is also the issue of sustainability. If a whole school reform model does bring about change to a school system and the key leaders of a system leave, gains can be reversed. It is therefore important, according to Fullan (2001), that sustainable reform take place within a whole system and a school’s capacity be strengthened.

According to Newmann, King and Youngs (as cited in Fullan, 2001), school capacity consists of the following elements: teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources and leadership (by the principal). If each of these areas is strengthened and an unexpected change does occur within a school system, the school system is better able to remain stable and sustain itself. In this way, effective change is able to take place. It can be difficult to estimate how long it will take for change to take place, however. Fullan (2001) emphasises the fact that the process of change can be accelerated if a system makes use of "change knowledge" more intensively. The theoretical framework for this study incorporates "change knowledge," which will be discussed later.

2.6. Critique of school improvement

The field of school improvement has grown considerably over the years, however a number of limitations still exist. A pragmatic critique of school improvement is that several school improvement strategies do not take schools with a diverse range of socio-economic circumstances into consideration (Fidler, 2001). The culture, context and socio-economic (Harris, 2010) issues of a school are extremely important (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) and have been found to not always be taken into account. It is only in recent times that the field of school improvement has identified the importance of taking into account the contextual factors when deciding on and applying school improvement strategies. Another pragmatic critique of school improvement is that a number of projects have been implemented with very little evidence of their effectiveness (Fidler, 2001).

A radical critique of school improvement is that school improvement initiatives misidentify the problem within school systems and very often go about trying to rearrange various parts of the system and intervene in specific areas while the problem originates from the fact that inequality still exists between black and white people and between the rich and the poor. School improvement initiatives therefore sometimes miss what counts in a school system.

An additional limitation within the field of school improvement is that there has been an over emphasis on the school level (Fidler, 2001). Numerous school projects have been unsuccessful with coming to grips with change and development at other levels within a school system. Research within the field of school improvement suggests that school improvement take on a

multi-level approach with strategies that impact all levels within a school system and not just a selected few (Fidler, 2001). The greatest concern expressed in the literature is the way in which school improvement programmes have neglected the classroom level (Fidler, 2001), placing more emphasis on school effectiveness and teacher effectiveness.

One is able to infer from the limitations described above that school improvement can be problematic. It is important that we acknowledge that, despite this, school improvement has, in many cases, resulted in dramatic improvements in school effectiveness. The next section of the literature review focuses on the nature of school improvement in more developed countries (MDCs) and less developed countries (LDCs).

2.7. School improvement in MDCs and LDCs

In both MDCs and LDCs educational investment is seen to be one of the most essential factors that contribute to economic growth. It is for this reason that an extensive amount of research is being carried out on school improvement and an immense amount of money is being used to improve school systems.

A more developed country is one that consists of a highly developed economy, a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a low infant mortality rate and an advanced technological infrastructure (Puga, 1996). A less developed country, on the other hand, is a nation with a lower living standard, an underdeveloped industrial base, a low GDP, a high infant mortality rate and a low Human Development Index (HDI) (Puga, 1996) in comparison to other countries. It is important to bear in mind however that there is no single standard by which a country is identified as an MDC or LDC.

The vital purpose of school improvement is to improve outcomes and levels of achievement and wellbeing for learners (The Australian Council for Educational Research, 2012). This section of the literature review explores the nature of school systems and school improvement in MDCs and LDCs. The model introduced in the report *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) will be used, along with the “Productive Pedagogies” framework of classroom practices that focus on improving the outcomes of learning for all learners (Christie, 2008), to explore the nature of school systems and school improvement in MDCs and LDCs. Hattie (2009) also introduces a model for visible

learning which, too, will be used to explore the nature of school systems and school improvement in MDCs and LDCs.

2.7.1. Background to the McKinsey model

A school improvement project that is developed for a LDC or a MDC will focus on bringing about change to different areas of a school system in different ways. How does one go about deciding on an intervention for schools in MDCs and LDCs? The model introduced by McKinsey and Company in the report *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) examines 20 school systems. The report builds on an article published by McKinsey and Company in 2007 which tries to understand why the world's top performing school systems perform better than other school systems. The study aimed to uncover the pathways that lead to improving schools, bearing in mind that there are different pathways for LDCs and MDCs (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

The model aims to move schools from a status poor to fair, fair to good, good to great or great to excellent with interventions developed specifically for the individual school's context. Interventions for schools designated as "poor" are different to those for schools which are "great". The report is useful in that it offers a useful analytical tool, along with an intervention database, to help guide such interventions (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). School systems are therefore able to use this report and the model offered to extract lessons for their own systems, which are at different starting points. In this way, school systems may be changed and transformed in remarkable ways.

The McKinsey and Company report describes the improvement process as a journey. Before one goes about developing and implementing an improvement intervention, one should first amalgamate three dimensions. Firstly, one has to go about assessing the current performance level. In other words, one would have to measure the outcomes of students in order to determine whether their current level is poor, fair, good, great or excellent. Secondly, one would have to select an intervention. In order to do that, one would have to decide what the system needs to do in order to improve student outcomes. This decision is guided by the system's performance level and the specific challenges that the system encounters. Thirdly, one would have to adapt an intervention according to the context within which one is working. The history, culture, politics

and structure of the school system need to be taken into account when doing this (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

2.7.2. The McKinsey intervention model

The McKinsey intervention model consists of three aspects: an improvement journey, a theme and an intervention cluster. The improvement journey assesses the current performance level, deciding if the current level is poor, fair, good, great or excellent. This is quite similar to the first dimension explained earlier. The theme focuses on the area in which the improvement journey will be worked on. For instance, if the improvement journey of a school system is found to be at a fair to good level, the theme for this level would entail getting the foundations in place. The intervention cluster places focus on three areas that the intervention will address. If we continue with our example of a school system that is found to be at a fair to good level, with a theme that places emphasis on getting foundations into place, the first area of intervention will focus on the foundation for data and accountability (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). This will in turn address issues like the school's transparency and requirements for inspections (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). The second area of intervention for this level will focus on the financial and organizational foundation (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). This area will address issues like decentralizing financial and administrative rights and increasing funding (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). The third area of intervention for this level will focus on the pedagogical foundation (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). This area will address issues like the language of instruction.

2.7.3. A breakdown of each journey

A school that finds itself located within the “poor to fair” journey faces numerous challenges at the start of its improvement journey. Firstly, teachers and principals are not very experienced and are not as motivated as teachers from other systems (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Secondly, the governing education bodies are not very capable of supporting and managing schools (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Thirdly, the performance between schools differs extensively in a particular system (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Fourthly, resources are limited for the improvement program and fifthly, student literacy levels and numeracy levels are low and the level of absenteeism is significantly high (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). To address these challenges, focus is placed on interventions like technical skill-building, external

coaches, instructional time on task, school infrastructure improvement, provision of textbooks, additional funding for low performing schools and meeting the basic needs of learners like meals, clothing, transportation and toilets (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

The “fair to good” journey aims to raise the quality of their students’ skills (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). Their concern is for how to organise the various foundations of their system, like teacher responsibility, finance and pedagogy (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). These foundations are crucial as they provide school systems with the required information and resources required to monitor and improve performance (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). To address these concerns, countries like Poland have focused on interventions like ensuring schools are transparent when it comes to school performance, ensuring that schools are inspected, decentralizing financial and administrative rights and ensuring that the language of instruction suits the context in which teaching is taking place (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

The “good to great” journey is the position at which the school system relies largely on teachers’ values and behaviours to drive continuing improvement (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). In this journey, interventions like pre-service training, certification requirements, school-based coaching, self-evaluation and teacher community forums are implemented (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

The “great to excellent” journey focuses on generating an environment that will set free the originality and novelty of its teachers (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). A country like Hong Kong is at the “great to excellent” journey. This journey has teachers that are highly skilled and have routines and practices that are innate to how they teach and work in a school system (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). The interventions for the last part of the journey focus on enhancing teachers’ responsibility to look after each other’s development and providing teachers with the time, resources and flexibility to reflect on and attempt new ideas that could better support learning (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).

The McKinsey model for school improvement has been broken down into its various areas and a description of each journey has been provided. A set of interventions that accompany each journey has also been provided. This model does prove to be useful in that it emphasizes the

importance of assessing the current performance level of a school system before one begins developing an improvement initiative for a school. Those who do wish to plan and implement a project on school improvement are able to use the dimensions provided in the model.

An exploration of the model as well as the report reveals that most LDCs are located in the poor to fair and fair to good journeys and most of the MDCs are located in the good to great and great to excellent journeys. It is imperative to bear in mind that countries situated in the good to great and great to excellent journeys have come a long way as they were located once as poor to fair and fair to good journeys. A country like Singapore, for instance, is at the good to excellent journey presently as it has worked its way through the various journeys and finally reached the excellent level. Singapore was not always at the level of excellence, in fact this country started off at the poor to fair journey. An example as to how a school system can transition from journey to journey will follow next.

There are various areas in a school system that need to be worked on, however according to Barber and Mourshed (2007) and Christie (2008), one essential part of a school system is teacher quality. This will be examined critically to illustrate how a school system is able to move from a poor level to an excellent level. The quality of a teacher is vital for student achievement and determines the quality of a school system (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Winefeld, & York, 1996). An effective teacher is one that possesses comprehensive knowledge of the subject at hand, is equipped with the correct educational skills and is highly motivated to teach (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Teachers in LDCs are known to fall short when it comes to meeting these standards. Schools within LDCs are actually recognized for attracting teachers indiscriminately. Therefore school improvement projects in LDCs are designed to improve teachers' educational skills, strengthen their motivation to teach and reinforce their professional commitment to teaching.

In a MDC, on the other hand, the quality of teachers differs vastly. The improvement initiatives put into place are different to those in LDCs. For instance, Singapore, Finland and South Korea do not permit just any individual to teach in their schools. These countries are considered to have the most successful school systems in the world (Mourshed et al., 2010; Byron, Kihn, & Miller, 2010). They are different in that, when it comes to selecting teachers, only those with the highest academic achievements stand a chance. Initiatives have been put into place so that once

prospective teachers have received their qualifications in teaching they are made to take various tests to determine their suitability to teach at various schools in the country.

They are tested on their academic ability and are screened for their motives for wanting to teach. Once the teachers are selected - usually one out of ten participants is selected - teachers are expected to undergo an immense amount of training to equip them with the necessary additional skills and knowledge they may require. The educational departments within these countries provide this. Only after that are they permitted to teach. Those training to be teachers are also paid while training. A process such as this is carried out to ensure that only the best teachers are recruited to teach in the schools (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Hammond (2010, p. 510) supports this point, stating “the highest-achieving countries around the world routinely prepare their teachers extensively, pay them well in relation to competing occupations, and provide them with lots of time for professional learning.” There may be many other factors as to why schools in MDCs are so successful but the quality of teachers is definitely a factor that contributes to the success of their schools.

Barber and Mourshed (2007) inform us of three aspects that are extremely important when it comes to improving school systems and having the best school systems in the world. Firstly, it is imperative to recruit the correct people to become teachers; secondly, the teachers that are recruited should be developed into effective instructors and thirdly, it is vital that the school system convey the best possible instruction to each child so that each child is able to benefit equally.

The above indicates quite clearly that huge amounts of effort go into selecting teachers for schools in Singapore, Finland, South Korea and many other MDCs in the world. The selection and training of teachers is a process that these countries wish to perfect. If we contrast this scenario to LDCs we will discover that teachers are recruited in large quantities due to the vast need for teachers (Hammond, 2010). They are also underpaid and not much attention goes into selecting the best teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). What we do not realise, though, is that teachers in countries like Singapore were not always equipped with the correct educational skills and were not always highly motivated to teach. It was over time that these countries worked on these aspects within their school systems to achieve excellence in areas like teacher quality. The dynamics therefore within a school system changes over time and as a country transitions into a

new journey different areas of a school system are worked on. In a LDC, the need presently may be to ensure that the correct resources are made available to the learners, but for a MDC the need may be to have the best mechanisms put in place in order to select the best teachers.

One therefore cannot assume that teacher quality is an aspect that does not receive as much attention in LDCs as it does in MDCs. A LDC happens to be at a very different level to that of a MDC and other needs may be of priority in a LDC that have already been dealt with in a MDC. A range of interventions are being implemented in LDCs to improve the situation of teacher quality. For example, incentives are being provided to teachers to strengthen their motivation to teach (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). It is therefore safe to articulate that the nature of school systems and school improvement in LDCs and MDCs are at different levels of development.

2.7.4. Critique of the McKinsey model

This model works according to a step hierarchy, moving schools from poor to fair, fair to good, good to great, and great to excellent levels. The model offered is great for other school systems that wish to extract lessons for their systems that are at different starting points. The problem with such a model, however is that it does not take into account the concept of individuation. Each school system is unique and functions differently to every other school system. Even if all school systems were to start off at the same level, carrying out the same interventions, each school system would eventually go off in a different direction. The complexities within a school system increase and the McKinsey model fails to take this into account.

An additional problem with this model is that it deals with themes which may change within each journey over time. A theme in the poor to fair journey may change twenty years later. If that does occur, where does a country locate itself within this model and does the model still remain useful? The last limitation I wish to express is that this model does not make mention of the external factors that could affect a school system at any point in its journey. This is crucial, as research does point out that external factors play a huge part in school improvement and should always be taken into account. Harris (2010) reiterates the importance of external factors being taken into consideration when trying to achieve school improvement.

2.8. Productive pedagogies

The next section of the literature review explores one of the many pedagogical frameworks that are believed to bring about school improvement. The four dimensions that make up the productive pedagogy are provided and elaborated on. An attempt is made to link the productive pedagogy framework with a school system in an MDC and a school system in an LDC. It is important that I first define the term “pedagogy”. Pedagogy is a term used to describe an amalgamation of skills and knowledge that a teacher may require to teach effectively (Christie, 2008; Chapuis, 2003).

During the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study, productive pedagogies came about as a research tool for classroom observations (Education Queensland, 2003; Chapuis, 2003). Productive pedagogies are a framework that teachers can utilize to critically reflect on their classroom practices. Productive pedagogies emphasize the importance of a teacher’s role in schooling, placing the teacher at the centre (Hattie, 2009; Lingard, Hayes & Martin, 2003). This is in contrast with projects in the 1970s and 1980s, which situated the school at the centre (Harris, 2001). There are four dimensions that make up the productive pedagogy. Each of these dimensions is believed to make a difference in students’ learning and outcomes.

2.8.1. The four dimensions of productive pedagogies

The four dimensions of productive pedagogies are intellectual quality, connectedness, a supportive classroom environment and the recognition of difference (Lingard, Hayes & Martin, 2003; Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2004; Christie, 2008). The first dimension is intellectual quality; this dimension is concerned about the quality of the lessons that take place within a classroom (Christie, 2008). Teachers are encouraged to deliver high quality lessons in which students are able to critically engage with knowledge (Hammond, 2010). A lesson that is of a high quality is seen to offer students the chance to learn about various phenomena in depth. Knowledge of all sorts is presented and students are encouraged to engage in conversations and express their views.

Intellectual quality expects learners to manipulate information and arrive at meanings that are new to them and learners are expected to critically analyse information in order to give responses that show a deep level of understanding (Christie, 2008). Intellectual quality, therefore, takes

education in the classroom to a whole new level. The dynamics within a classroom that is of high intellectual quality is very different to those in a classroom where ordinary teaching and learning is taking place.

The second dimension is a supportive classroom. If a classroom is supportive, learners are able to take intellectual risks as they feel safe within a supportive environment (Christie, 2008; Hattie, 2009). In this dimension, learners are expected to engage in tasks, raise questions that may contribute to class discussions, regulate their own behaviour and share their views on the outcomes of a lesson. A supportive classroom environment is also one where learners are given social support and teachers express their high expectations to all their students.

The third dimension is engagement with difference. This entails teachers drawing on the various cultures, languages and beliefs of learners in order to get them to participate in activities and ensure that no learner is neglected (Christie, 2008). This dimension is mainly concerned with making sure that all learners in a classroom feel like they belong and that they all share a sense of community. This is a vital dimension in a classroom since a classroom is made up of learners of different genders, races and religions. The fourth and final dimension is connectedness. This entails learners linking their background knowledge to events outside the classroom (Chapuis, 2003; Christie, 2008). In this way learners discover how to connect knowledge from various subject areas. It is this dimension in which learners learn to connect their knowledge to real life contexts.

2.8.2. An application of productive pedagogies to an MDC and an LDC

The various dimensions within productive pedagogies are useful for the teaching learning process and can indeed be used within a classroom to improve learners' outcomes. The problem with this framework is that it was developed in Australia and is most appropriate to schools located within an Australian context. Australia is also a MDC and the level of education in Australia is extremely high, therefore classrooms are able to function at a high level. The problem with a model like this is that it is less suited to LDCs school systems.

A teacher in an LDC struggles to get learners to actually concentrate and grasp a lesson; this makes it difficult for teachers to have high intellectual quality lessons. Another problem is that teachers in LDCs are not always as educated as teachers in MDCs, therefore making it difficult

for teachers to provide high quality engagement with learners. In a class with few learners, learners may find it easy to express their views and regulate their own behaviour. In a LDC, class sizes are large and learners may not feel comfortable engaging in conversations with teachers, raising questions and expressing their views. Another concern is that teachers are not able to provide large class sizes with the social support they need.

Another problem with this model is that it expects learners to link their background knowledge to events outside the classroom (Christie, 2008). Learners in LDCs are not always exposed to television and newspapers to the same extent as learners are in MDCs, therefore making it difficult for learners to use their background knowledge to link to events outside the classroom. This does become a disadvantage as learners may struggle to connect knowledge to real life contexts. A dimension that does seem to apply well to all contexts, though, is engagement with difference. Schools in both LDCs and MDCs can incorporate the culture, race and language of all learners to bring about a sense of community.

This framework is accompanied by many problems. If one is thinking of matching it to a context in an LDC, careful consideration needs to be taken. A framework such as this is more likely to work and succeed in an MDC, although components of this framework may be used in school systems in LDCs when planning and implementing a school improvement project.

With the above in mind, it may be difficult to use such a model in an LDC but it is not impossible. In Australia's education system, indigenous students are identified to be the most disadvantaged group (Ritchie & Edwards, 1996). A study was carried out to explore whether teaching practices would increase educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in numeracy (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.). The study aimed to critically assess the role of pedagogical practices when teachers taught mathematics lessons. The aim of the study was to also assess the ways in which teachers created significant numeracy experiences for Aboriginal students (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.).

The study examined teaching styles, teaching methods, cultural values and the mathematics curriculum and learning outcomes. All the areas of study were related to productive pedagogies. During the study, researchers attempted to understand what kinds of activities and materials were utilized before the study was conducted to teach mathematics (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.).

Researchers also went about examining teachers' expectations of their Aboriginal students and examined the ways in which teachers valued the culture of learners' and how this influenced Aboriginal students' experiences of mathematics. The results of the study revealed that the productive pedagogies framework was appropriate and applicable when teaching mathematics to indigenous learners (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.). Learners' performance in mathematics did improve significantly.

2.8.3. A critique of productive pedagogies

A number of critiques accompany this framework which needs to be considered carefully. The first critique is that productive pedagogies risk being over simplified (New Basics Project, n.d.). This becomes problematic as the four dimensions may be viewed as four ways to become a better teacher. This would disadvantage students as the model is designed to improve students' learning. Productive pedagogies is also criticized for the use of the term "productive pedagogies", which is seen to represent nothing more than a mixture of concepts (Kilmurray, 1995). An essential critique is that the productive pedagogies framework cannot be accurately assessed through policy analysis procedures only (New Basics Project, n.d.). It is only through the monitoring of a teacher's performance and the outcomes of students, for instance through studies like the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS), that a legitimate critique can be made (New Basics Project, n.d.).

Having had a cursory look at the productive pedagogy framework as a means of bringing about school improvement, I now move on to examine a model produced by Hattie (2009) which utilises a list of variables, which he believes are important, and should be carefully considered in order to bring about school improvement.

2.9. Visible learning

In the field of education, there are countless programmes being developed to address issues of schooling. There is a great deal of literature on how to go about improving schools and the teaching and learning that takes place in schools, yet schools still perform very poorly. John Hattie conducted approximately 800 meta-analyses which covered over fifty-two thousand studies so that he could produce a model for successful teaching and learning (Hattie, 2009).

Hattie's studies are based on millions of learners. His aim was to investigate the variables that have an impact on school improvement.

Hattie (2009) identified the variables that are most influential in bringing about school improvement, the variables that influence school improvement slightly and the variables that do not really have an influence on school improvement. He attempted to put together a model that was based on the theme of "visible teaching, visible learning". Visible teaching and learning, according to Hattie (2009, p. 22), is "teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students, and students seeing teaching as the key to their on going learning".

Hattie (2009) identified six areas that contribute to a learner's achievement: the child, the home (Christie, 2008), the school, the curricula, the teacher and the approaches to teaching. It is important, for instance, that a child have former knowledge of learning, that a parent has expectations and goals for the child, that the school and classroom environment is safe and stimulating for the child (Christie, 2008; Hattie, 2009), and that the child receives the best quality of teaching and is informed that errors are allowed (Hattie, 2009).

It is also vital that a child receives the maximum from a well-developed curriculum, so that he or she is able to gain a deep understanding of a range of phenomena and is able to construct his or her own meaning (Christie, 2008; Hammond, 2010). It is also imperative that a child is presented with challenging tasks (Hattie, 2009). It is therefore very important that all six areas are considered when trying to improve learners' achievement. It is also essential that one remembers that classroom contexts are diverse and that a strategy that may be applicable to one classroom may not necessarily be applicable to another. Nevertheless these six areas are to be considered in all classrooms.

Hattie (2009) may believe that the six areas mentioned above are important for learners' achievement, but he places special attention on the need for teachers to be actively involved and passionate when it comes to teaching and learning and in his model he emphasises that learning is an extremely special journey for both teachers and learners. Hattie highlights six ways in which excellence can be achieved in education. He states that a teacher is seen to be one of the most powerful influences when it comes to learning (2009); teachers are meant to be influential and actively engage in the passion of teaching and learning and teachers should always be aware

of what learners know and think about (Hattie, 2009). It is vital that teachers know the intentions of learning and have criteria for their lessons to determine the success of the lessons and what was taught and learnt. It is also important for teachers to have multiple ideas so that they may relate these to other ideas and learners may learn how to construct and reconstruct knowledge (Hattie, 2009; Christie, 2008). It is also important that all areas of a school stress that error is acceptable as a means to learn.

Hattie discovered that the most important variables that impact school improvement is feedback (Reynolds, 2010; Hattie, 2009), students' prior cognitive ability and instructional quality (Hattie, 1992). The variables that have a slight impact on school improvement are teacher style and classroom environment. The variables identified to have the least impact on school improvement are finances, class size and team teaching (Hattie, 1992). Hattie's findings are very unusual and unique because he discovers that feedback is the most fundamental variable that impacts on school improvement. This is a variable that does not surface in most studies carried out on school improvement.

Hattie highlights feedback as the most crucial variable impacting school improvement, as he believes that the most straightforward and uncomplicated way of improving education is providing learners with plenty of feedback (Hattie, 1992; Cornelius-White, 2007). A child needs to be provided with information on how to correct their mistakes and learners should be provided with directions and information on how they can improve. A learner should also provide teachers with feedback on their lessons, whether they are coping, whether they are in need of additional assistance or whether they are struggling with a certain subject or topic. Feedback is important for learners as well as teachers.

Hattie's model is therefore one that focuses on all areas of a learner's life and places extreme importance on the role of teachers at school. The six areas that Hattie believes are important to a learner's achievement are indeed vital and the emphasis he places on teachers is essential. The role of a teacher should never be undermined. He also indicates very clearly which variables are most crucial in bringing about school improvement.

An area that Hattie's model does not take into consideration, which other models do, is the attempt to address achievement at the district and national levels. Hattie instead focuses on the child, the home, the school, the curricula, the teacher and the approaches to teaching and neglects going further. This could be a problem, especially if one wishes to adopt such a model in South African schools. As discussed later in the literature review, all levels of a school system are important and interventions need to be aimed at all levels.

Hattie's work is carried out across all contexts and settings therefore making his findings valuable and generalizable, but because his studies are predominantly carried out in the United States of America, Europe and Australia they leave room for bias as the issues faced in schools in first world countries are somewhat different to those faced by schools in LDCs. As a result, one cannot assume that the variables identified by Hattie are the same variables that impact school improvement in other parts of the world. Another limitation with such a model is that it provides a list of variables that have an impact on school improvement but does not provide suggestions as to what should be done with the list of variables.

If we compare the list of variables that Hattie believes should be addressed to improve schools to the list of areas that the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) selects to address to improve their schools, there is a vast difference. The DRF considers variables such as class size, a safe and secure school environment and a good physical infrastructure to be important factors that impact school improvement. The DRF also regards providing meals to learners, schools having a functioning computer lab, and the school as well as learners maintaining a positive relationship with parents and the community as important variables for school improvement (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.).

It is evident that the DRF's list is very different to Hattie's list. It is important to bear in mind that the context and setting of Hattie's studies are extremely different to the context and settings in South Africa. Therefore, applying a model like Hattie's to the South African context needs to be done with great caution. Hattie's insights into variables, which are important for school improvement in a MDC, could be useful to those in MDC contexts, however.

2.10. School improvement in South Africa

South Africa's education system is performing very poorly at present and the need to improve schools is a pressing nationwide concern. According to Khosa (n.d. p.3) "the problem is systemic; therefore, it requires systemic solutions based on partnerships between the state, the private sector, and civil society." It seems that education reform needs to address activities in the classroom, school management and governance as well as administration of the education system (Khosa, n.d.). The next section of the literature review pays close attention to school improvement within a South African context. A brief history of school improvement in South Africa, as well as an overview of the current situation, is provided.

During apartheid the education system was divided according to race and language, and was funded and resourced in ways that favoured white people and deprived black people (Gardiner, 2008). There was also a distinction between urban and rural schools. The schools that white people attended performed better in comparison to schools attended by black people. Prior to 1994, school improvement was largely sponsored by NGO initiatives (Taylor, 2008). These initiatives were small in scale and focused mainly on teacher development (Taylor, 2008). They typically provided subject-focused training to chosen teachers in certain schools (Taylor, 2008). When South Africa became a democracy, it was agreed that all schools would receive the same conditions of service and be governed in the same way (Gardiner, 2008). The Department of Education also determined not to separate "rural education" from "urban education (Gardiner, 2008).

The first large-scale project dedicated to school improvement was the Imbewu project, which ran from 1998 to 2001 (Perold, 1999). This project targeted 523 rural schools in the Eastern Cape. The project trained teachers and principals in child-centred teaching and outcomes-based education (OBE) (Perold, 1999). In the year 2000, the notion of systemic school reform was introduced (Taylor, 2007). The key aim of school reform was to link the macro and micro levels of educational practice in order for the two to strengthen and support each other (Taylor, 2007). The curriculum, teaching and assessment were therefore expected to be in line at a classroom level, the school level and the government level (Taylor, 2007). The first programme to be based on a systemic design was the District Development and Support Project (2000-2002) (Taylor, 2007). This programme targeted 453 primary schools from four of the poorest provinces in South

Africa. A number of interventions were aimed at improving districts, schools and classroom teaching. While the project experienced success initially, improvements were not sustained for the duration of the project.

The Quality Learning Project (QLP) (2000-2004) is an example of a systemic programme designed for the high school level. This project targeted 524 high schools. The aim of the QLP was to better the management of districts and schools (Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005; Khanjee & Prinsloo, 2005) and to improve classroom teaching. QLP schools showed significant improvement in their senior certificate examinations (Khanjee and Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor, 2007). The leadership and administration of the schools improved as well. Curriculum delivery, as well as support to teachers, increased. The QLP interventions affected the way in which districts, schools and classrooms functioned. Learner performance was improved in the process.

When the QLP was evaluated, it was discovered that thirteen of the seventeen QLP districts were restructured (Khanjee & Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor, 2007). The findings also revealed that there were a number of problems hindering the complete implementation of systemic reform initiatives. It was discovered that the systems of government at a provincial and district level were exceptionally weak (Taylor, 2007). There were a number of vacant posts, management systems were poorly developed and there was a shortage of essential resources, such as vehicles to visit schools (Taylor, 2007). It was also found that districts did not support or monitor schools. Schools may have been pressured to do well but there was no monitoring of this.

Another systemic initiative was that of the Dinaledi project (Taylor, 2008). This project was run by the national Department of Education and targeted 102 underprivileged high schools in the country. It was discovered that some provincial departments did intervene at the school level, but there was little intervention by the relevant district offices (Taylor, 2007). Teachers and principals received training and materials but there was no planned evaluation carried out on the Dinaledi project. The schools that were involved in the project were found, though, to perform better than their counterparts. The Dinaledi project and the QLP were both systemic initiatives but they were extremely different in that the details of their initial school profiles differed majorly therefore making them not comparable (Taylor, 2007). However, both initiatives did achieve remarkable overall scores compared with schools in which such projects were not implemented (Taylor, 2007).

The initiatives of the previous decade have continued in the second decade of democracy, but there has been considerable research into new initiatives which has provided policy lessons for both the government and the private sector, therefore giving rise to new and improved models of school improvement (Taylor, 2007). The new models emphasise that different intervention programmes are appropriate to different schools. In some cases international donors have continued to fund older models of school improvement aiming at assisting the poorest primary schools in South Africa (Taylor, 2007). For example, international funders are funding the second phases of the Imbewu Project and the District Development and Support Project.

In 2003 a major new initiative, the Khanyisa Education Support Programme, was introduced by the Joint Education Trust (JET) (Khosa, n.d.; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Moyana, 2005). The Khanyisa Education Support Programme is actually the first programme to be based on JET's school improvement model. JET will be elaborated on shortly. This programme aimed to assist with delivering quality education services in the Limpopo Province (Simkins & Perreira, 2005). A study was carried out thereafter to establish the factors affecting learning outcomes at four levels, namely the school level, the teacher level, the classroom level and the learner level. This study concentrated on inputs and outputs at the various levels, paying close attention to teachers and learners (Simkins & Perreira, 2005). Factor analysis and normative scoring were used to establish the dominant factors that correlated with learner performance (Simkins & Perreira, 2005).

Teacher qualification and teacher experience were found to be the variables at a teacher level that most affected learner performance (Simkins & Perreira, 2005; Taylor, 2008). Planning, assessment and the promotion of reading and writing were found to be the variables at a subject level that affected learner performance most (Simkins & Perreira, 2005). Learners doing homework and reading on their own were found to be the variables at the learners level that affected learner performance least (Simkins & Perreira, 2005). The Khanyisa Education Support Programme did lead to an increase in learners' scores in various subjects, particularly in maths and literacy and improvement was also found in teacher and management practices (Simkins & Perreira, 2005).

The Joint Education Trust (JET) is a non-profit organisation, which aims at improving the quality of education, predominantly for the poor in South Africa (Khosa, n.d.). JET, like many

other organizations, has identified a need for systemic solutions that are based on partnerships between the state, the private sector and civil society (Khosa, n.d.).

JET has come up with a successful school improvement model that is based on an active partnership between the state, the private sector and civil society. The JET school improvement model consists of seven components which are believed to contribute to school improvement. These components are stakeholder mobilization, planning and organization, teacher performance, parent involvement, district support, teacher competence and research monitoring and evaluating (Khosa, n.d.). This systemic school improvement model is currently being implemented in 63 schools in North West Province and the Eastern Cape and 856 schools in Limpopo (Khosa, n.d.). According to Khosa (n.d. p.8), “educational outcomes will get better if teachers are effective and the teaching and learning environments are supported by effective school organization, community involvement, and district support and monitoring”. If interventions address all seven components of the systemic school improvement model, school improvement is very likely to take place.

2.11. Partnerships in education

That JET would adopt a school improvement model that is based on an active partnership between the state, the private sector and civil society is not surprising. In recent years, the private and civil sectors’ roles in education have increased. There has been an emergence of non-state involvement in education through public private partnerships (PPPs) (Latham, 2009). The objective of PPPs is,

“ to promote improvements in the financing and provision of services from both the public and private sectors but not to increase the role of one over the other; and to improve existing services provided by both sectors with an emphasis directed on system efficiency, effectiveness, quality, equity and accountability. Critically, PPPs involve the public and private sectors working together to achieve important educational, social and economic objectives” (Latham, 2009, p. 2).

The public sector comprises the general government sector, whilst the private sector is comprised of everything that is not the public sector (businesses and companies) and civil society is comprised of non-profit groupings (Latham, 2009).

The business sector, as well as civil society, is now involved with improving education. The National Business Initiative (NBI) commissioned Helene Perold and Associates to carry out research on large companies and corporate foundations investing in and supporting education mainly in South Africa (Perold & Associates, 2011). The research revealed that large companies and corporate foundations invested approximately R6.2 billion in corporate social programmes and projects during the years 2010 and 2011, with R4.3 billion being allocated through Corporate Social Investment (CSI) budgets. Education has remained the development sector most supported by large companies (Perold & Associates, 2011).

There are seven types of PPPs in education. This review describes five of these. The first is an *adopt-a-school program*. This type of PPP involves the private sector providing money and resources to accompany public sector funding of public schools (Latham, 2009). The second is *private sector philanthropy*. According to Latham (2009, p. 4), “the main feature of private sector philanthropic initiatives is to increase the amount and effectiveness of corporate philanthropy to improve chances for poor children to gain access to a quality education”.

The third is a *capacity-building program*. This type of PPP entails partners from the private sector providing support to public schools across an array of areas such as “curriculum and pedagogical support, management and administrative training, textbook provision, teacher training and quality assurance” (Latham, 2009, p. 4). The fourth is *outsourcing of school management*. According to Latham (2009, p. 4), “school management initiatives involve the public sector authorities establishing contracts directly with private providers to operate public schools or manage certain aspects of public school operations”. The fifth is *school infrastructure partnerships*. This type of PPP “involves the design, financing, constructing and even operating of public school infrastructure under long-term contracts by private sector parties in partnership with the government” (Latham, 2009, p. 4).

The various types of PPPs in education indicate that the private sector, as well as civil society, is able to get involved and assist with improving education. If the role of private sector partners is

increased, a significant improvement in education will result. The mind set of constantly thinking that education is solely the responsibility of government needs to be altered. School improvement should be of concern to everyone. Instead of education being left in the hands of the public sector solely, there needs to be an active partnership between the public sector, the private sector and civil society for school improvement to be achieved successfully. The government, corporate foundations, NGOs and businesses need to work together to improve education.

2.12. School improvement in KwaZulu-Natal

South Africa's education system is multifaceted. It consists of 12 million learners, over 400 000 educators and approximately 30 000 schools in over 70 districts located across 9 provinces (CDE Executive Summary, 2011). The majority of learners are in provinces that are, for the most part, rural. These provinces are the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo (Chisholm, 2004). The situation of schooling in KwaZulu-Natal, in particular, is grim.

The quality of schools, as well as learner performance in KwaZulu-Natal, has been negatively impacted by poverty. For this reason, government has had to review and revise various policies (Taylor, 2007). In the interim, a number of projects have been implemented to improve the quality of schools. This is how a few programmes in KwaZulu-Natal originated. An example of such a project is the QLP, which was introduced earlier. This project targeted 524 high schools, as mentioned earlier, but was also one of the projects that focused on all nine provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal (Khanjee & Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor, 2007). The aim of the project was to develop the district capacity (Taylor, 2007). A number of other small scale projects were implemented which addressed the need to develop professional teaching staff and district personnel and trained schools in how to use learning resources and control the use of them (Taylor, 2007).

2.12.1. The David Rattray Foundation

The urgency of the need to improve schools is attested to by the many projects being implemented and the countless models being developed on school improvement. The reasons for this have been portrayed quite clearly. The DRF is also an organisation trying to bring about

school improvement as its aim is to provide assistance to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in rural KwaZulu-Natal.

DRF interventions aim to improve many areas of a school, including safety and security; infrastructure; the physical environment; water and sanitation facilities; health and nutrition of learners; curriculum and resources; sports, culture and community; leadership, management and governance; and environmental friendliness (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.). The DRF's purpose is to improve education in its target schools. The projects within the DRF are conducted in partnership with student governing bodies, school management teams and the Department of Education (DoE) (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.). The various projects are funded by the DRF and national and international funders fund the DRF.

The productive pedagogies framework places special attention on the role of teachers in a school system (Christie, 2008); the visible learning model also places a huge amount of attention on the importance of teachers but also goes further by focusing on the child, the home, the school, the curricula, the teacher and the approaches to teaching (Hattie, 2009). The approaches and models in South Africa that attempt to bring about school improvement are systemic in nature and focus on interventions at classroom, school and district levels but seem to neglect the learner and his or her individual background. It is evident therefore that each model, project, approach, framework or intervention seems to focus on different areas of a school system. The aim of this thesis is therefore to investigate the nature and function of the DRF as a case study for school improvement.

2.12.2. Critique of school improvement in South Africa

Improving schools in South Africa has been a priority for many years, hence the number of school development, school effectiveness and school improvement initiatives that have been and still are being introduced. These programmes have focused on different aspects of school life such as the individual schools, school management and teacher development. However, research indicates that school improvement projects in South Africa have not had a significant impact on teaching and learning and learners' performance (Christie & Potterton, 1997). The reason for this is that interventions have typically only focused on one area of change at a time rather than effecting change in all areas of a school system in an integrated manner (Chinsamy, 2002). It is for this reason that a holistic look at the school is now required. The structure, the people, the

processes, the values and the culture all need to be taken into consideration when planning and implementing a programme on school improvement (Chinsamy, 2002).

Chinsamy (2002) argues that the failure to improve education in South Africa is due largely to provincial departments of education drafting empowerment policies that have not been adequately implemented (Chinsamy, 2002). According to Chinsamy (2002) this is, in fact, the primary reason for the failure of school improvement projects in South Africa. The failure to improve education is also due to schools not being held accountable for the quality of learning and teaching that takes place (Christie, 2008; Chinsamy, 2002). According to (Fullan, 2006; Chinsamy, 2002; Creemers, Stoll, Reezigt, & ESI, 2007) the departments of education can also be blamed for the failure to improve education as they have not placed enough pressure on schools to perform well.

The departments of education have not gone to the effort to look for explanations for poor results and there has been little follow up to monitor progress and ensure that curriculum delivery is improving and learners are being assessed. Chinsamy (2002) adds that the district offices have also failed to monitor the running of schools in their areas and have failed to maintain development within the schools.

2.13. Conclusion

The literature review has focused on a great deal of information regarding school improvement. The shift from individual school improvement projects to whole school reform has been made evident. The way in which school improvement is achieved in MDCs is indeed different to the way in which it is achieved in LDCs. It is also clear that the South African school system is struggling and we can safely say that in South Africa some learners are doing exceptionally while an extremely large proportion of learners are doing poorly or failing. The interventions to assist poorly performing schools appear countless and many have proved to be exceedingly inefficient. There are numerous factors that are involved in improving a school, however it is essential that all these factors be considered simultaneously. A school needs to be considered holistically before an intervention is planned and implemented. It is also of utmost importance that the complexities of a school system be understood before interventions are planned and implemented.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe the two pronged framework with which I analyse the DRF and the work it sets out to do in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The first is the two approaches (charismatic and bureaucratic), which the thesis argues have been adopted, one by David Rattray and the other by Ben Henderson, the CEO of the DRF. The second is the two theories (change theory and complexity theory), which the thesis argues, explain what is actually happening within the DRF and around the work it sets out to do.

3.2. A bureaucratic or a charismatic approach

At the beginning of the study I met Ben, the CEO of the DRF, read a variety of documents about the DRF and acquainted myself with the partnership that exists between the DRF and the schools. I noticed that Ben used a distinctive approach in his leadership of the interventions and assistance provided to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

It is for this reason that I opted to explore whether Ben took a bureaucratic or a charismatic approach in his efforts to bring about change to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. This was relevant to my study as it provided insight into the way in which decisions were made and carried out and the challenges and advantages to the DRF if a bureaucratic or a charismatic approach to leadership was used.

Weber (1947) distinguishes between bureaucratic and charismatic approaches. A bureaucratic approach, according to Talbert (2010, p.561), "uses traditional management tools of directives and rules, prescribed routines, and sanctions for compliance as ways to promote change." Working for change using a bureaucratic approach has the advantage of having a guide to work by. One is not left on one's own in the effort to find a way to effect change. The challenge posed by a bureaucratic approach, however, is that the process of achieving change can be undermined by the limits and restrictions of rules and routines which cannot be violated (Weber, 1947). Change could be hindered by the fact that one cannot act outside of the structures and rules.

A charismatic approach is the opposite of a bureaucratic approach. If one takes on a charismatic approach one is likely to take action in a spontaneous manner (Weber, 1947). A charismatic approach does not follow any rules and routines. It has no structure and does not follow a regular procedure (Weber, 1947). A charismatic individual requires no qualifications to do what he / she is called to do. One that follows a charismatic approach works independently. The benefit of using a charismatic approach is that it does not place any restrictions on a charismatic person therefore allowing them the freedom to do as they feel is best (Weber, 1947). There is also no pressure to obey certain rules and procedures.

After having studied Weber's distinction between a charismatic approach and a bureaucratic approach and having collected my data, I found that David Rattray adopted a charismatic approach while Ben Henderson adopted a bureaucratic approach when assisting the schools. David went about taking action in a spontaneous manner as Weber (1947) states and randomly provided schools with assistance. A school would make a request and David would meet that request. David followed no rules or routines and his assistance was purely charitable. David did not monitor schools to see whether they used whatever he may have provided to them and he did not have any expectations. Ben, on the other hand, provided schools with assistance in a strategic manner. When a school made a request Ben did not just meet that request. He had expectations, one of which was that schools adhere to a partnership (this is discussed in Chapter Five where the findings are presented). Ben followed rules and prescribed routines, as Talbert (2010) states. He also monitored schools to see that they were using whatever they had been provided with.

The next section focuses on two theories that are integrated which I believe are applicable to this study. It is vital to bear in mind that this is a study of school improvement, therefore the theories that speak to my research are theories centred on school improvement and how to best achieve it.

3.3. Change theory

In the beginning, along with choosing to explore whether the DRF takes on a charismatic or a bureaucratic approach when attempting to bring about change to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, I also chose to adopt a theory that stands out in particular: change theory, developed by Fullan (2006). I chose to adopt Fullan's change theory to explore whether the DRF

goes about bringing change to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in a similar way to that which Fullan (2006) suggests.

Fullan interrogated several theories that attempt to explain change to try to understand why they were not working. He discovered that it was not so much that the theories were wrong as that they were incomplete. Using "change knowledge" as well as the discoveries he had made, Fullan came up with seven premises he believes are essential for bringing about change to a school system. The theoretical framework of this study is drawn from the literature reviewed which focuses on school improvement and trying to bring about change to a school system. The theoretical framework used to understand and interpret the data is Fullan's (2006) theory of change that focuses on "change knowledge" which includes seven core premises that guide the way in which change can be brought about in a school system. However, before I continue with Fullan's change theory, I would like to emphasize that Fullan also uses complexity theory when trying to understand a school system. Fullan's change theory therefore should be understood along with complexity theory as complexity theory underlies Fullan's change theory.

Complexity theory focuses on intervening at all levels within a system, rather than just one, to bring about change. This is useful for my study as I wish to explore whether Ben, the CEO of the DRF, adopted the core premises Fullan provides or at least some of these premises, whether he aimed to work with all levels of a system when trying to bring about change to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area and whether he was aware of the complexity that goes with trying to understand how a school system works and how change can be brought about to a school system.

According to complexity theory, if one intends to intervene in a specific area of the school system in order to bring about school improvement, all systems involved in that area should be engaged on all levels and all parts of the school system should be involved in trying to improve that area to bring about an improvement in learner results. It is vital for one to identify systems within and across areas one is working in and to analyse how they interact and intersect with one another. If each system is understood in relation to the other within a specific area within which one is intervening, effective change can be brought about. For instance, according to Opfer and Pedder (2011), in order for schools to improve, teacher quality to increase and for the quality of

student learning to improve there needs to be a focus on the professional development of teachers.

If teachers are professionally developed it will result in professional learning which in turn will have an effect on teacher quality increasing, student learning improving and schools improving. If one is to achieve teacher professional learning it is important that strands from areas like teacher professional development, teaching and learning, organizational learning and teacher change be brought together. It is essential that strands from each of these areas be understood in relation to one another and not just in isolation. To do this, Opfer and Pedder (2011) use complexity theory to understand these areas which are, in fact, systems.

Opfer and Pedder clarify (2011) that there is no use in trying to understand just one system in order to bring about teacher professional learning. Complexity theory therefore emphasizes that if one intends to intervene in a specific area of the school system, all systems involved in that area should be engaged on all levels and all parts of the school system should be involved in trying to improve that area to bring about an improvement in learner results.

According to Fullan (2006), in order for school improvement to transpire change needs to take place in a school system, bearing in mind that the nature of change is complex and should be viewed as a fluid, non-linear and context specific process (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, as cited in Griffiths & O'Neill, n.d.). Each school system has a culture; therefore, in order to bring about school improvement, strategies of change need to focus on changing individuals and the culture or system within which they work (Fullan, 2006).

This entails having to change teachers and principals within a school system and changing the culture within which they work: in other words creating a sense of purpose and direction, creating high expectations of staff and learners, a climate of self-evaluation, a focus on teaching and learning and a belief in the possibility of success (Fullan, 2006). If one is to be successful at changing individuals and the culture or system within which they work, it is important that small, symbolic details be given attention as well as larger structural issues (Fullan, 1991).

3.4. Fullan's seven core premises

Fullan makes use of seven core premises, which he highlights as essential for bringing about change to a system.

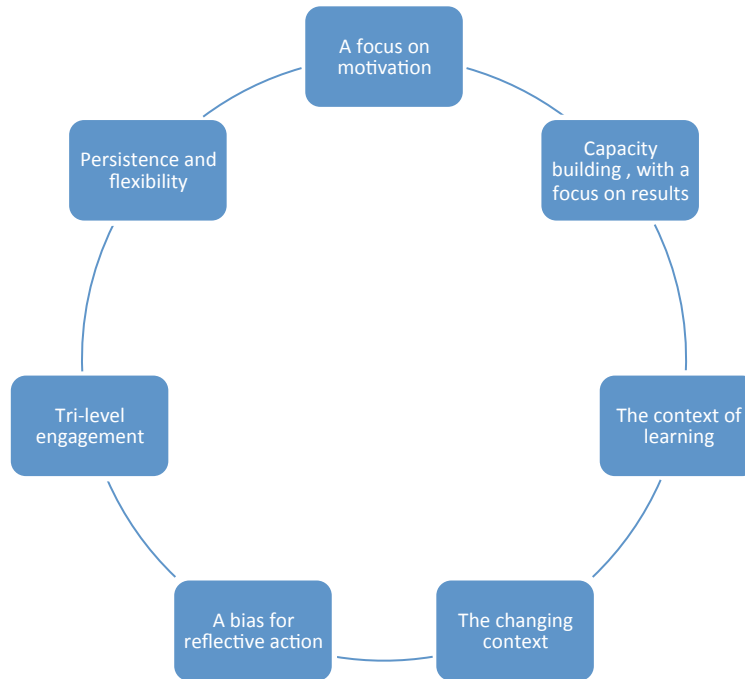


Figure 1 The seven core premises that underpin change knowledge

The first premise Fullan (2006) highlights for change to take place within a system and for improvement to be brought about within a system is that people need to be motivated individually and collectively (Fullan, 2006). Those within a school system, including learners, teachers and principals, need to be motivated individually and collectively so that change may take place within that school system. All the other premises depend on accomplishing the first premise, which is all about motivation. It is vital to note that Fullan highlights the need for not just learners or teachers to be motivated but for learners, teachers and principals to be motivated individually and collectively. At the school level, learners, teachers and principals are positioned and what we find is that Fullan has not just placed emphasis on learners or on principals but on learners, teachers and principals being motivated. This is an indication of complexity theory underlying each factor that is worked on in a school system.

The second premise places emphasis on capacity building with a focus on results. Capacity building is “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). Capacity building, according to Newmann, King and Youngs (as cited in Fullan, 2001) consists of (1) teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, (2) professional community, (3) program coherence, (4) technical resources and (5) principal leadership.

This premise also emphasizes the importance of school systems being supported, as well as pressured, by policy makers to do well (Fullan, 2006; Chinsamy, 2002). According to Cherednichenko (as cited in Griffiths & O’Neill, n.d.) school systems should also be supported by the school and the school community. Elmore (as cited in Fullan, 2006) adds that placing emphasis on accountability only will produce negative pressure and this pressure will not motivate anyone and therefore does not lead to capacity building. However positive pressure, according to Elmore (as cited in Fullan, 2006)

“is pressure that does motivate, that is palpably fair and reasonable and does come accompanied by resources for capacity building. The more one invests in capacity building, the more one has the right to expect greater performance. The more one focuses on results fairly – comparing like schools, using data over multiple years, providing targeted support for improvement – the more that motivational leverage can be used” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9).

As a result, if a school system is receiving a balance of both support and pressure to increase learner performance, motivation within the system will increase automatically (Fullan, 2006; Chinsamy, 2002).

The third premise stresses the need for learning in context to be widespread (Fullan, 2006). In this way individuals within the system are able to learn from the context in which they are working. This then allows individuals to examine their school system and bring about the changes they feel are necessary. The fourth premise accentuates that any strategy for improvement needs to be able to change the larger context in order for change to take place. The larger context is comprised of other schools as well as school districts. For instance, if a school principal identifies that another school is doing really well, the principal will be motivated to

change in order to do well too; therefore change is taking place within the larger context and not just in one particular school.

The fifth premise is extremely important as reflection is vital in order for change to occur. Fullan (2006) highlights that individuals need to be thinking and reflecting on what they are doing. It is important for individuals to not only carry out an action but to think about that action carefully. The reflection process assists individuals in identifying what needs to improve and how improvement can be brought about.

The sixth premise focuses on fostering a relationship between schools, the community, the district and the state (Fullan, 2006; Chinsamy, 2002). In this way all levels of a school system are able to work together to bring about change. A connection between the three levels needs to exist and there needs to be mutual interaction between all three levels. It is also important that all three levels have the ability to influence each other. This premise concurs with complexity theory that, in order for change to take place, all levels of a system need to be involved in the change process.

The final premise is one that is extremely important in order for change to occur within a school system. As a system may experience hindrances at some point, it needs to be flexible enough to change if there is a need to do so and systems need to be persistent if they wish to achieve change within their systems. If obstacles arise while working for change within a system and individuals grow weary and lose their determination to keep moving forward, nothing will be achieved.

Fullan (2006) believes that these seven premises are very important in order for change to occur within a school system, bearing in mind that motivation must be maintained and systems must remain flexible and persistent at all times. If these premises are addressed, change is likely to take place. It is essential to bear in mind, though, as Fullan and Stiegelbauer (as cited in Griffiths & O'Neill, n.d.) point out, that as each school has a unique context the attempt to bring change to schools is complex and will differ from school to school. The seven core premises that Fullan presents are important for change to occur, however Fullan (as cited in Griffiths & O'Neill, n.d.) notes that there is no sole process for effecting change and there is no sole theory of change, so

“given the levels of complexity involved there is never a single, correct way to proceed with school change” (Fullan, as cited in Griffiths & O’Neill, n.d., p. 7).

It is vital, however, to bear in mind that there are constraints when it comes to using Fullan’s theory of change. Firstly, using the change theory and adopting the seven core premises that accompany it is not a quick fix to improving schools and bringing about school improvement, which is what many politicians seek. Secondly, change theory does involve deep cultural change which many people will resist, making this a challenging theory to adopt in order to bring about change to a school system (Fullan, 2006).

On the positive side, change theory offers possibilities, because after fifty years of attempting to use various other methods to bring about change to a school system and not having got anywhere, policy makers as well as the public are receptive to alternative strategies (Fullan, 2006). Secondly, change theory and its core premises are indeed becoming more and more clear and their logic is becoming increasingly evident. Lastly, there are now more leaders who are actively involved with refining the seven core premises. This is significant as the core premises are not meant to remain constant forever but need to be able to change over time.

3.5. Conclusion

The theoretical framework focuses on two approaches (charismatic and bureaucratic) as well as two theories (complexity and change) to understand how the DRF goes about achieving school improvement. There is an evident shift in approaches when trying to bring about school improvement. It is also evident that Fullan’s seven core premises are important to bringing about change to a school system, as is complexity theory, in that it emphasizes the need for systems and sub systems within a school to be taken into account when trying to achieve school improvement. It is essential for all levels of a system to be engaged in order to bring about change to a school system. In this way effective change is able to take place resulting in successful school improvement. It must be kept in mind, however, that because each school system is unique the process of change within each school system is complex and will be different from school to school.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore the uniqueness of the DRF as an example of an organisation working for school improvement in the context of the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. This chapter provides a description of the research methodology and the research design adopted for the study. A comprehensive description of the research questions, the study sample and the research instruments used to collect data is given. Ethical issues and consent are also discussed. A thorough discussion of the collection and analysis of data, as well as the limitations of the study, follows.

The key research questions guiding this study were:

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

4.2. Research design

This is a qualitative research study. A qualitative approach seeks to discover, rather than test, explanatory theories; it is also naturalistic and favours observation and interviewing (Denscombe, 2007). A qualitative approach seeks to express certain phenomena using thick descriptions rather than categories and variables (Rule & John, 2011). In a qualitative study, the researcher is expected to immerse herself as an instrument of data collection (Rule & John, 2011). Merriam et al (2002) argues that meanings, understanding and processes can be best reached using a qualitative approach.

A qualitative approach is appropriate to this study as the aim is to explore the DRF and its interventions for school improvement as a case study. The intention is to gain a rich, deep insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF as an organisation implementing a range of

school improvement projects in schools located in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. A qualitative style lends itself to understanding the nature and purpose of the DRF in great depth.

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Case study

A case study was the primary methodological approach used in this study as it allowed me, as the researcher, the opportunity to gain understanding and insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF with regard to its work for school improvement. A case study may include comprehensive information about a particular participant or a small group (Rule & John, 2011). According to Henning (2004, p.32), a case study “focuses on specific people, engaged in specific activities, at a specific place and at a specific time”. This study can be considered a case study as it focuses on Ben, the CEO of the DRF (specific person) carrying out interventions (specific activity) in selected schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area (specific place). In addition, the study is exploratory and descriptive.

Rule and John (2011) make mention of several types of case studies. This study utilises two of these types: it is both an exploratory case study and a descriptive case study. Exploratory case studies, according to Rule and John (2011, p.28), “seek to investigate situations that might not have been researched previously and for which there might not exist established theories”. Descriptive cases studies, on the other hand, “seek to develop a rich, thick description of a phenomenon” (Rule & John, 2011, p.29).

These two types of case studies are appropriate to my study. It was exploratory in that I attempted to explore the work of the DRF as a case of school improvement as very little research has been carried out on this organization. It was also descriptive in that I sought to develop a rich, thick description of the DRF that was both intensive and deep.

4.4. Advantages and disadvantage of case studies

4.4.1. Advantages

The advantage of using a case study is that it allows for a great deal of depth (Denscombe, 2007). It is also a flexible approach in that it can use an extensive range of methods for collecting and analysing data, which was done in this study (Rule & John, 2011). A case study is also

considered to be more manageable due to its particular unit of study (Rule & John, 2011). A case study, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), may also lead a researcher to learn more about a phenomenon which was not understood well and may be useful for examining how an individual, program or organisation changes with time.

The case study model was therefore applicable to this study as its aim is to learn more about the DRF in terms of understanding what the organisation sets out to do within the various schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, how its approach to bringing change to the schools has changed over time and the processes involved in this change.

4.4.2. Disadvantages

The disadvantage of using a case study, according to Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2003), is that the researcher may run the risk of understating or overstating the case. A key weakness of a case study is the fact that it involves a single case, making it difficult to generalize to other situations (Rule & John, 2011). This study examines a single case of an organization; findings, therefore, cannot easily be generalized to other organizations.

Limitations on time and money may also restrict the researcher's ability to obtain rich, thick data (Rule & John, 2011). A case study is also often criticized as being too subjective. As it generally involves one person collecting data, bias can be a problem, which can influence results. As case studies are context bound it is also difficult to test their validity.

4.5. Context of the study

This study was conducted in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, situated in the Umzinyathi District in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area is home to Blood River, a symbol of the power struggle which took place between the Boers and the Zulus and between the British and the Zulus. This region is known to be one of the poorest in South Africa, with an unemployment rate of approximately 83 per cent (David Rattray Foundation, 2010). The incidence of HIV/AIDS is high and many children have been left without parents or a traditional family structure (David Rattray Foundation, 2010). The area suited the research objective as the DRF is situated in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area at Fugitives Drift Lodge and the

interventions carried out by the DRF have only been implemented in selected schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

4.6. Research participants

According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (2004, p.44), sampling “involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and / or social processes to observe.” In the first phase of the study, purposive sampling was used to select 8 schools from 2 circuits and 4 wards in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area for the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) describe purposive sampling as selecting participants according to the specific characteristics that are needed for the research problem. Purposive sampling is therefore appropriate to this study. The 8 schools that were selected for this study were selected on the criteria that they were involved with the DRF and its interventions. The principals of all 8 schools, some primary and others secondary schools, were interviewed with the hope that they would provide valuable insight that would extend the boundaries of my knowledge of the DRF. The CEO of the DRF, Ben was also interviewed as part of the study.

In the second phase of the study, purposive sampling was adopted once again to select 2 of the 8 schools at which I had conducted interviews for further exploration. A “good school” and a “bad school” were selected on the basis of the various interventions carried out at the schools, how they were performing academically during these interventions and how well they functioned in general. When I conducted the initial interviews the principal of the “good school” indicated that it was functioning well, had adequate resources and was not performing too badly. The “bad school”, however, was adequately resourced but was performing very poorly according to the principal's account. Based on these accounts, I selected these two schools for further exploration in order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within each school and attempt to discover why one school was performing well while the other was not despite the fact that both schools had access to adequate resources.

4.7. Gaining entry

At the beginning of this study, Ben was approached and a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of conducting research on the DRF and the schools with which it is involved. The CEO consented to research being carried out on the DRF. A letter was sent to all the schools involved with the DRF requesting permission to conduct the study in their schools and to interview their principals. The letter explained the nature of the study and the reason that the school had been selected for the study.

Due to the distance of the schools from where I live, I sent the letters by email to the gatekeeper of the DRF who then assisted with distributing them to the 8 schools selected for the study. Samples of these letters can be found in Appendix C and D. The principals were provided with my name and details, the institution's name and my supervisor's contact details should they wish to verify the information.

4.8. Data collection methods

This study made use of six types of data collection instruments, namely interviews, document analysis, a checklist, a preference analysis, observations and Participatory Action Research (PAR). A range of data collection methods was used in order to ensure that my findings were not distorted or biased and to generate a wealth of data to help me explore the nature and the function of the DRF. Data was collected in three phases.

4.8.1. Document analysis

During the first phase, documents were gathered and scrutinized in order to develop an understanding of the nature and function of the DRF as a case study for school improvement. According to Rule and John (2011, p.67), "document analysis is a useful place to start data collection in a case study, particularly if the research design includes other methods such as interviews and / or observations". Relevant reports on interventions that had been carried out in the DRF schools, newsletters, the memorandum of understanding, checklists of what had been implemented in the various schools and the schools data survey was analysed to get a sense of the case and its history.

Document analysis was exceptionally useful in that it provided me with a useful place to start and also assisted me with formulating an interview schedule. It was also beneficial in that it provided me with a better understanding of the interventions carried out in the schools as well as the vision, mission and goals of the DRF. After analysing the various documents, I developed a list of questions to pursue during the interviews and observations.

4.8.2. Semi-structured interviews

In the second phase I used semi-structured interviews, preference analyses, checklists and (PAR). I conducted a semi-structured interview with the CEO of the DRF, Ben in order to gain a deeper insight into the foundation and the work it sets out to do. Semi-structured interviews were the main method of collecting data. A semi-structured interview is valuable in that it allows the researcher to investigate a certain phenomenon in depth and clarify participant answers (Rule & John, 2011). A semi-structured interview also allows for probing further into specific lines of enquiry (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the principals of all 8 schools to gather deep insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF as an organisation implementing school improvement projects in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The interviews were conducted in English, as all principals were able to articulate their responses clearly without language being a barrier. Each interview took approximately 50 minutes long and I formulated the interview schedules after having made use of document analysis. The interviews were helpful in eliciting responses from the principals as to how they viewed the DRF, what their relationship was like with the DRF and how they felt about the interventions carried out in their schools by the DRF.

Interviewing is advantageous in that the researcher and the participant are face to face. This allows the researcher to prompt and encourage the participant. An interview process is also not inflexible. The participant is allowed to take their time when responding to questions and add to his answers as well as change his responses. The semi-structured interviews were constructed with open-ended questions which allowed the participant to respond freely.

The disadvantage, however, of using open-ended questions is that participants may provide excessive irrelevant information (Rule & John, 2011). Prior to the interview, the nature of the

study was explained to the principals, confidentiality and anonymity was assured and principals were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt the need to do so. I hoped that by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity participants would be encouraged to respond as honestly and openly as possible.

4.8.3. Preference analysis

A preference analysis was used alongside the interviews. The preference analysis was adopted as a means to find out which DRF interventions were most favoured by the principals and which DRF interventions were least favoured. The principals were required to rank the interventions carried out in their schools with (1) being the most favoured intervention, (2) being the favoured intervention and (3) being the least favoured intervention.

The preference analysis unfortunately was not effective as principals thought of it as a list of needs that I would be meeting for them and as a result many interventions were ranked as (1). They tended to rank an intervention as (3) if it was already implemented in their school. The preference analysis therefore failed to evoke valuable discussions with the principals on why they favoured certain interventions over others.

4.8.4. Participatory action research

It is important for the researcher to understand the context in which the schools are to be found as well as the location in which the DRF has chosen to intervene in. The researcher therefore engaged in (PAR) to develop a greater sense of the area in which the DRF is functioning in. The researcher embarked on a transect walk with a member from the community, asking various questions in order to gain a set of demographic details of the area as well as the conditions those in the Rorke's Drift/Isandlwana area have to endure.

4.8.5. Observations and checklists

Observations are essential for data gathering as they supply the researcher with an insider perspective on dynamics and behaviours in different settings (Rule & John, 2011). Checklists provide researchers with a structure as to what needs to be observed or evaluated. Such checklists can entail simple lists of criteria that need to be marked off as present or absent. Observations alongside a checklist were used in the second phase of data collection. I used a

checklist while observing to get acquainted with the interventions that were carried out by the DRF in the various schools.

In the third phase of data collection, detailed observations were made. The objective was to explore the school system, its boundaries and its use of resources, thus observing its daily practices. This method was appropriate as the purpose of the case study “was to capture and portray the liveliness and situatedness of behaviour” (Rule & John, 2011, p.67). The observations carried out in the third phase were also useful in that classrooms, lessons and staff were observed.

4.9. Data analysis

Data analysis entails accounting for, explaining and making sense of the data. The data was analysed using two approaches: a deductive approach and an inductive approach. A deductive approach works from the more general to the more specific (Aqil Burney, 2008). This is most commonly known as a top down approach. An inductive approach on the other hand works from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories (Aqil Burney, 2008).

The deductive component of this study used Fullan’s (2006) change theory and the seven premises that make up the theory. The deductive component explored whether Fullan’s change theory as well as complexity theory (Opfer & Pedder, 2011) applied to the data collected. In other words, I investigated whether the DRF went about bringing change to a school system in the way Fullan suggests. The deductive component of this study also used Weber’s (1947) two approaches, charisma and bureaucracy, to identify whether Ben had adopted a charismatic or a bureaucratic approach when deciding on interventions to be implemented in the various schools and when attempting to bring about change to schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area.

The inductive component of this study used grounded theory to identify concepts within the data collected. Grounded theory, according to Starks and Trinidad (2007), looks at when “meaning is negotiated and understood through interactions with others in social processes.” Thematic analysis was then used to discover, analyse and report any patterns within the data. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clark (2006), “is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.”

Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six phases of analysis that one can go through when doing thematic analysis. The first phase requires the researcher to familiarize herself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involves reading the data repeatedly and actively, searching for various meanings and patterns. I became familiar with the data through the process of transcribing it verbatim and reading it to search for meanings and patterns. I then noted a list of initial ideas. The second phase entails generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A code identifies an aspect of the data that may appear interesting to the analyst. I coded interesting features across the data set while gathering data that was relevant to each code.

The third phase entails having to bring together the various codes, placing them into possible themes whilst gathering all data extracts that are relevant to each theme. I generated a list of codes and came up with a number of themes. The various themes were refined and narrowed down to three final themes. The fourth phase requires the researcher to review the themes to check whether the themes do in fact relate to the coded extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is an important phase as the coded extracts have to relate to the themes which have to be supported by the data.

The fifth phase involves defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point, the researcher defines and refines the themes she will present for analysis. The sixth and final phase of analysis is producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the researcher has worked out the themes and analysed them in relation to the data, she is able to report her findings. In my case, this involved the writing up of my dissertation.

It is important that I make mention that I did attempt to use Nvivo, a programme that organises, analyses and shares data, however I was not adequately trained to be able to make the most of the programme. I found it easier and much more convenient to organise and analyse the data in the space of my own home. I therefore organised and analysed the data manually.

4.10. Trustworthiness

It is important in research for a study to be able to demonstrate that its findings are reliable and valid. It is for this reason that trustworthiness becomes so pivotal. To ensure trustworthiness,

validity and reliability concerns need to be properly dealt with. As Merriam et al (2002, p.27) argues “there is no point in considering reliability without validity”. According to Kvale (1996), validity can be described as the truth and correctness of a study. If a study claims to be valid, the study must be sure to have interpreted the meaning of the phenomenon accurately (Vithal & Jansen, 2006; Smith, 1995).

A way to ensure that a phenomenon has been accurately interpreted is by making use of triangulation. Babbie and Mouton (2005, p.277) reveal that,

“the best way to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study is to collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view. This means asking different questions, seeking different sources and using different methods”.

This study employed triangulation to ensure that the data gathered would be consistent and would lead to phenomena being interpreted accurately. This was done using interviews, document analysis, a checklist, a preference analysis, observations and (PAR).

Reliability, on the other hand, is concerned with consistency and whether results will remain stable over time. Reliability is very much interested in whether a study would reveal the same results if repeated. Reliability testing is more common in quantitative studies rather than qualitative studies (Vithal & Jansen, 2006). According to Smith (1995), to improve reliability multiple methods of data collection should be utilized.

This study, as mentioned, used interviews, document analysis, a checklist, a preference analysis, observations and (PAR). Cohen et al (2007) adds that in order to ensure the reliability of a study reality should be conveyed as experienced, the researcher should be specific about the context and the situation, thorough details should be provided, findings should be reported honestly and responses should be presented in depth. I have attempted to do this to the best of my ability.

4.11. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee (see Appendix A). Permission to conduct the study at each school was sought from the relevant school principals (see Appendix D). Permission to conduct the study at different schools was also sought from the Department of Education (see Appendix B). Permission to conduct the study was also sought from the gatekeeper of the DRF (see Appendix C).

During the data collection process a list of seven ethical requirements identified by Emanuel, Wendler and Grady (2000) were considered and adhered to. These include “social or scientific value, scientific validity, fair subject selection, favourable risk-benefit ratio, independent review, informed consent, and respect for potential and enrolled subjects” (Emanuel, Wendler & Grady, 2000, p.2703). Throughout the data collection process precautions were taken to ensure a high standard of ethical practice. The most important consideration throughout the process was to ensure the safety and respectful treatment of participants. According to Durrheim and Wassenaar (2004), to achieve this researchers should take into consideration the principles of autonomy and nonmaleficence.

I ensured that participants were informed of the purpose of the study. I obtained permission from the participants to tape record the interviews. I also made certain that participants were provided with a written explanation of the conditions and implications before participants could volunteer to participate in the study. The participants were informed that information disclosed would remain confidential; participants were provided with a consent form (see Appendix E) explaining to them that there were no potential risks or harm and that there would be no incentive provided. The participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

This study did not involve any participants under the age of 18, as the sample of study was the 8 principals and the CEO of the DRF, Ben. There were no aspects of the research about which the participants were not to be informed. No harm was perpetuated or envisaged to participants. The data collected will be locked away safely for five years after which it will be destroyed. If any articles are published as a result of this research project, the identity of participants will be safe guarded.

4.12. Limitations of the study

This is a small scale, in depth study that was carried out in a particular context to investigate a particular organization; generalizing the findings to other contexts and organizations may, therefore, be difficult. It is possible that the CEO of the DRF, Ben or the principals gave responses in a socially desirable manner which could have skewed the results. This limitation was identified prior to the implementation of study and the principals were encouraged to answer as honestly as possible and were assured of anonymity. The principals may also have chosen to conceal information which could have been valuable to the study. Preference analysis was used to address this limitation however, as mentioned earlier, the preference analysis was ineffective and did not serve its intended purpose.

4.13. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methodology and the research design that guided the study. The research questions, the study sample, the research instruments used to collect data and ethical issues were addressed. The phases for data collection were discussed as well as how the data was analysed. I conclude this chapter by highlighting the importance of reliability and validity in research. The way in which a study is conducted will determine the findings ultimately.

Chapter 5: Presentation of findings

5.1. Introduction

The findings that have emerged from the data collected in this study are presented in this chapter. Data was collected through a variety of methods including semi-structured interviews, site visits, observations, document analysis, a checklist, preference analysis, and (PAR).

This chapter begins with a background of the DRF followed by a brief overview of the contextual factors affecting those in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana region – most importantly, children – and a discussion of the major themes and findings which emerged from the data. This descriptive background of the DRF provides a useful backdrop to the thesis and demonstrates the reasons for which David Rattray and the DRF chose to work in the schools in this area. The contextual issues provide a sense of the importance of the contribution of the DRF to such an area. The major themes that have emerged from the data aim to answer the main research questions of this study.

The main research questions which guided this study were:

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

There are three main themes which have emerged from the data: school improvement, partnership and wider system issues.

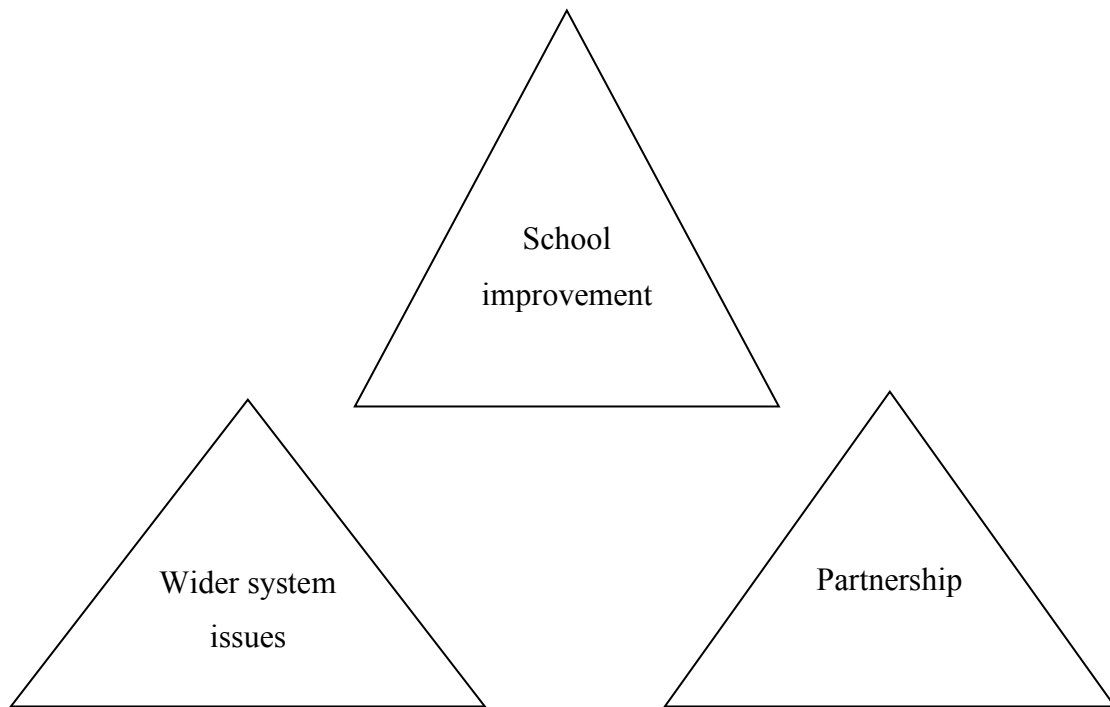


Figure 2 Themes

5.2. The David Rattray Foundation (DRF)

In the late 1980s, David Rattray and his wife Nicky started a business in the Rorke's Drift area in rural KwaZulu-Natal. They ran a lodge, which was based on the theme of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. David Rattray travelled to many places around the world sharing his knowledge and love of the Zulu people; he was a fine raconteur. As their business grew, so did their interaction with the local community and they began to look for ways to assist the local schools (David Rattray Foundation, 2013).

In his trips abroad, David would speak of the educational needs of the children of Umzinyathi. His desire was to assist children in the extremely rural areas of Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift through education to overcome the hardships of their tremendously disadvantaged backgrounds (David Rattray Foundation, 2013). The needs in the area were many, and included communication, health, nutrition and employment. Education, however, was a passion for David:

"...he believed that if a child received a good education, he became master of his own fate, and could make his own informed decisions about matter[s] such as AIDS, [their] career and so on". (David Rattray Foundation, 2013)

Working in partnership with local community leaders and businessmen, David began to contribute to the development of the local community. The schools David worked with were chosen on the basis of proximity to the lodge which he ran. This also meant that he chose to work along the Isandlwana band which runs through the Anglo-Zulu War Battlefields area. David first began to help in small ways, with projects such as setting up a milk fund so that every child at school could get a glass of milk every day, to the provision of kitchens, libraries and a few buildings (David Rattray Foundation, 2013).

In 2007, David was murdered. His wife and their three sons saw his murder as an act committed out of ignorance and resolved to stay in the area and expand the work that had been started. (David Rattray Foundation, 2013). Nicky, David's wife, shared his view that a better education was imperative for the children of Umzinyathi.

In the weeks following David's death, the David Rattray Foundation was established to commemorate his life and continue his work with the schools. Ben Henderson, a recently retired businessman and a close friend of the Rattrays, offered to take on the responsibility of continuing the work with the various schools. He became the CEO of the new foundation while Nicky continued with her responsibilities at the lodge and as a mother. The foundation was initially funded by funds donated by friends and family of the Rattrays to cover the costs of David's funeral. Since then, funds have come from donations, guests, friends, acquaintances, corporate entities in South Africa, individuals from the United Kingdom and a host of organisations.

When the foundation was established an attempt was made to identify the schools with which David had been working and those to which he may have offered or promised assistance. This initial survey of the schools gave the DRF an indication of the extensive needs the schools were faced with. There was a need for a professional evaluation to be done, however, to investigate issues in some of the schools more thoroughly and collect information about areas of greatest need (David Rattray Foundation, 2013). In 2008, the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg assisted by conducting a whole school evaluation survey of six schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area (David Rattray Foundation, 2013). These survey results were then generalized to all the other schools.

The DRF began by assisting six schools in the area. This number has grown to seventeen schools today. The DRF has chosen to continue supporting the schools situated along the band which runs through the Anglo-Zulu War Battlefields area as well as a few schools outside the band. The survey results indicated that resources were not the only thing the schools needed. The needs identified at the schools fell into four broad categories: infrastructure, self-help issues, community engagement and teacher support. The DRF made use of the information provided by the survey to begin planning assistance to various schools. At the same time, the DRF made contact with the Department of Education (DoE) to advise them of their findings and to plan a mutual way forward (David Rattray Foundation, 2013).

The DRF has developed a template of how a school should look which is used to determine which interventions are needed in the various schools. The DRF projects aim to improve many areas within the schools, including safety and security; infrastructure; the physical environment; water and sanitation facilities; the health and nutrition of learners; the curriculum and resources; sports, culture and community; leadership, management and governance; the achievement of learners and environmental friendliness. The DRF has intervened in each of these areas, building classrooms, kitchens, libraries, jungle gyms and toilets for schools and supplying sports equipment, socks, knitted hats and library books. The DRF has also supplied schools with water tanks, generators and fencing (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.).

The DRF furthermore has gone as far as conducting training on issues such as the curriculum, administration and parental involvement and engagement with the community. The DRF's purpose is therefore to contribute to the improvement of education at the DRF schools. The projects implemented by the DRF involve the communities as much as possible and resources that can be found within the communities are used. For instance, the DRF recruits unemployed individuals from the communities, trains them in rammed earth techniques and employs them for the various building projects. The rammed earth buildings are cost-effective, long-lasting and eco-friendly. They depict traditional structures with curved walls and thatched ceilings. The projects within the DRF are conducted in partnership with student governing bodies and school management teams as well as the Department of Education.

All schools supported by the DRF sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the foundation. This MoU clearly indicates the terms of the partnership between the DRF and the

DRF schools. The purpose of this MoU is to identify the roles and responsibilities of each party and the relationship between them. The MoU provides a clear outline of what the DRF expects from the schools and the responsibilities the schools can expect the DRF to fulfil (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.). For instance, the DRF expects schools to take care of all materials, equipment and buildings they may possess. This means keeping all facilities and equipment well maintained and in good working condition. The DRF also expects school grounds to be litter free at all times. The school is also expected to display responsible asset management and make every effort to have the appropriate person, or a substitute, attend all relevant DRF meetings or courses (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.).

The schools, on the other hand, can expect the foundation to do its best to raise funds that are necessary to carry out the agreed projects. The schools can also expect the DRF to consult with them as well as the DoE on any work required and plan interventions that best suit the school. In the MoU, schools are informed that they may opt out of the programme at any time and the DRF may withdraw from the partnership at any time. The schools are also informed that the DRF assists with projects which directly or indirectly contribute to the improvement of the education of the children in the schools (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.).

The background of the foundation has been provided and from this backdrop the various themes, which have emerged from the data, will be elaborated on and discussed in greater depth. Before I present these themes, I would like to provide a brief description of the contextual issues those in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are faced with on a daily basis. The contextual issues raised in this thesis do not cover all the contextual issues within this area, however. In order to understand the nature and function of the DRF, it is important to understand the context in which the DRF works and the challenges those in the area face.

5.3. Contextual factors

The David Rattray Foundation is located in an extremely poor district and assists schools situated in one of the poorest regions in South Africa. The Umzinyathi District in KwaZulu-Natal is one of the least developed areas in South Africa, facing an extremely high rate of unemployment, the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS infections and with many vulnerable and orphaned children (David Rattray Foundation, n.d.). The schools in this area, as well as the community at large, are

faced with countless challenges. The children in this area are extremely disadvantaged, facing many challenges on a daily basis which have an enormous effect on their schooling.

5.3.1. The home environment

The home environment of most children in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana region is very impoverished. In addition to being poverty stricken, those who live in this area have to endure many difficulties. The CEO of DRF commented that:

“It's tough being a kid in this environment; those few that [do] make it amaze me because everything is against them, including their education system. It's actually working against them”. (Ben Henderson)

5.3.1.1. The family structure

Some children live with illiterate parents or grandparents, others live with sick adults and others are raised by siblings. Those who live with grandparents have either had their parents relocate in search of better job opportunities due to unemployment in the rural areas or have lost their parents due to disease and sicknesses. Circumstances like these have a severe impact on children and their education as they result in a lack of parental support and children are unable to receive the help and stimulation they require from their parents and grandparents.

5.3.1.2. Family size

In the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area family size can be problematic. Due to parents passing away or relocating, grandparents are left to attend to their grandchildren. Grandparents therefore have no choice but to resort to using their grant money to take care of their grandchildren. In many instances, the grant money is not enough to sustain a family and for this reason many children wind up not having sufficient clothing, stationary or food. It is for this reason that all the schools in the area run a feeding scheme to provide learners with a meal; for some learners this is the only meal they receive all day. A principal revealed the following after being asked whether learners are provided with a meal:

“Yes, in most cases it's the only hope they having [have]. Some they come hungry to school, they will wait until such time, quarter to eleven or eleven o'clock on Monday then

they get maybe their share. There is a problem when feeding takes place, there are some greedy ones but you can see that it's not that they are greedy but that they are having nothing. It's the only hope they are having and they dish as much as they can and they forget about the others and we have to go there and control their dishing. If we do that then it means they are not going to get enough". (Principal 1)

5.3.1.3. Displacement of children

There is also a problem of parents moving their children to the cities once they have secured a job and then finding the cost of living in the city too high for them to be able to care for their children, after which they send their children back to the rural areas to live with family. It is essential to bear in mind that schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are no fee schools, meaning that learners are not required to pay school fees. A principal shared her concern regarding this issue, saying:

"Many parents what they do here, in the beginning of the year some parents they took [take] their children to towns, most of them [to] Gauteng, in Johannesburg. They took [take] their children to Johannesburg in January, then maybe in June - July they come back with the learners, they said [say], we don't have money for transport for them, we don't have money for school fees, we don't have money to buy uniforms for them. But in the beginning of the year most of them they took their children..." (Principal 5)

This becomes detrimental as children end up enrolling late for school and lag behind due to the shift between schools. This is one of the many reasons that many learners perform poorly in school as they are unable to catch up once they have fallen behind. Sexual abuse is another problem that can arise in situations like these as many children are sent to live with family members where there is very little monitoring in place to prevent abuse.

5.3.1.4. A shortage of basic services

Additional hardships faced by most households in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are the lack of electricity, a telephone and clean piped water. This becomes a setback as children are unable to find out what is happening in the world around them by watching television with the result that their school performance can be hindered by the limitations of their general

knowledge. The learners in this area also find it difficult to do their homework, if given any, as there is no electricity. They are expected to walk home and when they do get home, chores await them and by the time they are able to do their homework the sun has set.

Due to households not having clean piped water, children are sent to collect water which is time consuming. Water is collected from unhealthy and unsafe sources putting children and the community as a whole at risk of contracting waterborne diseases. The roads in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are gravel and children have to walk to school as many are unable to afford taxi fees. This becomes very problematic, as some learners have to walk as far as 20km to get to school leaving them exhausted and unable to concentrate. The home is not the only environment which presents grave concerns, however. The school environment is just as unfavourable for learners in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

5.3.2. The school environment

5.3.2.1. *A lack of parental support*

As mentioned earlier, lack of parental support is a major problem that arises in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. Most children are unable to obtain the help and stimulation they require from their parents as their parents are either illiterate or absent from their lives most of the time; their grandparents may also be illiterate and unable to assist them. As teachers at the schools are aware of these issues homework is often not assigned. This presents a major problem, as learners are not practicing what they have learnt inside the classroom.

5.3.2.2. *A negative attitude towards learning*

I also gathered from a principal's account and observations that learners also seem to have an unenthusiastic attitude towards learning. This may be due in part to the difficulty of walking to school each day. There are also many learners who have not had a meal before they arrive at school therefore leaving them drained and unenergetic. This is a concern that cannot be ignored as learners may find it difficult to concentrate and feel too weak to do any schoolwork.

5.3.2.3. The medium of instruction

The medium of instruction at the schools also seems to represent an obstacle to nearly all learners. The schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlawana area are required to teach in Zulu from grade R to grade 3 and only in grade 4 are learners taught in English. A principal shared her view concerning the medium of instruction saying:

“And then grade 1 up to 3, when they in grade 4 they start English, it's a problem to them now. So we are struggling to make them understand this English because now all subjects are done in English once [in] grade 4[and] upwards. Whereas in foundation phase they were doing it in Zulu, so there is that gap”. (Principal 2)

This issue seems to be a huge concern as learners are made to write exams in grade 4 which are set in English, meanwhile they have been taught in Zulu from the very beginning. Learners are unable to communicate in English or understand the content of all subjects but they are now taught in English and all textbooks provided are also in English. The medium of instruction therefore has a huge impact on school performance and may be an additional reason, along with many others, for learners failing to pass.

5.3.2.4. Transport

In this area transport is an issue not only for learners but for teachers too. Most teachers are not from the immediate area and live a distance from the school. Teachers therefore are typically unwilling to stay after school to provide extra lessons to learners or assist with tasks as they cannot afford to miss their transport home. If workshops are run by the DRF an hour is taken out of their working day for the workshop. The DoE sets the specific time period and the DRF have to abide by this. The CEO of the DRF stated the following:

“Um, we were going to be taking some of those teachers, the teachers who were going to attend, away from school for maybe one hour during their teaching day to participate in the training so they could still get home by taxi because most of the teachers depend on taxi transport and if they miss that taxi it's a long walk home and there's not many other taxis so they've got to catch that taxi. We had to fit our training into that specific time period which the department laid down for us”. (Ben Henderson)

The schools in the area also place very little emphasis on extracurricular activities. A school in an urban area would usually have extracurricular activities after school, however for schools in the Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area that is very uncommon as teachers leave directly after school. Some schools try to allocate a day of the week for extracurricular activities but this affects teaching time.

5.3.2.5. *Under-qualified teachers*

The schools in this area also struggle with under qualified teachers. This problem arises when schools are in dismal need of teachers and teachers are recruited indiscriminately. As a result learners are not taught the way they should be; they do not receive the content they should be receiving for a particular subject for their particular grade and therefore fail to grasp the material set out for them. In rural areas teachers are made to teach subjects that they are not qualified to teach as there is a shortage of teachers at the schools.

All the factors mentioned above have a severe impact on learners as well as on their performance at school. The issues faced by children in the rural areas are enormous. The work carried out by the DRF in this area is therefore much more challenging and it is important to grasp these factors I have elaborated on in order to understand why the DRF carries out the interventions that it does. Those living in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are faced with countless obstacles and perseverance, patience and tolerance are required by the teachers, the learners, the community and the DRF in order to move forward. The next part of the chapter discusses the three major themes found in the data, namely school improvement, partnership and wider contextual issues.

5.4. School improvement

5.4.1. Introduction

School improvement is one of the major themes that have emerged from the data set. This is, of course, of no surprise as this study is an exploration of the DRF as a case study of school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The aim of the study, therefore, is to examine how the DRF is implicated in trying to bring about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

At the beginning of the chapter I did cover the various interventions carried out by the DRF in the various schools to bring about school improvement. However, in this section I would like to present the views and opinions of principals as to how they see the role of the DRF in bringing about school improvement in their schools. I would also like to elaborate on what the CEO of the DRF, Ben feels is important in order to bring about improvement in the schools of the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

It is vital to bear in mind that there are two parts to the findings on school improvement. One part focuses on the aspects that promote school improvement and the other part focuses on the aspects that hinder school improvement. After considering this I will go on to discuss two proposed models that could address the problem of school improvement and bring about an improvement in learner performance. I will end with a discussion of a model which was used by Ben and describe his shift to an alternative model which he feels will be more effective in bringing about school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

5.4.2. DRF interventions

As I mentioned earlier, four categories of need were identified by the Delta Environmental Centre in their evaluation of the schools of the area: infrastructure, self-help issues, community engagement and teacher support. The DRF aims to address the needs located in all four of these categories according to document analysis.

The interventions implemented by the DRF that aim to address infrastructure needs include the fencing of school grounds; improvements to ground water drainage; the construction of classrooms, science labs, computer centres, libraries, jungle gym play structures and toilets; the

provision of library books and educational toys, the refurbishment of electrical systems, the repainting and repair of school buildings and the supply of school textbooks and scientific calculators.

Interventions which aim to address community engagement needs, self-help issues and teacher support needs include workshops for bridging nutrition and addressing the NCS, computer lessons for principals, summer camps, addressing administrative issues and community engagement, Kingsmead teacher workshops, leadership academies, provision of peace corp volunteers, community engagement programmes, teachers' training, yearend educational trips and other activities.

It is evident that the DRF attempts to intervene in many areas of a school in order to bring about school improvement. Semi-structured interviews, observations and checklists corroborate with what the documents say. The DRF has not selected one area to intervene in but rather a few areas. This is significant as there are a great many schools in the area that have needs to be met.

The next section focuses on the positive aspects identified by those interviewed in the study as bringing about school improvement and the negative aspects that are perceived to hinder school improvement in the schools in the area.

5.4.3. Positive aspects promoting school improvement

The DRF has implemented a variety of interventions which it considers important for bringing about school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The schools, in addition, perceive that the DRF's involvement is bringing about school improvement.

The principals believe that their schools are experiencing improvement for a number of reasons. The schools receive support, encouragement, motivation, guidance and assistance from the DRF which they feel is necessary for their schools to improve. A principal from one of the schools expressed the following, indicating the guidance his school receives from the DRF:

"After being guided by the leadership from [of the] DRF we could realise that we still are lacking 1, 2, 3..." (Principal 1)

"...and there is no need for us to run around when we are facing a problem because guidance is already there." (Principal 1)

The DRF also offers schools a range of workshops covering many topics. The schools find these useful as the district fails to provide support to teachers and to developing teachers, school management teams (SMTs) and school governing bodies (SGBs). A principal stated the following:

“...we have done that, instructional leadership, managing assessment, instructional leadership planning in classroom, management in CAPS, instructional leadership, introduction and overview, so that’s what we do... (Inaudible) it’s about leadership, staff motivation and positive reinforcement, professionalism and discipline, educator... (Inaudible) conduct.” (Principal 2)

In my in-depth observations, teachers expressed their grievances saying that they do not receive support, they are not very motivated and they have not been developed. A mathematics teacher revealed to me that he has not been developed in any of the three areas that he teaches. He also admitted that subject advisors do not visit. These observations are noteworthy because the lack of motivation, support and development came through in the way lessons were taught, teachers conducted themselves, subject content was delivered to learners and the lessons were handled. The lessons were not taught with enthusiasm, teachers showed a lack of interest towards learners, subject content was very basic; learners were not encouraged to ask questions and teachers did not challenge learners. I also found that teachers would not go over and beyond what was expected of them as teachers.

There is a facilitator who runs most of the workshops for the DRF and also monitors principals. She visits the schools individually and assists them with whatever problems they may be grappling with.

“...DRF we usually... (Inaudible) we usually go to [facilitator] for workshop[ing] on Tuesday and on Thursday, which is monitoring, then she comes. When we learn about IQMS then on Thursday she come[s] and ask[s] for the IQMS file and show[s] me that you must put this in [the file and] you must do this and this and the other things we do it according to [the] Department of Education. And we [she] also help[s] us, support[s] us, develop[s] us where we need support and development.” (Principal 5)

The schools are also supplied with resources, which they believe are important for bringing about school improvement. The schools do receive funds from the department for text books and stationary however resources like school buildings, library books, science labs, educational toys and so forth which are supplied by the DRF are important to bringing about school improvement to their schools.

“Cupboards from DRF, many things, the books, library books that we have we got it from [the DRF], there is an improvement. There is an improvement but we want to balance the improvement of the infrastructure, books and the work of the learners.” (Principal 9)

The DRFs assistance is therefore wide ranging and is perceived to bring about school improvement. A principal states the following:

“...once you are in [apart of the] DRF you have to work very hard and you work with the knowledge because they are supplying us with a lot of knowledge and infrastructure and everything....” (Principal 2)

The responses of the principals attest to the efforts of the DRF to bring about improvement to the schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area. It is also evident that the DRF’s interventions aim to assist different areas of the school. Clearly the DRF believes these interventions will bring about school improvement or it would not have invested in the projects that it has. However, later in this thesis I will discuss how the approach of Ben to assisting the schools has changed and how his focus is now on a specific set of schools. This will be explored in the theme that focuses on partnerships. The next section will focus on negative factors perceived by Ben, a facilitator and the principals as hindrances to school improvement.

5.4.4. Negative aspects hindering school improvement

An array of interventions are being carried out within the schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area to bring about school improvement, however there are a large number of negative aspects too which hinder school improvement greatly. Firstly, in some schools principals are found to be weak. This affects the manner in which the school functions. Secondly, teachers are reluctant and lack motivation. This comes through in the way lessons are taught. Thirdly, resources are not used as they should be. For instance, in the two schools in which I

carried out in-depth observations I observed that library books were not being taken out and computer facilities were not being utilized.

“It’s a lack of motivation from their side and unfortunately I would say it’s the lack of motivation from the principals mainly. ‘Cause [because] those are the schools with weak principals.” (Facilitator)

In addition, staff are not developed. Teachers made mention of this. The district could be blamed for this; this will, however, be elaborated on when wider system issues is addressed as a theme. Furthermore, there are under qualified teachers at most of the schools in the area. Their lack of expertise is apparent in the way subject content is delivered.

“...in [it] is also a help in terms of a curriculum understanding of a in [on] the part of educators because I could see we they can understand a teaching but now they might be a some lack of content.” (Principal 7)

This is a serious concern as, in some cases, much of the curriculum is not taught to learners and learners are expected to write Annual National Assessments (ANAs) as well as their internal examinations while they are not being well prepared for them. If a learner fails the year he or she is condoned and, unfortunately for the learner, has to enter a new grade without having learnt everything he or she should have in the previous grade. Once again, the DoE could be blamed for this. The following responses were provided concerning teachers:

“...what troubled my mind so much is that we have a lot of unqualified educators.” (Principal 6)

“Although we are working under difficult conditions, since we are running short of educators” (Principal 4)

“It’s because the teachers are sometimes not the best trained, the principals sometimes [are] not the best trained, schools [are] inadequately equipped...” (Ben Henderson)

Another issue is that teachers lack content knowledge and are therefore unable to provide learners with the best possible information regarding a specific subject. In addition, it is an issue that the district does not intervene in the various schools to the extent that it should. Again, this

will be elaborated on when focusing on the theme of wider system issues as it is a complex issue in its own right.

The responses above reveal that there are many factors that hinder school improvement in the schools in the study. It is for this reason that so much effort goes into planning and implementing DRF's projects that aim to address these factors that hinder school improvement. It is vital to remember, though, that not all factors can be addressed and not all problems can be solved as time and money is limited.

The next section discusses two models for addressing school improvement and school performance. Following that the model initially adopted by DRF's CEO, as well as the model he plans to adopt, are discussed.

5.4.5. Models for school improvement

There have been countless interventions implemented to bringing about school improvement over the years and large amounts of money have been spent doing this. Performance levels are still dismal, however, despite the amount of funds (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Roberts, n.d.) and resources invested into schools. This crisis has prompted the development of new models which aim to achieve school improvement and raise school performance levels in schools across South Africa with realistic budgets and timeframes.

In the early days, interventions aimed at improving pieces of a school system that seemed to be struggling. Over time these pieces accumulated and eventually interventions were developed to address all levels of a school system, or all areas within a school. This was known as whole school improvement. It was found, however, that intervening at all levels of a school system and in so many areas of a school was too costly and appeared to yield little improvement (Roberts, n.d.). As the costs of interventions tackling all areas of a school and all levels of a school system are prohibitive, an alternative approach was needed (Jones, 2012) that produced measurable results.

A number of organizations are researching the issue of school improvement. The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), established in 2009, is an example. NEEDU is responsible for the administration of schools and is tasked with providing a reliable, critical and precise account of the state of schools in South Africa to the Minister of Education

(NEEDU, 2013). In 2012, NEEDU focused on the Foundation Phase (grades 1-3) as that was the year the new curriculum (CAPS) was to be introduced (NEEDU, 2013).

NEEDU focused on 134 primary schools in South Africa and its findings revealed that in order for schools to perform well a number of areas need to be addressed. Principals need to maintain efficient time practices in their schools and take responsibility for leading curriculum delivery. The issue of language needs to be addressed, with either English being the language of learning and teaching at the foundational phase or standardizing African languages. Subject advisors should be trained in additional languages spoken in the various districts so that they can provide leadership, advice and training to schools, teachers and parents. Norms should be set for reading proficiency nationally and SMT members should monitor learners reading systematically. School leaders should monitor learner writing throughout the school. Workbooks should be evaluated against the curriculum and revised where necessary. The provincial budget should allocate more funds towards equipping schools with reading material in the foundational phase. Models for effective teacher capacitation should be adopted. And the list goes on (NEEDU, 2013).

The needs identified by NEEDU are imperative and are similar to those identified by other organisations. Addressing these needs in a piecemeal fashion would be time consuming and costly. A model is needed to address these needs which use an innovative approach to bring about school improvement and increase learner performance.

There are two models that I wish to discuss, both of which take time and funding constraints into consideration. Jansen's model acknowledges that schools in South Africa are diverse, with each school having to face its own challenges and having to deal with its own problems. According to Jansen it is unreasonable to expect all schools to receive the same government-mandated, top-down approach to education (Feinberg, 2013). Jansen states the following:

“But government—by definition a top-down structure—is ultimately responsible and accountable for the South African education system. Which brings us to a riddle: How can a top-down entity provide the flexibility and quality to allow for different (and better) solutions in different schools for different children, all focused on one extraordinary outcome—helping learners achieve the dream?” (Feinberg, 2013)

Jansen believes that in order to achieve this “dream” a different approach needs to be taken - one that seems to have worked in other education systems. Jansen believes that the government should provide extraordinary educators and other qualified operators the liberty to implement their own ideas for helping learners improve and reach new levels of excellence (Feinberg, 2013). He also feels that the *“South African Department of Education could allow nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to contend for the privilege and honour of operating their own government schools”* (Feinberg, 2013). Teachers and principals should be free to do what they identify needs to be done in their schools as they are the ones dealing with the challenges first hand and are therefore in the best position to come up with solutions. Roberts (n.d., p. 3) states that this *“can be likened to creating small spots of light which benefit individual schools, but have no impact on the education system as a whole”*.

If the government did allow for a bottom-up approach to thrive, it could attempt to reproduce the innovative and successful ideas that emerge in government schools nationwide (Feinberg, 2013). To ensure that this approach works well, accountability standards would have to be set and maintained by the government and all schools would need to be held to high standards of quality (Feinberg, 2013). If teachers and principals meet the standards, they would have the liberty to implement their own ideas to meet their learners’ needs.

This model seems to hold promise as it is true that each school is different and faces a unique set of problems. Allowing teachers and principals to deliver education to their learners and do what they feel needs to be done in their schools could work. The fact that schools are to be held to high standards of quality would ensure that not just any school would be permitted to do what it feels needs to be done as it would first have to meet the standards set by the government.

The second model I would like to introduce was developed by Taylor. A study called the National School Effectiveness Study (NSES) was carried out in all eight provinces in South Africa with the exception of Gauteng (Taylor, 2011). This study “aimed at identifying lessons for policy and practice for government, principals, teachers, and parents” (Taylor, 2011, p. 2). The NSES tracked a cohort of children in grade 3 for three years. The learners’ performance was assessed by means of literacy and mathematics tests administered in English.

The results of the study revealed overall that learner' Socio Economic Status (SES) and school type did influence results as black learners that attended historically black schools did worse than black learners that attended historically white schools. The results of the study also revealed that learners that were exposed to English demonstrated higher achievement. The study indicated that learner-teacher ratios and resources were not really associated with student achievement. It did reveal, however, that "attendance and punctuality by principals and teachers, thorough curriculum planning, frequency and use of assessment for teaching, teacher knowledge, and curriculum coverage" (Taylor, 2011, p. 10) were strongly associated with learners' tests results.

According to the NSES, improved performance can be achieved by focusing on "time management, curriculum planning, the systematic use of assessment to focus teaching and learning, and the procurement and retrieval of books" (Taylor, 2011, p. 10). Taylor identifies a list of variables that need to be addressed in order to bring about school improvement; if these variables are addressed correctly learner performance can be expected to increase. He advocates taking one of the variables at a time and working with it throughout the school system. In this way attention is paid to one variable only, allowing it to be addressed effectively on all levels of a school system.

Considering these approaches, a bottom up approach could be taken, as Jansen suggests, in which investment is made in a few schools that perform exceptionally well, or a top down approach could be taken, as Taylor suggests, in which an identified list of variables are worked on throughout a school system. Jansen's model focuses on excellence while Taylor's focuses on addressing one variable at a time to bring about school improvement and improve learner performance. Considering that time and money are a constraint both models seem to be feasible solutions. Clearly, the model that actually works and does in fact improve learner performance in a short space of time with the least amount of funds would be the best model to adopt. The only way to find out which model that is would be to put both models into practice and see which one is most effective.

The next section discusses the model initially used by Ben and how it has been altered to bring about school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

5.4.6. Ben's model of school improvement

When David was alive, a school would make a request for something and, if it sounded reasonable to him, he would meet the request. He never expected anything in return from the schools as his assistance was solely benevolent. He did not try to use any particular model in his work and just followed a simple, charitable approach.

When the DRF was established after David's death, Ben was appointed as CEO. He has been responsible for DRF interventions in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area since. As I have mentioned, the Delta Environmental Centre in Johannesburg assisted with a whole school evaluation survey of six schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area and these survey results were generalized to all the other schools.

The needs identified in the schools were placed into four broad categories: infrastructure, self-help issues, community engagement and teacher support. Ben has assisted the schools according to these four categories. The model he appears to have adopted is one of whole school improvement as his interventions have been aimed across multiples areas within the schools, targeting classrooms, teachers, principals, learners, the curriculum and the community. He goes further to provide schools with any additional resources they may require.

In addition to this model, Ben has also used a business model in his efforts to bring about school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. All of the schools supported by the DRF have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which clearly indicates the expectations for their partnership with the DRF. The MoU is put in place as a means to make sure that school improvement does occur. If schools adhere to the agreement they are assisted and if they do not adhere to the partnership the DRF withdraws from the school. Ben therefore requires schools to do their bit as he does his bit, as he does not believe in giving whilst schools keep taking. The business model as well as the notion of partnership will be explored further in the theme to follow due to being complex in its own right.

An issue that has arisen, though, is that while large sums of money have been used to assist the schools very little improvement has been seen in the performance of learners and the funders would like an account of how their funds are being used and some kind of verification as to

whether these funds are benefitting the schools. As a result, Ben has decided to adopt an alternative model in his work with the schools to try to bring about school improvement.

Currently, schools are designated as red, yellow or green schools. With the new model, some of the green schools will be reclassified as “blue schools”. These will receive additional attention from the DRF. Ben will be involved personally with the blue schools and will also sit on their student governing body. He will therefore have a say in the way the schools are managed and will be in a position to provide input into the schools. Schools with efficient and effective principals who are already running their schools well will be selected to be blue schools. These attributes are important to Ben; this will be elaborated on in the theme to follow. The DRF will focus greater attention on the blue schools and provide them with whatever it is they may need. The following paragraph reveals Ben’s intention:

“We’re going to build a chain of schools: preschool, primary school, secondary school. And that chain will become a blue chain so we work in the primary school and the kids who get whatever it is that they need in that school that we can give them, we will do so to make sure that they get the best possible educational or pre-educational experience. So that by the time they go to primary school they are fully prepared to take full advantage of everything that’s given to them in primary school. And then we’ll follow them through primary school and then into secondary school, so we’ll follow that starting group that started the blue chain today and we’ll follow them all the way through school trying to provide absolutely everything for them all the way through.” (Ben Henderson)

The aim of adopting such a model is to ensure that the performance of learners improves and that this performance is monitored over time. If Ben forms a chain consisting of three blue schools and is able to monitor the chain closely and be as involved as much as possible in these three schools, he hopes to achieve good school results. In this way funders are provided with proof that their money is being used and is in fact making a difference to the performance of learners and Ben is able to document that improvement is happening.

This model will provide the DRF with greater confidence that what it is doing for the schools in the area is, in fact, working and there will be evidence to prove this. If a few schools are being funded without a limit, it will allow those schools benefit as much as possible rather than

spreading funding across many schools where no improvement seems to be taking place. If the model does work and is successful, the DRF may continue using this model with other schools in the area. If a chain is formed, there is control, the performance of learners is tracked over time and the DRF can be assured that there will be good results at the end.

The first model Ben used follows a common approach to school improvement but over time it was found to be time consuming and costly. The new model, however, is unique and different compared to the models mentioned above. The models mentioned above are proposed to be used across South Africa and not just in select schools. Ben's model, however, focuses on a few schools, thereby allowing him to control and monitor what goes on with them on a daily basis.

While the new model Ben plans to adopt may work, it does however mean that many schools are excluded from the blue chain and therefore will not receive the best. The blue chain may actually produce educated learners that are prepared to go to university when they reach the end of the chain in grade 12, however many learners will not receive that opportunity as they are not included in the blue chain. The DRF does not have sufficient funds or manpower to include all the schools.

5.4.7. Conclusion

This theme has identified the factors that promote school improvement and those that hinder school improvement. This section has also presented two models, one by Jansen which is driven by an emergent logic, taking a bottom up approach, and one by Taylor which is still one of whole school improvement that identifies a list of variables that need to be addressed but chooses to address one variable at a time. I have also presented Ben's original model and his alternative model to bringing about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. It is obvious that all these models have a common goal, which is to improve performance without having to spend large amounts of money and time to produce good results. It would seem, therefore, that all the models mentioned above have an underlying business model guiding their approach. This may be because the need to bring about school improvement in South Africa is of great concern, but much time and money have been wasted already.

5.5. Partnership

5.5.1. Introduction

In the data set, the notion of partnership in education is discussed extensively. This section of the chapter will explore the theme of partnership and the profound dynamics that surround it. There are two parts to the interventions carried out in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area: those implemented by David Rattray and those implemented later by Ben Henderson. These two individuals have taken opposite approaches to working in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, both of which are unique in themselves.

5.5.2. David Rattray's approach

In the beginning, whilst David was alive, a relationship formed between himself, the community and the schools. The community and the schools perceived David's help as a donor and recipient type relationship. If a school made a request to David for something and it sounded rational to him, he would meet the request. He had no intention of questioning schools as to why they needed or wanted a range of resources and what they had done on their side towards qualifying for the various resources. David never expected anything in return as his assistance to the schools, as I made mention of earlier, was purely charitable. David also trusted the schools and therefore assisted them without question.

5.5.3. Ben Henderson's approach

After David's death as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the David Rattray Foundation was established and Ben Henderson, the current CEO of the foundation, volunteered to take charge of assisting the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. If we juxtapose David's approach with Ben's approach to assisting the schools the approaches are poles apart. Ben works as the representative of a foundation whereas David worked more as an individual benefactor. The quote below, taken from an interview conducted with Ben, depicts this difference very clearly:

“Um, because Dave wasn’t as involved as the foundation is, so if a school makes a request to David for ... made a request for something and it sounded reasonable to him, he said okay. Now if a school makes a request to us for something, we say, ‘what are you going to do about it? What are you doing towards this project?’ That’s the first thing we asking you. I said ‘No, what are you going to do? This is a partnership. We can provide whatever it may be, and what are you going to do to make it work?’” (Ben Henderson)

This gives a clear indication that Ben does not take the same charitable approach that David did, but instead would like a partnership between the foundation and the schools. A partnership, according to Ben, is schools having a desire to progress, whilst reflecting enthusiasm, cooperation, commitment, dedication and drive to bringing about school improvement. Ben expects schools to do their bit as he does his bit in assisting them and he makes this evident saying:

“...in her particular school, because of her enthusiasm and desire, we felt that if she’s that keen she’s going to all this time and trouble and inconvenience by hiding behind a woman, potential embarrassment of being somewhere where she shouldn’t be, if she’s that keen then we should, she obviously wants to do something, we should invite her, and so we did.” (Ben Henderson)

This means schools are expected to provide input into what is needed and input into solving whatever problem may exist. Ben does not believe in giving whilst schools keep taking. He wants to see schools making an effort to attend all meetings, being responsive and willing to give of their best and showing commitment.

Ben therefore desires feedback. He may not expect schools to sing a song for him or dance at his arrival however he does desire something in return for what he’s doing in order to have him keep doing what he does. This is a significant aspect of how Ben works in contrast to how David worked as David did not expect anything in return for his assistance. If a school is not responsive and lacks dedication, Ben is less likely to assist them. If a school fails to adhere to the partnership, Ben is then able to address the situation, reminding schools of their part of the partnership. If a school still fails to adhere to the partnership, the DRF is permitted to withdraw from the partnership.

“...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 they’ll do it because they don’t want to be dropped...” (Ben Henderson)

Here we see very obviously that Ben desires to have some form of control over the schools even if it means having a small amount of control. Ben is conscious of the fact that schools are governed by the DoE therefore giving him very little say in how the schools should be run, however Ben is able to employ a partnership agreement to gain some form of control over the schools. He is able to do this as he is aware that all schools require resources and support. They aren’t going to receive most of it from the DoE and therefore have to lean on the DRF for assistance and as a result no school wishes to be excluded from the DRF. This partnership is laid down in the form of a formal document. All DRF schools are aware of this partnership from the beginning and what is expected of them by the DRF and what they can expect from the DRF. A few of these expectations were outlined earlier in the chapter.

The DRF has expectations and, as a result, schools will have to decide whether they would be willing to engage in a partnership with the DRF. If a school does decide to go ahead with the partnership they are accountable for their part of the partnership. If a school fails to adhere to the partnership and reveals a lack of accountability, consequences will follow. It is important that schools do their bit as Ben does his bit as the partnership laid down by the DRF in the beginning indicates clearly that the DRF is not a charity and that the DRF is not going to be a hand out type operation as they want to partner with the schools.

“...we were not here to hand out; we were here to partner with the communities...” Ben Henderson)

The next section will go on to explore the process of change that has taken place in terms of the way in which Ben treats the various schools and the procedures he adopts when implementing projects.

5.5.4. The process of change

When the foundation was established, all of the schools received the same treatment and were made aware of the requirements of partnership. There weren’t seventeen schools at first, however each school, regardless of when they had joined the foundation, was treated equally.

The scale of the project determined the procedure Ben would take when implementing a project. If a project was being carried out and schools were being supplied with sports kits, for instance, all schools would receive sports kits.

If a larger project was being carried out, for instance a classroom block being built, certain factors came into play. The DRF would look to see if they had enough funds to build a classroom block and whether the school was in great need of a classroom block. For instance, if four schools required a classroom block, Ben would examine how many learners were enrolled at each school and which school would need a classroom block the most and the school with the highest enrolment rate would qualify for a classroom block as they would be seen to have the greatest need. This was the procedure Ben used when implementing large projects.

Over the years, Ben's approaches changed and so did his treatment of the schools as he discovered that some schools neglected the partnership they had once agreed upon. There are some schools that do not cooperate, they do not participate effectively and they do not show commitment. There are some schools that fail to attend workshops run by the DRF, they fail to put in the effort required and they portray an attitude of disinterest. If a school is unwilling, Ben no longer treats them the way he did initially. He said:

"You know she's a taker and we didn't like that kind of attitude. Every time we invited her to attend training session[s] or a meeting about something or to participate in whatever it was which is her part of the partnership and it's not for our benefit, it's for her benefit, [she] wouldn't come, [she] always had an excuse. And if you check Gadeleni's attendance records of anything, she is always missing. [She] doesn't care and we think if you don't care why should we care about your school?" (Ben Henderson)

"Certain schools always fail to do certain things, they fail to turn up for meetings, they fail to submit information that you've requested, they fail to reply to whatever it is, or they fail to show up for occasions..." (Ben Henderson)

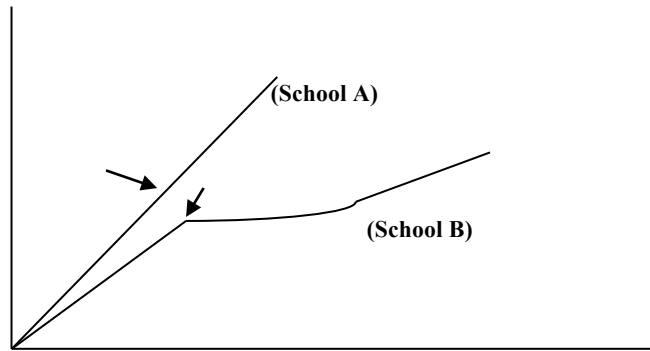


Figure 3 The rate of change

The DRF schools all start off at a point where they are treated equally. As the DRF works with the schools, the DRF does its part as the schools do their part. A school that has a good principal and is functioning well according to Ben would look something like School “A” in the figure above. This school is adhering to the partnership and according to Ben it deserves support. The school labelled “B” is a school that starts off well and does adhere to the partnership however at a certain point it stops. In Ben’s view this school will no longer function well and so he begins to withdraw support from it.

If we analyse the graph we see that so long as the graph is constantly moving upwards, the schools are still being supported but if the schools begin to flatten out at a certain point based on Ben’s criteria, Ben is no longer willing to support them as he did. In an economic model of these changes this effect is termed “the rate of change”. The DRF, in other words, will continue to support the schools if a positive rate of change is maintained however when there is a negative rate of change the DRF begins to withdraw from the school. If there is a rate of change in the positive direction and principals are trying to adhere to the partnership then Ben may consider assisting them again.

“...he does seem to have a better handle on things that[n] he had before and he was quite receptive and responsive and I thought hmmm okay maybe we can reconsider [him]...”

(Ben Henderson)

If a large scale project is being implemented nowadays, a number of factors are taken into consideration which are somewhat different to the factors mentioned earlier. There has to be enough funding available to go ahead with the project, a school has to have a great need for the project, the school must be committed to the partnership between themselves and the DRF and

the school has to reveal a sense of consistency in their request for a particular project. The fact that a school has a need is not a sufficient reason alone for the foundation to support that school. If a school is found to be uncooperative, does not attend workshops, fails to communicate and is not consistent with their request, their need is not considered even if their need is greater than that of another school.

“As an example, um, about 4 months ago [Company Name] who used to provide funding for our community building project said to us, ‘Okay, we going to fund another project this year, so to decide which school [is in] need, [or who] 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 Mhlazane. Mhlazane has a school principal who doesn’t participate effectively, so, sorry, next school. This one’s got 70 children per classroom, and that happens to be so and so school and this teacher is very willing to, okay we’ll go there. There’s no point in rewarding because that’s how they see it, rewarding a principal who’s not cooperative with extra facilities or extra whatever it may be...” (Ben Henderson)

According to Ben, if a school is unwilling to cooperate, he finds no reason to support that school and deems it is a waste of money.

“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 gonna [going to] do it just because it feels to me a waste of money.” (Ben Henderson)

This reveals that when Ben refers to a partnership between the DRF and the school what he actually means is in fact a partnership between the DRF and the principal of the school. Ben is aware that teachers and learners do have needs, however Ben has decided to work with the principals and only the principals. Therefore if a principal is uncooperative and unwilling, the rest of the school will suffer and will no longer receive support from the DRF. Ben’s grounds for deciding to work with the principal are due to his belief that one cannot go past the principal to work with the teachers and the learners of a school.

“...you can’t get to the children, it’s not, we can only get to the principal and if the principal is blocking it by their behaviour or by their whatever, their lack of response,

their unwillingness to participate, etc, then the kids are going to suffer because of the principal, not because of us.” (Ben Henderson)

A school does not operate that way; therefore, in order to improve a school the principal needs to be competent, dedicated, effective and plugged-in at all times. In other words, a principal is expected to run the school well, attend workshops, show signs of commitment and enthusiasm in all areas and be willing to participate in all activities. In that way a trickle effect is able to take place, so whatever a principal receives, be it in the form of skills or knowledge, it can be passed down to the teachers and the learners. If a principal is not cooperative, shows signs of disinterest and does not attend meetings and workshops or does attend workshops and meetings but does not transfer the information / skills he / she has received, the workshops and meetings will have been a waste to that school and the teachers and the learners will have failed to benefit due to the principal.

This notion of partnership that Ben emphasizes so strongly seems to be driven by an underlying force, perhaps a business mind. I did mention in the beginning of the chapter that Ben is a former businessman who had just retired and, being a good friend of David and Nicky Rattray, decided that he would take on the responsibility of carrying on the work after David died. In view of the fact that Ben was a businessman and has now had to take on the responsibility of carrying out interventions in schools, it is no surprise that he would approach the tasks at hand from a business point of view. The following quote indicates the way in which a business principle guides Ben’s way of thinking as he feels a school will not benefit if resources are invested into a school that is not well run and does not have an efficient principal running it.

“Our intention is to provide support but when you spending a lot of money you want to try and get the best bank for your buck and you can’t get that if the person that you’re spending it with [on] is not sufficiently motivated to make the changes as well.” (Ben Henderson)

If a school needs to benefit, invest resources into a school where there is a good principal and where the school does function well and in that way the resources will not go to waste. Here we find that Ben monitors a principal’s efficiency and if the principal is an efficient one, he is able to trust that the resources provided to that school will be of benefit, will assist in improving the

school and will not go to waste. In other words, if a school is a well-functioning school and is run by an efficient principal, he is content to support that school.

“Siyanda is a well-run senior school with a principal who’s reactive, proactive, committed [and] dedicated...” (Ben Henderson)

If a school does not function well, he will drop the school and support one with a principal that is dedicated and competent. It may seem as if Ben does not care about the needs of the school but this is not the case: he cares about the school and its needs but is also looking for schools that will honour a partnership.

“...you know when there are other schools that are more responsive and that still have the same needs, we’ll go there.” (Ben Henderson)

The Bible speaks of the parable of the ten minas. This parable is about a king who gives three of his servant’s ten minas (wages) to put to work before he goes away. When he gets back he sends for his servants to whom he had given the money to find out what they have gained with it. The first servant tells the king his mina has earned ten more and for this the servant is rewarded ten cities to be in charge of. The second servant tells the king his mina has earned five more and for this the servant is rewarded five cities to be in charge of. The third servant presents his mina to the king saying he has kept it away in a cloth. The king takes the servant’s mina away from him and orders it be given to the servant that had ten minas.

This parable clearly indicates that if you take what you have been given and you use it for optimal benefit, you will be given more. If you are given something but do not use it for optimal benefit, you will not be given more. If a school is provided with resources and the use of these resources leads to great benefits for the school, the school will be provided with more resources. However if a school is provided with resources and the school does not benefit, the school will not be provided with more resources.

It appears that Ben takes the same approach when working with the various schools. If we compare this to David’s approach, we find that with David if a school wanted something they would receive it so long as David had the means to meet the school’s wants. In other words, David met the wants of the schools while Ben meets the needs of the schools so long as they

adhere to the partnership, which is very important to Ben. The issue with adopting an approach like David's is that if some schools are not as brave as others to make requests for something, they get left out. So, although a charitable approach was taken, David was not expecting anything from the schools and so as they made requests their wants were met without question and we begin to find that an inequality begins to emerge as not all schools are brave enough to make their wants known. Ben, however, looks to see that schools request resources that will benefit them and bring about school improvement.

"...many of the requests that were being submitted to us through these informal discussions did not make sense to us in terms of benefiting education. They were um some of the some of the some of the requests were things like, a principal needed a bigger office or a bigger desk, I'm sure why it was convenient for him to have a bigger office or a bigger desk it did not help education in any way at all in his school." (Ben Henderson)

Ben also looks to see that schools really do have a need but also adhere to the partnership. It is evident that Ben adopts business principles and business ethics when implementing interventions in the various schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. In business, a company's purpose is to maximize investor's returns. The field of economics uses the term "opportunity cost" which in essence looks to see if what the money is being spent on actually derives the most gain.

An example of this is that if Ben decides to fund a building project for school D but is aware that the principal at school D is incompetent and believes that the building will not be used as it should be, is that then the best possible option to take or should he rather fund a building project for school F, instead, as school F has a competent principal running the school and he believes the building will be used as it should be and it will benefit the learners? In this case, Ben is likely to fund school F as he believes the benefit he's going to receive is going to be greater than if investing in school D.

We also find that the manner in which Ben implements interventions seems to follow a business approach. In business, the input of an investor is known as the marginal cost and what the investor gets out is known as the marginal benefit. It is essential for businessmen and women that the marginal benefit always be higher than the marginal cost. Ben believes that it is best to support schools if there is going to be optimal return so, in that way, the marginal benefit is

great. If Ben supports schools that fail to function according to his criteria, the marginal benefit will be small and the marginal cost for him will be great. As a result he will not be getting the best effect for the money he's invested in the schools. Therefore, it's better to invest in a school that will produce greater returns.

One could analyse this, asking, "Should you not care about the school despite the principal? Does the school not have learners that will benefit despite the principal?" However, if Ben does take an approach to support all schools equally regardless of the efficiency of principals and ignores the business principles which he makes use of – and let's presume as a result some schools fail to function well and continue to perform poorly – this means resources as well as large sums of money would be wasted and Ben would have to resort to borrowing money just to try to increase the potential return of investment. This is known as leverage.

In terms of how Ben operates, this would not work, firstly because the DRF is not a charity and secondly because the DRF does care about its funds and what they are being used on. There is also the concern of Ben needing to provide an account to donors that necessitates proof as to where their funds have been used and what the results have been, bearing in mind that the donors themselves are business-minded individuals who do not want to see their money being wasted. Once again, Ben's actions are planned and intentional as he believes in supporting schools that will produce greater returns. Ben does not take risks as the pros and cons are weighed before implementing a project.

The next section goes on to discuss the three categories in which schools are placed by Ben and how he views the schools. The categories are assigned a colour, each with its own attributes.

5.5.5. The three categories

The DRF has a list of all the schools they support; there are green schools, yellow schools and red schools. The green schools are liked by Ben and he is willing to support them. Ben has found the green schools to be responsive and committed and he's formed a good working relationship with the schools as they have cooperated and showed dedication. The yellow schools are somewhat liked and Ben is cautious when supporting them. Ben feels those within the yellow category are not as committed and dedicated as they should be and his relationships with the yellow schools are not as strong as his relationships with the green schools.

The red schools are no longer receiving support in the form of resources from the DRF as they have been found to not adhere to their partnerships. The red schools are still invited to workshops run by the DRF as it is of no loss to the DRF whether the schools attend or not, however the schools do not receive any resources from the DRF. Ben has found the red schools to be uninterested and incompetent. If a project is carried out, green schools are most likely to be supported.

There is a new category, which I mentioned in the first theme, which is to be added to the list, namely blue schools. This category is going to consist of a few schools and Ben's aim is to provide these schools with everything they may require to ensure they perform well.

The next section goes on to discuss my in-depth observations carried out in the second phase of my data collection process. A few days were spent in each school to gain a feel of each school environment and to explore the way in which each school was being run and how they functioned externally as well as internally.

5.5.6. A closer look at the schools

I decided to select two schools to observe in detail, a green school (school A), which Ben is happy to continue supporting and assisting, and a yellow school (school B), which Ben is observing very closely. The aim of observing each school in detail was to investigate what interventions the DRF had carried out in each school, whether the schools were functioning well and, if they were, was this at a school level or at a classroom level and why. For instance, if the school functioned well at the school level, the principal could be assumed to be competent and proactive, whereas if the school was functioning at the classroom level, teaching and learning is taking place and learner performance is improving.

I discovered that the green school did function well at a school level; however, it functioned very poorly at a classroom level. The yellow school, however, functioned well at a classroom level and to some extent functioned at a school level. The green school was found to have a competent and exuberant principal who showed commitment and passion. The way the principal conducted herself at school and went about running the school revealed a well-functioning school. The school was well taken care of and all facilities and equipment were well maintained and in good working condition. The school grounds were litter free at all times and the school displayed

responsible asset management. This school was, therefore, found to adhere to the partnership and functioned well at a school level. For these reasons it is no surprise that Ben has categorised it as a green school.

At a classroom level, however, I discovered that very little teaching and learning took place. Teachers were not motivated to teach, learners did not show a great interest in learning, lessons were not always well planned, resources were not used and the subject content was not always challenging. I also took the liberty of studying the school's Annual National Assessment (ANA) results which were found to be quite poor. I also observed that resources were not being used. This green school had a full service centre, a computer room and a library which were barely being used. According to the principal, the DoE had not allocated staff to work in the full service centre and the computer room.

The yellow school was found to be functional to some extent. The principal was passive and quiet and didn't seem to take on an authoritative role, however the school was well taken care of and all facilities and equipment were well maintained and in good working condition. The school grounds were litter free at all times. This yellow school did adhere to the partnership to some extent, however to Ben the principal:

“...just seemed to be completely [and] totally out of his depth...” (Ben Henderson)

At a classroom level, though, this school functioned well – better than the green school, in fact. I found teaching and learning taking place, teachers were somewhat motivated; learners showed a greater interest in learning and the ANA results were much higher than those of the green school.

With both schools, it looks to me that Ben focuses far too much on the functioning of a school at a school level rather than the functioning of a school at a classroom level. School A was doing something right at a school level however school B was also doing something right, only at a classroom level. This aspect deserves a great amount of attention because the ultimate goal is to improve learner's performance. Ben, however, seems to have evaluated not only school B but all yellow and red schools according to the efficiency of the principal. This makes sense to an extent, as Ben only works with the principals, however my experience demonstrated that a school can perform well even though the principal may show signs of passivity.

Ben has made the assumption that if a school has a good principal the school will be good but if the school has a bad principal the school will be bad. By bad I mean a school that does not function, as this is what Ben looks for in a school. The problem that arises, however, is that Ben seems to have ignored the possibility of a school having a good principal but performing badly in terms of school performance or the possibility that a school could have a bad principal and still perform well. He may have overlooked these two possibilities because he believes that if a school has a bad principal the school cannot be good and if the principal is good then the school has to be good. However, just because a school functions at a school level does not necessarily mean that the school is doing well at a classroom level. And just because a school is not functioning at a school level does not mean that a school is not doing well at a classroom level. The only way to find out would be to spend time with the teachers, attending lessons and monitoring the school as a whole for a certain period of time.

Ben therefore seems to have overlooked these possibilities, namely a school having a good principal but performing badly in terms of school performance or a school having a bad principal but still performing well. Since he has not considered these two options, and has dropped schools with bad principals and has not focused on the functioning of that school at a classroom level, he may not be getting the optimal benefit. The efficiency of principals should therefore be considered carefully as a means to assisting schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

The next section unpacks what may seem like a misunderstanding surrounding this notion of partnership.

5.5.7. Misunderstandings surrounding the partnership

Ben reflects extensively on the importance of partnership and this comes through very clearly in the data gathered. One is able to gather that his work carried out in the schools is largely driven by this notion of having a partnership with the schools. I get a sense, though, that this partnership is important to Ben however I'm not sure that it is as important to the schools. Ben may have internalized this notion of having a partnership between the schools and the schools may be aware of a partnership however I'm not convinced that the schools have fully grasped this concept of a partnership.

The interviews reveal to me that the schools do not really understand this notion of having a partnership with the DRF or they may just not be taking it as seriously as Ben does. This is detrimental because Ben's decision to exclude schools is based on adherence to the partnership and therefore if schools are not fully aware of this notion, and have taken it for granted, they stand to lose the DRFs support for their schools. An observation I made in my interviews was that out of the eight interviews conducted with principals, the idea of having a partnership with the DRF was only mentioned in one. This principal said the following:

“DRF is our partner, DRF is the [a] very important partner, I can say. When I look at our school, as[t] ourselves as[t] educators so DRF is the partner that has assisted us a lot...” (Principal 4)

This to me reveals that the schools do not understand this partnership or they have taken the partnership too lightly and have not realised its importance to Ben. The partnership may have been presented to the schools in document form and they may have been made to read and sign it but I am not sure whether they have taken note of the seriousness that surrounds such a document. The document may have indicated that if schools fail to adhere to the conditions the DRF is permitted to withdraw, however I am not sure whether schools have taken this portion of the document seriously or whether they are just not interested in this partnership and find it to be unreasonable.

5.5.8. Conclusion

The notion of partnership is indeed a very strong theme and its importance is obvious to Ben. All decisions made by the DRF are based on this partnership. If a school fails to adhere to the partnership Ben will not support them and if they do adhere to the partnership Ben will continue to support them. A need for feedback is essential for Ben to continue carrying out the interventions that he does. The strategies Ben makes use of when carrying out interventions indicate that time constraints as well as accountability to funders do play a huge role in the way he goes about making decisions and implementing interventions in the various schools and that his business background does affect his choices. The next section goes on to discuss the theme of wider system issues.

5.6. Wider System Issues

5.6.1. Introduction

Like many involved with trying to bring about improvement to schools across the country, the DRF too is trying to bring about school improvement, as is evident in the previous sections of this chapter. It seems many are searching for ways to improve schools in South Africa. However, an option may be to focus on the education district since the district does stand between the provincial Department of Education and the schools. All too often, policies are judged as incorrect or schools are blamed for not doing their job, but the district is excluded.

According to Chinsamy (2004) and Fullan (2001) the problem is not with policy formulation but rather with policy implementation. A number of policies have been formulated but implementation has been poor. The district carries a huge responsibility when it comes to implementing policy however in depth observations reveal that it is not evident that the district is fulfilling these responsibilities. A number of issues concerning the district have surfaced from the data gathered. I therefore place the district under wider system issues, as the district is believed to be important to a school system and does have an effect on the school system. This theme will discuss the responsibilities of a district and my findings will then be presented in terms of how the DRF views the district and how the principals, as well as the teachers, feel about the district.

5.6.2. A districts' responsibilities

I would like to begin with a definition of what I mean when I speak about the district.

“The term district will be used to refer to administrative and managerial units within the education system which are located closest to the schools, forming an intermediate layer between individual schools and larger components of the education system, such as regional or provincial bodies. In the interests of administrative convenience, districts may be divided into smaller units (e.g. clusters of schools). Districts have a full-time staff attached to them, usually made up of professional bureaucrats and support staff employed by the government” (Roberts, n.d., p. 4).

According to Chinsamy (2002), a school should be held accountable for the quality of teaching and learning it offers. Chinsamy (2002) adds to this, highlighting that all schools should be receiving pressure and support from the district. It appears that due to the lack of pressure and support from the district many schools in South Africa are underperforming. Chinsamy (2002) adds that departments of education need to pressure schools so that responsibility is taken for learners' performance. In other words, school management teams should be made to explain poor results, the progress schools make in improving curriculum delivery and learner assessment should be tracked, the work of educators in classrooms should be assessed regularly and action should be taken if educators are identified for misconduct (Chinsamy, 2002). Simultaneously, it is important that educators and school management teams (SMTs) receive support from provincial departments of education.

This is not the case however for educators and school management teams located in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area as is evident from the in depth observations carried out. The brief conversations held with teachers and the observations carried out seem to reflect that the main source of support for educators and SMTs in the area is from the DRF. If a school is pressured to deliver quality learning and teaching it needs to be supported by the provincial department. According to Chinsamy (2002, p. 4):

“This support takes a number of forms, the more important of which are capacity building in training workshops and seminars for management and educators on the new curriculum and assessment, on site classroom and school visits and lesson observation, coaching and mentoring”.

The schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area rarely receive training workshops according to teachers' accounts and when they do they are not adequate. The CAPS workshop that was run took as long as three days, however when the DRF ran a workshop on the NCS it took approximately fourteen months to complete. This is proof of how in depth, focused and thorough the DRF is when carrying out workshops. The DRF also carries out workshops on integrated quality management systems for schools (IQMS) and these workshops address performance

management and staff development. The facilitator aims at making these workshops as practical and simple as possible.

“About the workshops that we are getting from [facilitator], of the DRF, she’s excellent.” (Principal 2)

The schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area do not have people from the district carrying out classroom, school and lesson visits and observations. These schools too do not receive any coaching or mentoring. The DRF however sends in a facilitator who does coach and mentor principals.

“...DRF we usually... (Inaudible) we usually go to [facilitator] for workshop[ing] on Tuesday and on Thursday which is monitoring, then she comes. When we learn about IQMS then on Thursday she come[s] and ask[s] for the IQMS file and show[s] me that you must put this in [the file and] you must do this and this and the other things we do it according to [the] Department of Education. And we [she] also help[s] us, support[s] us, develop[s] us where we need support and development.” (Principal 5)

The district is also responsible for ensuring that conditions are conducive to teaching and learning (Chinsamy, 2002). If the conditions for teaching and learning are conducive the delivery of the curriculum is likely to be successful, however, if not, the delivery of curriculum is affected. It is therefore vital that the district ensure that schools are provided with basic resources like stationary and learning aids so that they may deliver the curriculum in the best possible way as this is the core function of any school. It is also important for the district to ensure that schools have adequate buildings, sufficient equipment and skilled human resources (Chinsamy, 2002). A lack of these affects teaching and learning.

The schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area work in conditions that are not conducive. The schools do have basic resources like chalk, stationary and text books, however buildings are not adequate, with classrooms being overcrowded and multiple grades within one classroom being a common trend across the schools. It is for this reason Ben is building classrooms for the

schools and schools are being supplied with equipment as well as additional resources. According to Chinsamy (2002) it is important that the DoE addresses personal issues that teachers face like salaries, housing subsidies and medical insurance. If these issues are not addressed, learning and teaching can be affected.

An additional issue is the lack of skilled human resources. The schools in the area have computer labs and full service centres, however these are not being utilized as there are no skilled individuals equipped enough to utilize these resources in the best possible way. The district once again is responsible for providing posts so that these positions are filled and these resources can be utilized however from observations and brief discussions with principals it was found that this has not been done. As a result learners are not taught how to use these resources and the resources are not being used for the learners as they should be.

A range of district responsibilities have been presented and as is evident from observations and discussions carried out with teachers and principals that the district fails to fulfil the majority of its responsibilities in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The above is also a clear indication of how the DRF addresses these responsibilities. The next section goes on to discuss how the DRF depicts the district.

5.6.3. The education district according to the DRF

The district has a responsibility towards the schools which it is expected to fulfil. The district is meant to ensure that schools are receiving pressure and support, are being held accountable for the quality of teaching and learning they offer, are maintaining the work they do, are being developed, that curriculum is being delivered in the best possible way (Roberts, n.d.) and that schools are supplied with basic resources for the classroom and the school (Chinsamy, 2002). These responsibilities however are not being fulfilled the way they should be, especially in the rural areas of South Africa.

The data collated through interviews and observations for this study reveal too that these responsibilities are not being fulfilled the way they should be in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. It is for this reason that David assisted the schools previously and Ben has stepped in to assist the schools presently. If districts were carrying out the responsibilities they

were intended to carry out in the schools, the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area might not be in the position they are in presently.

The schools assisted by the DRF are all DoE schools. The DRF assists the schools with a variety of interventions however the DRF is not involved in the selection of teachers, principals and other staff members. The DRF's aim is to support, supplement and compliment the efforts of the Department of Education by working with the people and facilities in place already. Over the years, though, the DRF has found the district to be very unhelpful and uncooperative. The DRF has made various requests to the district however on each occasion the district has failed to follow through and has let the DRF down. Ben revealed the following:

“That programme was quite effective but it wasn't completed in the two years that we thought it would be completed in. We needed to continue to reinforce that but things took longer than we thought and we needed to continue to reinforce that and the funder stopped funding it at the end of 2 years. So that programme, the funder had agreed to fund for two years, the Department of Education said they would pick up the programme at the end of 2 years, the department didn't pick up the programme. We went back to the funder and said ‘Would you continue to fund their programme?’ and they said ‘No’ because the department wasn't showing any interest so the funders said no...” (Ben Henderson)

The DRF planned and implemented a project which aimed at getting parents as well as the community involved in their children's education. This project was funded for two years according to the agreement and the government agreed to pick the project up after the two years had come to an end. The project was successful however not as successful as it could have been as it was not completed. The government failed to pick up the project and therefore the project came to an end.

“...no the intention was that the government would pick it up at the end of that programme. The government would integrate it into their system. And the government never did, and still hasn't.” (Ben Henderson)

“And the only thing one learns from that is not to depend on the government picking up anything in the end of any programme because they won't. They'll do nothing. So

whatever intervention we do has to reach its end and be finished. Nothing that will depend on the government picking up loose ends. Even though they agree to do it.” (Ben Henderson)

“...I expect the government to do zero.” (Ben Henderson)

The above indicates that the DRF does inform the district of its intentions and has requested assistance from the district in terms of programmes being carried out in the schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area however the district has failed to come through. It is therefore evident that the DRF has been let down by the government and unfortunately the DRF has had to carry the load on its own. Ben does make it clear that they will not depend on the government because if they did nothing would get done in the schools. As a result, if Ben sees the need to carry out an intervention in the schools, the district is informed, permission is requested and Ben moves ahead with his intervention, in no way waiting on the government.

5.6.4. The education district according to principals

The school principals, on the other hand, seem to reveal opinions on the district which contradict those of Ben. The principals disclosed that government officials do visit their schools and that the department does in fact monitor their schools. The principals also divulged that the district does meet their needs and they do receive support from the government.

“They come to monitor at the beginning of each and every term. They come in, either the subject advisor, or the other monitors, they usually come at the beginning of the term and at the end of the term of each and every term and sometimes they just come, they don’t say, they don’t write a letter and tell us, ‘Excuse me, we are coming on this day’, they can pop in at any time.” (Principal 5)

“And also the department monitors us...” (Principal 6)

“And even the district, the subject advisors came...” (Principal 8)

The in depth observations carried out in school A and school B however revealed the opposite of what principals had to say in the interviews about the district. I found teachers expressing their views on the district saying that subject advisors do not visit their schools and that they do not receive support from the district. A number of teachers also revealed that they are not developed

and this does impact on their teaching as many of them are required to teach multiple subjects due to the lack of teachers. However they are underdeveloped, unmotivated and they lack content knowledge.

The findings clearly indicate a difference between the responses of principals and teachers. I suspect that the responses of principals may be influenced by a culture of silence. The principals in the area require assistance and therefore if they are identified as schools that depict the government in any other way but good this may affect their relationship with government officials and they may stand to lose a great deal and for this reason principals place government officials in a positive light.

A certain amount of fear may exist, therefore, and being silent may be the best solution for principals. This culture of silence that seems to exist also comes through in that principals aren't assertive and do not speak up. If meetings are arranged, and these meetings affect teaching time, principals do not protest, however if the DRF is carrying out workshops the government insists that they not affect teaching time. This reveals, therefore, that principals are in fact silent when it comes to matters concerning the DoE. A sense of compliance therefore exists in the schools, with principals and teachers expected to conform to everything set out by the government.

The above is evidence that the district does fall short in carrying out its responsibilities in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The district is expected to be accountable for schools and carry out its responsibilities in all schools, however the district too faces many challenges. The next section goes on to discuss why the education district may be failing to function. This is an important aspect to consider as the education district does have a pivotal role to play in making sure that all learners have access to education that is of high quality.

5.6.5. Limiting factors on districts' effectiveness

The education district does have numerous responsibilities to fulfil, however there are also many factors that limit districts from being effective and sometimes these may be overlooked especially when the district is blamed for its failings.

The various education districts are in charge of too many schools and consequently cannot supply effective services to them (Chinsamy, 2002). The education district has to ensure that all schools receive some services and because there are so many schools services are scarcely spread

across all schools. The schools that are most affected by this are schools in rural areas as they require services the most. There is also the issue of provincial head offices, district offices and education institutions having roles to play and relationships to maintain, however these roles and relationships are not clearly formulated, understood and exercised (Chinsamy, 2002; Roberts, n.d.)

There are also many district directors that lack delegated decision-making authority, which in turn effects necessary changes, that are designed to improve learning performance (Chinsamy, 2002). All decisions that are to be made are referred to higher authorities who take time, and due to an absence of delegated powers at a district level there is a delay in service delivery (Chinsamy, 2002). Districts are also in need of additional financial resources and the delegated authority to utilize such resources effectively. The lack of such powers hinders delivery and slows down quality management as districts have very little say in how financial resources are to be used and which actions are to be taken (Chinsamy, 2002). There is also the issue of power which does become a concern as some may abuse this power and exploit the delegated decision making authority they have and this may not always be in the best interest of schools.

The importance of the district has been made known and the limitations it faces too have been revealed. A school system cannot function without the district. If the district were to function as it should, school development should move forward as fast as possible. The district therefore cannot be ignored when school improvement is to be brought about. The model proposed earlier by Jansen is a model of excellence which provides the school itself the liberty to implement its own ideas as to what their learners need to improve and how it is they can reach new levels of excellence rather than expecting all schools to receive a government-mandated, top-down approach to education in the same way. This model may be one of excellence, however the model still requires the involvement of the district. To ensure the bottom up approach works well accountability standards would have to be set and maintained by the government and all schools would have to be held to high standards of quality. The district therefore would have to be involved with this process.

An additional model is the successful school improvement model produced by JET which is based on an active partnership between the state, the private, sector, and civil society. The JET

school improvement model consists of seven components, mentioned in the literature review, that are believed to be involved in bringing about school improvement. These components are stakeholder mobilization, planning and organization, teacher performance, parent involvement, district support, teacher competence and research monitoring and evaluating (Khosa, n.d.). Once again, district support is included in this model too, indicating the need for district involvement.

5.6.6. Conclusion

This theme has laid down the various responsibilities the district is required to fulfil. It is evident from the findings that the district does fall short in carrying out these responsibilities in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The DRF is involved with trying to address numerous needs the schools may be facing and also seems to be intervening in areas that the district is actually responsible for. The principals obviously place the district in a positive light as they may fear losing the little support they do receive from the district, however teachers clearly stated they do not receive any support or development from the district. Despite all of the above, it is imperative to remember that the district is important to a school system, it does have a huge impact on a school system and it cannot be ignored.

5.7. Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described the DRF in great detail, from how it was established to revealing the areas in which it sets out to work. The DRF intervenes in numerous areas which make up the school system. The major themes which have emerged from the data collated, namely school improvement, partnership and wider system issues have been discussed in great detail. The responses of principals and Ben as well as one of the facilitators of the DRF have revealed the difficulties experienced in an area like this and have indicated that school improvement is indeed being brought about in the various schools in the area. It is evident that the DRF is trying to bring about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area even though there are numerous complexities and issues to be dealt with because of the context in which it is working. There are many areas in which the DRF is intervening and there are also many areas which have received very little attention. The dynamics at play within an organisation like the DRF, as well as the area in which the DRF is working, makes it challenging to reach all the areas that require intervention.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

6.1. Introduction

Tucked away deep in the rural wasteland of the KwaZulu-Natal interior, amidst gravel roads and mud huts, is an organisation that has chosen to support the poorest of poor schools that are located not just in any rural area but an area that is bursting with history and power, as talked about in Chapter One. The area is home to Blood River, signifying the power struggle that took place between the Boers and the Zulus and between the British and the Zulus. The conflict between black and white is a significant part of the area's past. At present, however, we find a white man who was historically privileged carrying out an assortment of interventions in schools for black learners who are disadvantaged.

The funders of the DRF are predominantly international and based in Britain. The Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift area is a tourist attraction and there are extravagant lodges located in the area where accommodation costs large sums of money whilst surrounding these lodges are shacks, mud huts and underprivileged people that can barely afford decent housing or a meal. The context in which the DRF finds itself is exceptionally unique. The dynamics at play within this area make the case exceedingly interesting to fathom in terms of how school improvement can be brought about in such an area with so many opposing issues at hand. It is fundamental to consider this backdrop as the discussion is presented in order to comprehend that the study is set in a complex space.

In the previous chapter, three major themes that emerged from the data were discussed in great detail.

- 1) School improvement
- 2) Partnership and
- 3) Wider system issues

This chapter presents a discussion on the findings and how they relate to the literature reviewed and the theories explored. In the midst of relating my findings to the literature reviewed and the theories explored I also relate my findings, the literature reviewed and the theories explored to

the DRF and the work this organisation has set out to do. For the purposes of clarity, this chapter will be organised in a way that mirrors the literature review presented earlier in this dissertation.

6.2. The field of school improvement

The field of school improvement, as talked about in Chapter 2 can be dated back to the mid-1960s (Harris, 2001) when a bottom-up approach was adopted to bringing about change to schools. A number of small-scale projects were introduced focusing on individual schools, a select group of students or groups of teachers (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). The small-scale projects dealt with concerns surrounding teacher development (Harris, 2001), improving the conditions of teaching and learning, the implementation of curriculum materials (Harris, 2001) and so forth. These initiatives however failed to improve student outcomes.

Over time, a variety of studies have been conducted on the initiatives that have failed, a number of lessons have been learnt and as a result there is now an increasing shift from individual school improvement initiatives to system wide change (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). System wide reform, as talked about in Chapter 2, aims to work with whole systems rather than pieces of a system. The theory reveals that if a whole system – the school, the district and the state – are engaged school improvement is likely to take place.

Fullan's change theory, as well as complexity theory, support whole school reform adding that the solution to innovations that have come and gone is the development and implementation of whole school reform (Fullan, 2001), as talked about in the literature review. The findings of this study reveal that the DRF has been pushed towards whole school reform, although not entirely. The DRF, instead, has been found to focus for the most part on individual school improvement initiatives. The DRF interventions are aimed at engaging numerous areas, however the foundation provides certain schools with any additional resources they may require as well.

The DRF, for example, addresses infrastructure needs, community engagement needs, self help issues and teacher support needs. The various interventions addressing these four areas were mentioned in Chapter 5. These interventions are implemented by the DRF however not every school receives these interventions. In some cases all schools receive the same intervention,

however schools that are found to adhere to the partnership, as mentioned in Chapter 5, are assisted further.

The DRF's intention to focus on individual school improvement initiatives is driven to a large extent by a business mind set, as talked about in Chapter 5. According to Ben, resources should be invested into a school where there is a good principal and where the school functions well and in that way the resources will not go to waste and school improvement will be achieved. If the DRF chose to focus on whole school reform the funds it possesses would not be enough and resources would run out. This would mean that a school that shows no interest and does not adhere to the partnership would be receiving assistance but school improvement would not be achieved in the process. According to Ben, there is no point in providing schools with additional resources if they are unwilling to adhere to their partnerships.

“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 gonna [going to] do it just because it feels to me a waste of money.” (Ben Henderson)

“Our intention is to provide support but when you spending a lot of money you want to try and get the best bank 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.” (Ben Henderson)

A partnership, according to Ben, requires that schools have a desire to progress whilst reflecting enthusiasm, cooperation, commitment and dedication to bringing about school improvement, as talked about in Chapter 5. Ben requires that schools do their bit as he does his bit in assisting them. If schools are found to do their bit, this means they are adhering to the partnership and, according to the DRF, a school that adheres to the partnership and does their bit is a school that will improve learner performance and bring about a change to their school system. The DRF's purpose in adopting a business model therefore is to ensure ultimately that school improvement does take place in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area.

The various interventions mentioned in Chapters 1 and 5 are an indication that the DRF does intervene at a school level, however the data gathered and interpreted in this study indicates that

the DRF fails to intervene at a district and a state level. This could be due to the number of issues concerning the district mentioned in Chapter 5 in the discussion on wider system issues.

“And the only thing one learns from that is not to depend on the government picking up anything in the end of any programme because they won’t. They’ll do nothing. So whatever intervention we do, has to reach its end and be finished. Nothing that will depend on the government picking up loose ends. Even though they agree to do it.” (Ben Henderson)

“...I expect the government to do zero.” (Ben Henderson)

The DRF’s experiences pertaining to the district may be a hindrance to intervening at a district and a state level, however funds and manpower may also be a limitation. It is vital to bear in mind that Ben is solely responsible for the work that is carried out by the DRF in the schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area. His load is therefore limited and so are the funds he receives from various funders. An additional reason for the DRF choosing to not intervene at a district and a state level may also be due to the fact that the DRF is a supporter and their role is to provide support to the schools. In other words, the DRF is aiming to address areas, which in actual fact should be addressed by the DoE, and therefore the DRF may actually not have an interest in intervening at a district and a state level.

The data has moreover revealed that the DRF seems to focus a great deal of attention on technical resources and principal leadership, which are important aspects according to Newmann, King and Youngs (as cited in Fullan, 2001); however the DRF seems to fall short when it comes to intervening in classrooms, with learners and with teachers. It appears that the DRF intervenes at a school level however fails to address needs at a classroom level. This refutes complexity theory, which advises that if intervening in a specific area of the school system in order to bring about school improvement all systems involved in that area should be engaged on all levels and all parts of the school system should be involved in trying to improve that area in order to bring about an improvement in learner results. This was talked about in Chapter 3.

It is imperative to intervene in classrooms, with learners and with teachers. These three areas need to be engaged so that schools are able to improve. According to Harris (2001), the development of teachers and schools is closely linked and both are crucial to school

improvement. Opfer and Pedder (2011) add that teacher development is imperative at the school level. The DRF does not place much emphasis on teacher development, which is a major concern. If teachers are developed their professional learning will have an effect on school improvement, increasing teacher quality and improving student learning, as talked about in Chapter 3 (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In order for schools to improve there also needs to be a focus on motivation for learners, teachers and principals (Fullan, 2006). However, in this study, the data reveals that the DRF only focuses on motivating principals.

It is vital, however, to keep in mind that the DRF does not see the classroom, the learner or the teacher as unimportant areas for intervention. The DRF is aware of the complexity of a school system and that it is important that all areas be addressed however, for the DRF, it is difficult to intervene in all areas. The DRF consists of one person carrying out all the interventions in the seventeen schools. In addition, funds are limited and time is a constraint. As a result, the foundation has chosen to intervene only in those areas which it believes carry more weight and are able to have a greater effect on the whole school system. It is for this reason the DRF is concerned with technical resources and principal leadership as it believes a school that is well resourced and has an efficient principal will in fact bring about change to the school system and school improvement will be achieved.

There is also a need for schools to be reflective. Fullan (2006) stresses that individuals need to be thinking and reflecting on what they are doing (School improvement framework, 2009). It is important for individuals to not only carry out an action but to think about that action carefully. The schools situated in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area do not demonstrate a sense of reflection, but instead appear to comply with everything, as talked about in Chapter 5. It is also imperative for school systems to be flexible and sustainable so that if a system does experience hindrances at some point it is able to remain stable or adapt to those changes without collapsing. This does not come through in the data and the DRF does not seem to equip the schools with the skills to be able to sustain themselves if they experienced a setback. This is a concern as principals at the majority of the schools in the study were found to be weak. A quote from a facilitator corroborates this finding.

“It’s a lack of motivation from their side and unfortunately I would say it’s the lack of motivation from the principals mainly. Coz those are the schools with weak principals.”
(Facilitator)

A range of factors which play a role in bringing change to school systems have been identified. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (as cited in Griffiths & O’Neill, n.d.) stress that as each school has a unique context bringing change to schools is a complex process that will differ from school to school. This is a significant aspect to consider.

The next section focuses on the productive pedagogies framework, a model McKinsey and Company (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) proposes as well as Hattie’s Visible Learning. In this section of the discussion it is vital to hold on to what Fullan and Stiegelbauer (as cited in Griffiths & O’Neill, n.d.) say about each school having a unique context.

6.3. School improvement in MDCs and LDCs

In both MDCs and LDCs investing in education is seen to be one of the most crucial factors that contribute to economic growth. It is for this reason that an extensive amount of research is being carried out on school improvement and an immense amount of money is being used to improve school systems throughout the world. The ultimate purpose of school improvement is to improve the results of students, as well as levels of attainment and wellbeing (The Australian Council for Educational Research, 2012).

Literature reviewed has indicated that schools in MDCs are at a different level to schools in LDCs and because of this difference school improvement initiatives implemented in MDCs should be different than those implemented in LDCs as the needs of schools in MDCs are different to the needs of schools in LDCs. The productive pedagogies framework, a model proposed by McKinsey and Company (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) as well as Hattie’s Visible Learning has been reviewed in great detail with each providing a valuable set of ways in which school improvement can be achieved. This discussion, however, aims to portray the difficulty of adopting such models to a South African context because of the level at which South African schools presently function.

6.3.1. The McKinsey model

The model proposed by McKinsey and Company (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) works according to a step hierarchy in which schools are moved from poor to fair, fair to good, good to great, and great to excellent levels, as talked about in Chapter 2. The model is useful for countries that wish to extract lessons for systems that are at different starting points. The problem with such a model, however, as was discussed in the literature review, is that it does not take into account the concept of individuation. Each school system functions differently than every other school system. Each school system also faces its own problems which are different than the problems other school systems may be facing. In some cases, as indicated by the principals, teachers and Ben, schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area do not have strong principals, in other instances teachers are under-qualified and further issues exist as well. As a result, one cannot expect schools to follow a set pattern or, in this case, progress according to a step hierarchy.

Even if all school systems were to start off at the same level, carrying out the same interventions, school systems in an MDC or an LDC would eventually develop in different directions. The McKinsey model does take history, culture, politics and the structure of the school system into account (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) when deciding upon interventions. However it fails to recognise that complexities within a school system increase and that change occurs differently within each school system. The DRF does attempt to understand the complexities within the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, however it is not able to deal with all these complexities at once, as discussed earlier.

The McKinsey model, in addition, places a heavy emphasis on teacher quality. The literature (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Coleman et al., 1996) indicates that in countries such as Singapore, South Korea and Finland considerable effort is made to select the best teachers. According to Barber and Mourshed (2007) and Coleman et al (1996), the quality of teachers will determine the quality of a school system. In South Africa, however, teachers are typically appointed indiscriminately and there is no selection criterion as the demand for teachers is too vast for teachers to be turned away. The schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, for instance, have numerous teachers that are under-qualified. The DRF does not play a role in the selection or dismissal of teachers. So while teachers may be an important part of the school system, very little

emphasis is placed on teachers in South Africa. The DRF does attempt to capacitate teachers, however as there are many other areas that need assistance in a school, teachers are not the primary focus of the DRF.

A country like Singapore is able to place a strong emphasis on teacher quality and on the process of recruiting the best teachers because it has already worked on other areas of the school system, perfecting these over time. It is now able to focus on teacher quality without having to be concerned about resources, principals and other issues. A country like South Africa, on the other hand, is still trying to provide schools with resources and recruit quality principals. It is evident, therefore, that schools in an MDC are at a different level to schools in an LDC and, due to this, different areas of the school system are being engaged depending on the country and whether it is an MDC or an LDC.

As schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area have to deal with a range of contextual problems, as described in Chapter 5, working in certain areas and implementing only certain interventions as the McKinsey model suggests would imply ignoring these other contextual problems that the McKinsey model does not take into account in its intervention cluster, as talked about in Chapter 2. In the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, these contextual factors cannot be ignored as they have a severe effect on schools, learners, teachers and principals, as well as the community. If schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area were to adopt this model, therefore, each school would develop in some areas while other areas would remain neglected and eventually each school would develop in a different direction. Consequently, there is no certainty of schools actually progressing according to a step hierarchy.

6.3.2. Productive pedagogies

Productive pedagogies is a framework that teachers can utilize to critically reflect on their classroom practices, as talked about in Chapter 2. Productive pedagogies emphasize the importance of a teacher's role in schooling, placing the teacher at the centre (Hattie, 2009; Lingard, Hayes & Martin, 2003). The four dimensions that make up the productive pedagogy have been mentioned in the literature review. They include a range of factors which, if addressed appropriately, are believed to bring about school improvement.

These factors include high quality lessons in classrooms (Christie, 2008); learners being able to critically engage with knowledge (Hammond, 2010); learners being able to manipulate information and arrive at meanings that are new to them; learners being expected to critically analyse information in order to give responses that show a deep level of understanding (Christie, 2008); classrooms being supportive; learners being able to take intellectual risks (Christie, 2008; Hattie, 2009); learners being expected to engage in tasks and raise questions that may contribute to class discussions; learners sharing their views on the outcomes of a lesson; learners being provided with social support; teachers expressing high expectations of all their students; teachers drawing on the various cultures, languages and beliefs of learners in order to get them to participate in activities (Christie, 2008) and learners linking their background knowledge to events outside the classroom (Chapuis, 2003; Christie, 2008).

These factors are undeniably excellent aspects to focus on when trying to bring about school improvement, however they are not likely to be addressed, or even considered, by the schools located in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. The findings of this study indicate that teachers in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area struggle to get learners to actually concentrate and grasp a lesson, therefore making it difficult for teachers to deliver lessons of a high intellectual quality. There is also the issue of lessons being taught in English with the result that the majority of the learners do not understand and fail to grasp the lesson, contributing to the challenge of teachers providing lessons of a high intellectual quality. Here is a comment made by one of the principals:

"And then when grade 1 up to 3, when they in grade 4 they start English, it's a problem to now to them now. So we are struggling to make them understand this English because now all subjects are done in English once grade 4 upwards. Where as in foundation phase they were doing it in Zulu, so there is that gap". (Principal 2)

The findings also reveal that a number of teachers in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are under-qualified, therefore making it difficult for them to engage with learners at a high level. A principal shares her concern stating the following:

"...and what a troubled my mind so much is that we have a lot of a unqualified educators." (Principal 6)

In a class with few learners, learners may find it easy to express their views and regulate their own behaviour, however in schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, class sizes are large and learners may not engage in conversations with teachers, raise questions or express their views due to being afraid of the teacher and being afraid of what other learners will think of them. Another concern is that teachers are not able to provide large class sizes with the social support they need. Hattie, however, identifies class size as having little impact on school improvement (Hattie, 1992). This contradicts the findings of this study, as class size appears to be a variable that does have an effect on school improvement.

An additional problem with this framework is that learners are expected to link their background knowledge to events outside the classroom (Christie, 2008). Most learners in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, however, are not exposed to television and newspapers, giving them inadequate background knowledge to link to events outside the classroom. This framework is, therefore, difficult to adopt in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area because of the many complexities that exist in the context the schools find themselves in and the many challenges they are expected to overcome.

It is difficult to adopt this framework in LDCs however it is not impossible. For instance, in Australia's education system indigenous students are known to be the most disadvantaged group (Ritchie & Edwards, 1996). A study was carried out to explore whether teaching practices would increase the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in numeracy, as talked about in Chapter 2 (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.). The study aimed to critically assess the role of pedagogical practices when teachers taught mathematics lessons. The study revealed that the productive pedagogies framework was appropriate and applicable when teaching mathematics to indigenous learners (Cronin, Sarra & Yelland, n.d.). Learners' performance in mathematics did improve significantly. Therefore, if one does apply the productive pedagogy framework, caution should be taken and the complexities of a school system should be understood.

6.3.3. Visible learning

John Hattie conducted approximately 800 meta-analyses, which covered over fifty-two thousand studies, in order to produce a model on successful teaching and learning, as talked about in Chapter 2 (Hattie, 2009). Hattie identified the variables that are *most* influential in bringing about

school improvement, the variables that influence school improvement *slightly* and the variables that have the *least* influence on school improvement.

Hattie (2009) identified six areas that contribute to a learner's achievement: the child, the home (Christie, 2008), the school, the curricula, the teacher and the approaches to teaching. Hattie discovered that the most important variables that impact school improvement are feedback (Reynolds, 2010; Hattie, 2009), students' prior cognitive ability and instructional quality (Hattie, 1992). The variables that have a slight impact on school improvement are teacher style and classroom environment. The variables identified to have the least impact on school improvement are finances, class size and team teaching (Hattie, 1992). It is important that the child, the home, the school, the curricula, the teacher and the approaches to teaching be taken into consideration when trying to increase learner achievement. In the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, however, each of these areas is compromised. The CEO of the DRF states the following:

"It's tough being a kid in this environment, I don't, those few that make it amaze me because everything is against them, including their education system. It's actually working against them". (Ben Henderson)

In terms of the contextual factors that hinder school improvement discussed in Chapter 5, the schools are found to be in need of a great deal of attention and assistance in all areas. The DRF is attempting to assist the school and the curricula, however due to constraints the DRF is only able to assist in part in other areas.

If we compare the list of variables that Hattie believes should be addressed to improve schools to the list of areas that the DRF selects to address to improve the schools with which it works, there is a vast difference. The DRF considers variables such as class size, a safe and secure school environment and a good physical infrastructure to be important factors that impact school improvement. However, according to Hattie (2009) the variables identified to have the least impact on school improvement are finances, class size and team teaching, while in the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area nothing can be achieved without finances. It is also because of the large class sizes that learners are not able to receive maximum assistance and teachers are unable to provide learners with individual support.

According to Hattie, however, feedback (Reynolds, 2010; Hattie, 2009), students' prior cognitive ability and instructional quality (Hattie, 1992) are of utmost importance. These are areas which schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area struggle with. Teachers in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area are unable to provide feedback to learners as there are too many learners in a class. The in-depth observations carried out in the schools reveal that the closest form of feedback a learner will receive is having their books marked.

It is incredibly important, as talked about in Chapter 2, to bear in mind that the context and setting of Hattie's studies are extremely different to the context and settings in South Africa. Therefore, applying a model like Hattie's to the South African context needs to be done with great precaution. Hattie's work was carried out across the United States of America, Europe and Australia, which does leave room for bias as these areas are first world countries and the issues faced in schools in more developed countries are somewhat different to those faced by schools in less developed countries.

The productive pedagogies framework, the model McKinsey and Company proposes as well as Hattie's Visible Learning has been reviewed in relation to the findings of this study. It is obvious that the complexity as well as the context of the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area cannot be overlooked. The interventions carried out in schools in MDCs are always going to differ from the interventions carried out in LDCs. The findings of this study also reveal that the schools the DRF is working with are situated in a very poor context, making it quite complicated and complex to adopt a framework or model that might be working for schools in countries abroad.

The next part of the discussion looks at school improvement within South Africa and how this applies to this study and its findings.

6.4. School improvement in South Africa

Prior to 1994, school improvement in South Africa was largely sponsored by NGO initiatives (Taylor, 2008), as talked about in Chapter 2. These initiatives were small in scale and focused mainly on teacher development (Taylor, 2008). These initiatives provided subject-focused

training for chosen teachers in certain schools. The literature reviewed has indicated that systemic change is required for school improvement to be brought about (Khosa, n.d.; Taylor, 2007). There is a need for school reform to link the macro and micro levels of educational practice in order for the two to strengthen and support each other (Taylor, 2007). The curriculum, teaching and assessment are expected to be in line at the classroom level, the school level and the government level. The need for systemic change is the same as whole school reform or system-wide change (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006).

JET has come up with a successful school improvement model which is based on systemic reform. The JET school improvement model consists of seven components which are believed to contribute to school improvement. These components are stakeholder mobilization, planning and organization, teacher performance, parent involvement, district support, teacher competence and research monitoring and evaluating (Khosa, n.d.). If interventions address all seven components of the systemic school improvement model school improvement is very likely to take place.

The findings of this study indicate that the DRF does assist with parent involvement. It is involved with planning and organizing and it does monitor interventions carried out in the schools. The DRF does, however, seem to fall short in terms of the other components. It is essential to remember, however, that the DRF is not involved in the selection of teachers, principals and other staff members. The DRF is a supporter: its aim is to support, supplement and compliment the efforts of the DoE by working with the people and facilities in place already. It is therefore not the DRF's responsibility to ensure that teachers are competent and performing efficiently.

It is imperative to bear in mind that addressing all seven components represents a great deal of work which is beyond the capacity of the DRF, which consists of one person carrying out various interventions in all seventeen schools. The findings also reveal that the DRF falls short when it comes to whole school reform and intervening at various levels within a school system, as Fullan and complexity theory suggest. The DRF also falls short when it comes to addressing the seven core premises Fullan (2006) makes mention of and when it comes to intervening with teachers, the classroom and the learners. However, one always needs to bear in mind the context in which the DRF works and the complexity of the situation.

A pragmatic critique of school improvement, as talked about in Chapter 2 is that a number of school improvement projects do not take schools with a diverse range of socio-economic circumstances into consideration (Fidler, 2001). The culture, context and socio-economic (Harris, 2010) issues of a school are extremely important (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010) and have been found to not always be taken into account. In this study, the DRF was found to take socio-economic circumstances into account while planning interventions and also when implementing interventions. It is vital to bear in mind that Ben represents the total manpower of the foundation to implement interventions in all 17 schools; in addition, funds are a constraint and so is time. The DRF receives no form of assistance from the district, which makes the task of trying to improve schools challenging. It is for these reasons that Ben has decided to devote his attention to a limited number of schools, which I have discussed in great depth in Chapter 5. The schools that will be a part of the blue chain are schools that Ben believes will bring about an increase in performance levels and will effect school improvement.

In comparison to the productive pedagogies framework, the model McKinsey and Company proposes and Hattie's Visible Learning, the school improvement model developed by JET considers the needs of South African schools and takes into consideration the factors that affect South African schools. The components that make up this model are all important, dealing with all levels of a school system. In this way the whole system is engaged and whole school improvement can be brought about. The models that Jansen and Taylor propose, discussed in Chapter 5, seem to shift away from whole system reform. This does not mean, however, that these models are impossible to implement or cannot be adopted. The litmus test of all models is whether they result in successful school improvement.

6.5. The big picture

At the beginning of the DRF's story, it was David who assisted the schools. If a school made an appeal to David for something and it sounded reasonable, he would meet the request. One could say that of the seven types of PPPs in education, David is positioned within the private sector philanthropy, as this type of PPP is very much concerned with trying to improve the chances of poor children to gain access to a good quality education. In Chapter 1 I mentioned how the Rattrays' motivation for assisting schools was so that the quality of education could improve and

children receiving this education in the extremely rural areas of Isandlwana / Rorke's Drift could uplift themselves out of their extremely disadvantaged backgrounds.

Following David's death, the DRF was formed and Ben stepped in to continue the work David had started. The DRF has developed a master vision of how a school should look and function. It compares schools against its own template for how a school – and all its components – should be. The DRF's ultimate objective is improved academic results, however it does believe that there is more to a successful school than academic results and its "template" tries to reflect this. The DRF is aware that factors like supportive teachers, adequate facilities, decent grounds, positive attitudes and a good principal all have a part to play in producing successful citizens, however it does not have a major insight into which components are more important than others, apart from the basics of safety and health.

The findings of this study reveal that the DRF is aiming to bring about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area and, in order to ensure that school improvement will result, a business model has been adopted which guides Ben's decisions and the way in which he goes about bringing change to a school system. Due to being a small foundation with limited funds and time, the DRF has to select certain areas in which to work that a) clearly need help, b) are a priority and c) fit the availability of funds.

The benefit of adopting a business model is that funds are focussed on schools that are going to bring about school improvement. In this way funds are not wasted. A study commissioned by the National Business Initiative (NBI) and carried out by Helene Perold and Associates revealed that companies and corporate foundations are much more likely to support higher-performing schools than those that perform less well (Perold & Associates, 2011). The study found that companies chose to assist schools that performed well and functioned better so that their assistance would have a greater impact. As Ben is a former businessman, it is not surprising that he has adopted this approach as well.

This is important because over the years models have been introduced, interventions have been carried out and large amounts of money have been spent trying to improve performance levels yet these levels still remain low (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Roberts, n.d.). In the case of the DRF, a limited amount of funds are available and to improve performance levels these funds

must be used in the best possible way in order to receive a maximum return, as talked about in Chapter 5. The DRF is involved mostly with individual school improvement initiatives and is actually addressing issues which the DoE should be addressing. According to the findings of this study, the DRF goes over and beyond its mandate when it comes to assisting the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area

Over time, the DRF has come to believe that, like any organism, a school is a sum of all its parts. In its view, all the components of a school need to work together to produce a well-rounded individual. Experience has taught the DRF what is needed to achieve school improvement. The DRF has also come to realise the complexity of trying to bring about school improvement and trying to change the culture of schools. The DRF is, as a result, aware of the importance of adopting a systemic approach when trying to bring about school improvement to schools. It is for this reason that Ben is planning to focus on a few schools, providing them with whatever they may require. He is therefore adopting whole school reform: working across a school system and intervening in numerous areas of the school system.

The findings of this study therefore reveal that Ben is in fact moving towards what the literature calls whole school reform to achieve school improvement. While he started off with individual school improvement initiatives he is now moving towards a whole school approach.

“So we going to reclassify our schools into, we adding a new classification, we adding blue schools, blue schools are going to become our favored schools, they are going to be schools where we are going to focus all of our attention on giving those schools everything they need, and that's there's a selection process we working on now, so this is a work in progress but it goes in with what we were saying earlier about pre schools and so forth. We're going to build a chain of schools, so preschool, primary school, secondary school. And that chain will become a blue chain so we work in the primary school and the kids who get, whatever it is that they need in that school that we can give them, we will do so to make sure that they get the best possible educational or pre educational experience. So that by the time they go to primary school they are fully prepared to take full advantage of everything that's given to them in primary school. And then we'll follow them through primary school and then into secondary school, so we'll follow that starting group that started the blue chain today and we'll follow them all the

way through school trying to provide absolutely everything for them all the way through.” (CEO 3)

This is an understandable trajectory from charismatic to bureaucratic, and a shift from piecemeal interventions to sustained and holistic interventions (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). The findings therefore attest to a logical story which is not unusual in school improvement. The findings clearly portray a shift from a charismatic approach to a bureaucratic approach. The findings also reveal the emergence of phases in the lifecycle of the foundation through which change has taken place in the way the foundation operates and attempts to achieve school improvement.

6.6. Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by highlighting that school improvement is a major concern not only for schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area but for schools throughout South Africa. It is for this reason that models are being developed and interventions are being planned and implemented. The DRF has tried to bring about school improvement in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area and school principals have attested to this. The area faces countless challenges and for the DRF attempting to bring about change to the schools in the area is no easy task. This study has revealed the changes that have taken place within the DRF over time, the phases through which the DRF has transitioned and the complexities of working in an area like Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana have been brought to the fore.

There are numerous strategies by which school improvement can be achieved, however the literature, as well as the discussion, reveals that caution needs to be taken when adopting models that have been successful abroad as the South African context is different. The findings, as well as the discussion, have provided a detailed account of the nature and function of the DRF. The uniqueness of the case has been portrayed clearly. The various interventions carried out by the DRF have also been described and the process of change that has occurred has been explored.

Chapter 7: Summary, recommendations and conclusion

7.1. Introduction

Given the grave concern surrounding South Africa's education system, the planning and implementing of school improvement projects and the fact that nearly 80 per cent of public schools in South Africa are not able to meet the minimum performance standards, this study set out to explore the interventions carried out by the DRF, an organisation with an intention of bringing about school improvement to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in rural KwaZulu-Natal. A case study approach was used and a range of data collection instruments were employed which provided me with a great deal of insight into the context, purpose and practice of the DRF as a case of school improvement.

This chapter provides a summary of the findings followed by a few recommendations.

7.2. Summary of findings

The findings of this study have revealed that the DRF is a unique organisation attempting to bring about school improvement. The DRF consists of one man solely carrying out interventions in a range of schools that are located in one of the poorest areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The DRF aims to work across the school systems while focusing on some areas of the school system more than others. The DRF's interventions aim to improve many areas of a school which have been mentioned throughout this thesis. In the midst of assisting schools, the DRF is forced to consider the extremely harsh context within which schools are positioned.

This study has revealed three themes which have emerged from the data, namely school improvement, partnership and wider system issues. The findings have indicated that the DRF is involved with bringing about school improvement to the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area, a fact which was attested to by school principals. The importance of a partnership has been emphasized and the DRF's decision to implement individual school improvement initiatives has been made apparent. This study has also revealed the DRF's attempt to adopt a business model to bring about change to schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area in order to ensure that school improvement is achieved. The findings have shown that the DRF is planning to implement a new model in which it will focus on a set of "blue" schools which will

receive more intensive support. The findings have clearly depicted a shift from David's charismatic approach in the beginning to Ben's bureaucratic approach over time. The findings have also revealed the way in which the DRF has moved from individual school improvement projects to adopting a whole school approach.

The wider system issues that impact on the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area have also been described and the problems the DRF has encountered concerning the district have been highlighted. It is evident from the interviews and observations conducted in this study that the district has neglected the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area. Without question, the DRF is addressing issues, which are the responsibility of the DoE, and the DRF is undeniably doing far more for the schools in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area than the DoE.

The literature reviewed on school improvement internationally, as well as in South Africa, has revealed a shift from individual school improvement initiatives to systemic reform. The challenge for the DRF in adopting a systemic approach has been pointed out and the value of choosing to stick to individual school improvement initiatives has been explained. It is for this reason that Ben has chosen to focus on a few schools for more intensive support. The literature reviewed on school improvement in MDCs and LDCs, the model proposed by McKinsey and Company, productive pedagogies and Hattie's visible learning have all revealed the challenges involved with adopting models from abroad and applying them to a South African context.

7.3. Recommendations

This study has focused on exploring the DRF, the schools within which they engage, the interventions they carry out and the way in which these interventions are carried out. The findings of the study have explored the DRF's decision to continue supporting the various schools whilst focusing additional attention on a few select "blue" schools and providing these schools with everything they may require. The reason for selecting "blue" schools is to enable the DRF to track the performance of learners over the years and measure the effectiveness of its strategy to bring about school improvement. This also allows funders to see where their funds are being used and verify that there is a return on their investment.

Further research needs to be conducted on the "blue" schools project to determine whether this strategy is successful. This would require research to be undertaken over a number of years –

possibly twelve years – in total. The findings of such a study would be of immense value to the field of school improvement. It would provide valuable insight into the interventions carried out in the “blue” schools and how they have been carried out.

Further research also needs to be conducted on the leadership structure of a school and school functioning. It is not necessarily true that having a good principal will result in having a well-functioning school. The in-depth observations in this study have demonstrated this. A more thorough look at the schools is required and a deeper understanding of the schools is necessary in order to discover what produces a well-functioning school. Instead of just focusing on the principal, the leadership structure should be looked at and the school as a whole should be understood.

7.4. Conclusion

This study has explored an organisation that attempts to bring about school improvement in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area. The study has verified that the DRF is concerned with achieving school improvement and the interventions carried out have demonstrated this. The study has explored the approach the DRF uses when trying to bring about school improvement and the motive behind using such an approach. The study has also revealed a shift from the DRF carrying out individual school improvement initiatives to pursuing whole school reform. The study has also shown the difficulty of trying to bring about school improvement to schools in the Rorke’s Drift / Isandlwana area in view of the facts that the context is an unkind one, the assistance provided by the DoE to the schools is inadequate (as reported by Ben, principals and teachers) and the DRF consists of one person solely carrying out interventions in 17 schools under the constraints of time and funding.

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Appendix A



7 June 2013

Ms Miranda Naidoo 209507223
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0392/013M

Project title: A study of school improvement: An exploration of DRF as a case study for school improvement in the Rorke's Drift/Isandlwana area

Dear Ms Naidoo

Expedited approval

I wish to inform you that your application has 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 and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the 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.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

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

/px

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: ximbap@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 B



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/435

Miss Miranda Naidoo
75 Ridge Road
Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201

Dear Miss Naidoo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct a pilot and research entitled: **A Study of School Improvement: An Exploration of DRF as a Case Study for School Improvement in the Rorke's Drift/sandlwana Area**, 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.kzneducation.gov.za

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

Appendix C

THE DAVID RATTRAY FOUNDATION



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 Ms M Naidoo has been granted permission to conduct research on behalf of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) during the year 2013.

Yours faithfully,

JB Henderson

CEO & Trustee

David Rattray Foundation

P O Rorke's Drift 3016 KwaZulu Natal South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 34 271 8768/271 8051/6421843 Mobile: 073 8409447 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 D



University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X01

Scottsville, 3209

The Principal

Dear Sir / Madam

I am currently studying towards a Masters in Education and Development at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am presently engaged in a research study on school improvement. It is an exploration of the DRF as a case study for school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area

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 my knowledge on this concept.

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 interventions. 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 0825532538.

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

Yours faithfully

Miranda Naidoo

Appendix E

University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A study of school improvement: An exploration of the David Rattray Foundation (DRF) as a case study for school improvement in the Rorke's Drift / Isandlwana area

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Miranda Naidoo, from the Department of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The results from this questionnaire will be contributed to a Masters Dissertation. You were selected as a 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 my knowledge on this organisation.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to investigate the nature and function of the DRF, the interventions they have implemented to bring about school improvement and the processes of change that have occurred.

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 +/- 50 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.

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.

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 Miranda Naidoo (researcher) at 0825532538 or Professor 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.

Reply Slip

I, _____ hereby grant/ do not grant permission to be interviewed by _____ for research that will be conducted at _____

PERMISSION GRANTED	
PERMISSION NOT GRANTED	

Signature

Name

Date

Appendix F

Questionnaire

Interview Sheet (CEO)

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 work with the schools in this area?
5. Did you select the schools in which to intervene or did the schools approach you?
6. (Depending on the answer) - How did you go about selecting those specific schools?
 - On what criteria did you select those schools?
7. How did your list of interventions come about?
8. What is the logic that underpins the list of interventions?
9. How did you decide what interventions were needed in the various schools?
10. Did you follow up on the interventions?
11. In your opinion, would you say that your interventions have been useful?
12. If yes, what makes you say that they have been useful? If no, why do you say that they have not been useful?
13. 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?)
14. Why do you think school performances vary?
15. Would you say that the DRF has contributed to school improvement and how?

Appendix G

Questionnaire

Interview Sheet (Principals)

Part 1

1. How many years of experience do you have as a principal?
2. For how many years have you been a principal 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. What are your goals, vision and mission statement?
6. How do you go about achieving these goals, meeting your vision and meeting your mission statement?
7. How would you rate the performance of your school?
8. What is your understanding of school improvement?
9. What do you feel needs to be done in your school in order to bring about school improvement?

Part 2

1. What is your understanding of the DRF?
2. Explain to me how you were introduced to the DRF?
3. How is the DRF involved in your school?
4. What has the DRF done in your school?
5. How do you feel about what the DRF has done in your school?
6. How were the interventions decided on?
7. Why did you decide on these interventions (referring to the preference analysis) knowing all the other interventions exist?
8. Are there any interventions not on this list (referring to the preference analysis) which you think could improve your school?
9. Why do you think they could be important to your school?
10. Why do you feel “these” interventions (referring to the preference analysis) were not important?

11. Why do you feel “these” interventions (referring to the preference analysis) were important?
12. Has the DRF been useful to your school?
13. Has the performance of your learners worsened or gotten better after the involvement of the DRF?

Appendix H

Preference Analysis

Please rate the interventions carried out in your school, (1) being the most favoured intervention, (2) being the favoured intervention and (3) being the least favoured intervention.

School Name: _____

Intervention	Rating
1. Computer lessons for principals	
2. Delta Environmental Course	
3. iHubo Summer Camp	
4. Inkanyeziyokusa I (NCS, Admin, Community engagement.)	
5. Jungle gym play structures	
6. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop I	
7. Kingsmead Teachers Workshop II	
8. Library books	
9. Library equipment/furniture	
10. NSNP Development Workshops	
11. Peace Corps volunteers	
12. Phathakahle	
13. School library, new/refurbish	
14. Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)	
15. Teachers' training (Embury)	
16. Y/e educational trip	

Note: The preference analysis for each school is different

Please put a tick (✓) next to the interventions which you would have liked to be carried out in your school.

Interventions	
Bridging Nutrition – Nhlayisa	Mains Electricity
Classroom Furniture (desks, chairs, boards, etc.)	Major Maintenance Work
Clinic	Milk Supply for Children
Computer Centre	Miscellaneous stationery
Computer Lessons for Principals	NSNP Development Workshops
Computers	Peace Corps Volunteers
Construction of 3 classroom block	Phathakahle
Construction of 4 classroom block	Refurbish Electrical System
Construction of Full Service Centre	Refuse Bins
Construction of new toilets	Repainting of School Buildings
Construction of Shade/Shelter (400m ²)	Repairs to School Buildings
Delta Environmental Course	Roof Repairs
Educational Toys	School Library, new/refurbish
Fencing and extension of school garden	School Text Books
Fencing of school grounds	Science Lab
Funding for self-help construction	Scientific Calculators
iHubo Summer Camp	Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)
Improvement to ground water drainage	Sports Kits
Inkanyeziyokusa I (NCS, Admin and Community Engagement	Supply of Electrical Generator
Installation of water pump and water distribution piping	Supply of Knitted Hats
Jungle Gym play structures	Supply of Shoes
Kingsmead Computer Visit	Supply of Socks
Kingsmead Teachers Workshop I	Teachers' Training (Embury)

Kingsmead Teachers Workshop II	Teaching Aids
Kitchen (for food prep)	Tree Planting
Leadership Academy	Water Storage Tanks
Leadership Academy (Principal only)	Window Replacement
Library Books	Y/e Educational Trip
Library Equipment/furniture	

Appendix I

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 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	
. Y/e Educational Trip	
f) Sports, Culture & Community Interaction	
. Peace Corps volunteers	

. Siyanakekela (Community Engagement.)	
. Sports kits	
g) Leadership/Management/Governance	
. Inkanyeziyokusa (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 J

Observation Schedule (transect walk)

1. Where are the schools situated?
2. What is the approximate distance between the schools?
3. How far away from the schools do the learners, teachers and principals live?
4. How do learners, teachers and principals get to school?
5. Are the roads tarred/gravel?
6. Describe the surrounding area of the school?
7. What facilities are there in the area?
8. What is the ratio in terms of race?
9. Are the areas divided according to socioeconomic status?

Appendix K

Observation schedule (schools)

Part 1: 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 2: Teachers

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